

JOURNAL OF AFRICAN CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHY

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Focus: Tributes to Inus Daneel and
Allison Mary Howell; Ludwig Akzaklo
(Ghana), Stephen Ndabambi Ndlovu
(Zimbabwe), Sengu Mbongu Rebecca
(DRC)



A publication of the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*

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JOURNAL OF AFRICAN CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHY

The *Journal of African Christian Biography* (JACB) publishes research on biographies of African Christians. The primary focus is on the role of local agents in the spread of Christianity in Africa. The JACB is an open access publication committed to facilitating global conversations among scholars across cultures, nations, Christian traditions, and academic specializations, with particular emphasis on Africa. We invite contributions from individuals affiliated with religious and educational institutions in Africa and elsewhere.

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Inus Daneel
Allison Mary Howell

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Introduction: Enduring Legacies

This double issue of the Journal honors two giants of African Christianity who have died in the past year, Martinus “Inus” Daneel (1937-July 29, 2024) and Allison Mary Howell (1951-2023). Zimbabwean by birth, Daneel was a pioneering eco-theologian and expert in the early study of African Independent Churches and movements, as well as an ecumenist and an activist on behalf of the Shona people. Howell was Australian and lived as a missionary before becoming a scholar, making her home among the Kasena, in northern Ghana, where she ultimately was buried. Daneel and Howell were both children of missionaries. One powerful aspect of their two separate legacies was their willingness to intimately embrace the people among whom they chose to live and whose religious lives they documented. As a result, the scholarship they left behind for the African and the global church is not the teaching of “armchair theologians,” but instead that of researchers who were first trusted friends and even adopted family members. Their enduring legacies emerge from the richness of intentional relationships in their immediate cultural contexts, in educational institutions with their students, and within the global church and scholarly community at large.

Other legacies in this issue are documented with biographies from Ghana, Zimbabwe, and the DR Congo. Michael Wandusim’s account of the life of Ludwig Adzaklo, a pioneering Bible translator, teacher, and catechist, born in late nineteenth century Ghana, challenges us to reflect on how to factor fallen humanity into the assessment of our enduring Christian legacy. Luke Donner’s biography of Bishop Stephen Ndlovu highlights his strong leadership and advocacy for women’s leadership at a time of great political struggle in Zimbabwe and internal conflicts in his own church (Brethren in Christ), all the while maintaining a spirit of collaboration and ecumenism. The story of Rebecca Sengu Mbongu comes to us from the DRC, from the pen of her adopted daughter and accomplished Bible Institute director, Berci Ba-Dia-Ngungu Mundedi. Mundedi has painted in fine detail the life of an outstanding and accomplished servant of God who ministered to others from the depths of her own affliction, putting her Savior and others before her own needs, thus blazing a trail for other women to follow.

Anicka Fast’s article on a day in the archives not only highlights the challenges and the joys of archival research as she shares a rich array of photographic discoveries, but also proposes a new model for inter-continental collaboration in scholarship. It challenges existing patterns of inequity regarding accessibility to scholarly sources between Global South and Global North scholars. But more importantly, this model also flips the narrative—in this case, putting a Global North scholar *at the service of* African writers instead of the other way around.

The book excerpt showcases the biography of Imhobnuor Kambou contained in Ini Dorcas Dah’s excellent monograph *Women do More Work than Men: Birifor Women as Change Agents in the Mission and Expansion of the Church in West Africa (Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana)* [Regnum Africa / Wipf and Stock, 2017]. This exceptional

Christian testimony documenting one woman's powerful impact on her community was included in the DACB workshop for writers of women's stories that took place at Akrofi-Christaller Institute in Akropong in July 2024 (see update below). Rounding up this issue, Dima Hurlbut presents an insightful review of Jean-Luc Enyegue's recent book, *Competing Catholicisms: The Jesuits, the Vatican, and the Making of Postcolonial French Africa* (Woodbridge, UK: James Currey, 2022).

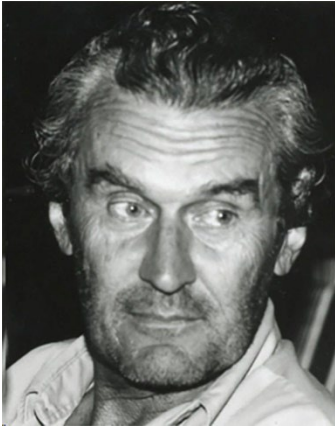
Directly following, you will find a brief overview of recent DACB events in Africa. It has been a very busy half year for the project!

Michele Sigg
Editor-in-chief

DACB Activities Update, July 2024

- *Kenya Christian Biography conference*: April 23-24, 2024, Mombasa, Anglican Diocese of Mombasa Research Institute (DOMRI). 7 original biographies presented, 2 keynote speakers (Michele Sigg and Esther Mombo) followed by 1.5 day mini workshop for biography writers. The brief conference had strong vision, leadership, and support from Bishop Alphonse Baya and DOMRI director Dr. Ferdinand Manjewa M'bwangi. The event was stimulating and aroused much local interest and energy in the church and local seminaries to continue the work of historical documentation ongoingly through annual events and publications. The first collection of biographies has been submitted to the DACB office after editorial review in Mombasa.
- *Ghana workshop for writers of women's biographies*: July 8-12, 2024 at Akrofi-Christaller Institute in Akropong. Michele Sigg taught the workshop with co-lecturer Ini Dorcas Dah to a class of 5 men and 6 women. The residential component of the workshop was key to creating a community of writers who would continue to work together, in solidarity, each on their own biography but for a common goal. Our meals and conversations drew us closer and knit us together as a family, creating trust and opportunities for friendship. It was a joyful learning experience for all of us—students and lecturers. Now the students are working on submitting the planning schedule and on organizing their research trips (July-August 2024).
- *Constable grant biography mini films*: The film project that began in 2021 but was somewhat slowed down by Covid has finished! You can view two short films on “Apolo Kivebulaya, the Barefoot Evangelist” and “Abba Moses the Black” at the links below. Soon the links will be available on the DACB website:
 - Apolo Kivebulaya: <https://youtu.be/wpgaZEfzmvY>
 - Abba Moses the Black: https://youtu.be/ByDSWnN_nOA

Inus Daneel, African Theologian



Marthinus "Inus" Louis Daneel of Somerville, MA, and Polokwane, South Africa, died on July 29, 2024, at age 87, after a long illness. Daneel was a noted eco-theologian, ecumenist, author of fourteen published scholarly volumes on African Christianity and traditional religion, and founder of ecumenical movements in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. He leaves his beloved wife of 28 years, Dana L. Robert Daneel; four adult children Alec Daneel, Lidia Haines (Russell), Talita DuPreez (Drean), and Inus Daneel, Jr. (Annelie); two stepsons Samuel Massie (Wenchi) and John Massie (Bonnie); and twelve grandchildren. He was predeceased by his

parents Alec and Tina Daneel, his sister Nyasa Groenewald, and his adopted son Leonard Gono. He is survived by three sisters Charlotte Joubert, Alta Klopper, and Cinie-Marie Simmelink.

Inus was born of missionary parents in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). He grew up fluent in Afrikaans and in Karanga, a dialect of Shona, the majority language of Zimbabwe. In 1960, he graduated from the University of Stellenbosch with a B.A. Hons. in Philosophy. He received the prestigious Abe Bailey Bursary, which sent a dozen outstanding South African graduates to the United Kingdom. Cashing in his travel award, he headed to the Netherlands and in 1971 earned the D. Theol. (cum laude), from the Free University of Amsterdam with a dissertation on "The background and rise of Southern Shona Independent Churches." He was Senior Lecturer and Researcher in Africa sponsored by the Free University of Amsterdam and the African Study Centre of Leiden University from 1965 to 1971. He founded and directed both the African Independent Church Conference (*Fambidzano*) (1972-1989), and the Zimbabwean Institute of Religious Research and Ecological Conservation (ZIRRCON) (1984-2000). In addition to his activism, he was Professor of Missiology at the University of South Africa (1981-1995), and Professor of Missiology Part-Time at the Boston University School of Theology from 1997 until his retirement in 2012. In 2004, his war novel *Guerilla Snuff* was named by the Zimbabwe International Book Fair as one of the best 75 books of twentieth-century fiction in Zimbabwe (one of 25 in English), the only one by a white Zimbabwean.

In 1965, Daneel moved into the Matopo Hills in apartheid-era Rhodesia to conduct research on indigenous Christian movements. Befriending the priests of the traditional high god Mwari, Daneel was the only white person admitted to the oracular cave of the deity. The deity sent him to warn Rhodesian government officials of the impending civil war, if white settlers did not return land to the Africans. His warnings went unheeded. For his refusal to bear arms against the Shona people, he was

summoned before a Rhodesian military tribunal and threatened with imprisonment. With leaders of African Initiated Churches, he founded the ecumenical movement *Fambidzano* that conducted theological education by extension throughout central Zimbabwe. As the adopted son of the Rev. Samuel Mutendi, founder of the Zion Christian Church in Zimbabwe, Daneel sat in the docket with the Mutendi family and bailed them out when they were convicted of resisting government seizure of ancestral land. After the war, although he was a Dutch Reformed church elder, Daneel was made a Bishop by Ndaza Zionist Churches in recognition of his ecological leadership. Called “Bishop Moses,” he raised funds for church development projects, planted trees, and wrote the most extensive detailed studies of African indigenous churches in a single cultural group.

After the civil war ended, resulting in the country of Zimbabwe in 1980, Daneel turned over the theological extension work to local church leaders and was appointed Professor of Missiology at the University of South Africa. His marriage to Beulah Curle ended in divorce in 1984. In his 15 years in Pretoria, he taught black and African theologies while commuting to Masvingo, Zimbabwe, where in 1985 with a group of chiefs and spirit mediums, he founded ZIRRCON to restore the lands ecologically-devastated by the civil war. With a traditionalist branch and a Christian branch, ZIRRCON initiated religious rituals for tree-planting, gully reclamation, and similar efforts to “clothe the earth.” For roughly fifteen years, ZIRRCON was the largest grassroots tree-planting movement in southern Africa. It hosted dozens of tree nurseries, 80 women’s clubs, and theological education by extension that included eco-theology and HIV-AIDS awareness.

As a self-professed “nomad” and adventurer, during the late years of the war Daneel designed boats and with his team Mutapa Eagles won multiple championships over a five-year period at the Tiger Invitational Tournament at Lake Kariba, the largest freshwater fishing tournament in the world. In 1996, Daneel married fellow missiologist Dana Robert. He began a decades-long commute between southern Africa and teaching African religions and theology at Boston University. In 2001, Daneel and Robert founded the Center for Global Christianity and Mission (CGCM). He was a member of the Harvard-Epworth United Methodist Church in Cambridge, MA. His ashes will be interred at Mt. Auburn Cemetery and a memorial service held at a later date. Donations in his memory may be sent to the CGCM, Boston University School of Theology, 745 Commonwealth Ave, Boston, MA 02215.

Tribute to Allison Howell (1951-2023)

A selfless, God-fearing lecturer, who can find her? Only those who have studied under the feet of Auntie, Mother, and Professor Allison Mary Howell.

Today I would like to pay tribute to a great woman of the Christian faith, Professor Allison Mary Howell. I first met Prof. Howell in 2008 at the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission, and Culture, Ghana, where I went to do an M.A. in Theology and Mission. We gradually became friends as I sat in her classes and later worked with her as the main supervisor for my MTh dissertation and PhD thesis.

From Lecturer to Friend, Sister, Colleague and Mother. I am very grateful for her guidance and advice, as well as her moral, material, and spiritual support that have helped make me who I am today. I must say that I became thirsty to conduct research on issues related to Gospel and culture when I heard Prof. Howell teaching about the Kasena of Northern Ghana. I found that many of the things she was talking about were exactly what I had seen with my people but I was blindly blaming them of certain attitudes. Seeing her identify with the Kasena as if they were her own people challenged me to do research on my people and to seek to understand them rather than judge them from the outside. She also taught me how women, including African women like Perpetua and Felicitas, who were among the martyrs in the Early Church, made a great contribution to spreading the Christian faith throughout the world. This also gave me the thirst to conduct research to find out how women in Africa are contributing to communicating the Gospel albeit from the marginalised position imposed on them in the church today.

Beyond Prof. Howell's supervision, I was more than motivated to work hard because of her commitment to her work at ACI. She taught me that she was not at ACI as an academic lecturer only, but as a servant of the Most High. She was most of the time at school at 7:00 am, after travelling all the way from Accra to Akropong. How could I give in to laziness when I came to school at 7:00 am to find that she was already in her office, working? She opened her office to me any time I needed her and was available to listen to me and give me the appropriate advice for my studies and life in general.

Prof. Howell, I thank God for your life—a life well lived. For the past eight months, I have been learning to reshape my map of the world without your physical presence. I owe you a lot. However, I am sure of one thing: you are resting peacefully in the bosom of your maker, the Lord whom you served with all your heart by impacting positively everyone you met during your existence on earth.

Prof. Mom, friend, sister, and colleague, rest. Rest well, near your maker's heart until we meet again! Ce n'est qu'un au revoir, Maman!

Ini Dorcas Dah

Student, friend, daughter and co-editor of the festschrift *Understanding the Gospel, Culture, and Environment: Essays in Honour of Allison Mary Howell* (2023).

Allison Howell: A Legacy of Mission Service

Australian missionary kid, missionary, and mission professor, Allison Mary Howell was born in the tin mining town of Manono in the southeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo on November 10, 1951. She was the third child of Richard and Margaret Howell, missionaries in Manono. Allison spent her childhood years in Congo, went to primary school in Zambia and, when her parents returned to Australia, attended high school at Meriden, an Anglican girls' school in Sydney. Tributes from schoolmates testify to her friendliness and sense of fun, her strong Christian faith, her athletic prowess, and her developing leadership abilities. She served as a competent head girl in 1969, her final year of high school.

Allison obtained a Bachelor of Arts (Honors) in Geography and Anthropology from the University of Sydney which she concluded with research on the impact of floods on farmers in the flood plains of the Nepean River in Sydney, Australia. Having lectured in Geography in Australia, she proceeded to the University of Toronto, Canada, where she earned a Master of Arts in Environmental Geography. She completed the program with a thesis titled, "Self-help and Cooperative Involvement in Rural Water Supply Programmes in Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Sudan."

In 1978, following her academic training, Allison served as a consultant to the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy Study on "Water Supply and Sanitation as Components of Primary Health Care." She also served as a consultant to the International Nepal Fellowship on the analysis of research on the rehabilitation and reintegration of leprosy patients back into Hindu society. In 1980 and 1981, Allison served as a lecturer at the International Training Institute, Department of Foreign Affairs, Sydney, Australia. Allison's academic interests and the expertise she gained from international development consultancies would prove invaluable in latter years in developing courses in holistic mission and development at the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture (ACI), in Akropong, Ghana.

Called to Mission

While Allison was busy serving international agencies in various international developmental initiatives, SIM Australia approached her several times to consider serving as a missionary. At the third proposition, she realized that this was God calling her to serve him in mission, and accepted. As a result, in 1981, SIM sent her to Chiana in the Upper East Region of Ghana, to witness to Christ among the Kasena and to assist in strengthening the Good News Bible Church of Africa (GNBCA), the young church emerging from SIM's ministry.

Serving among the Kasena, Allison did not function as a traditional missionary solely focused on conversion, church planting, and discipleship. Rather, she drew from her learning and experience in development to offer more in her service of the people and the kingdom of God. During her early years in Chiana, Allison learned Kasem, immersed herself in the Kasena culture, and participated fully in the life of her host

community. As she discerned the spiritual challenges of the people, she began to ask questions about Gospel and culture engagement and how to present the Good News to the Kasena in such a way as to answer their deepest spiritual and religious questions and aspirations. Wrestling with questions that traditional missionaries hardly asked at the time, she realized she was out of her depth and needed help. Providence would later open doors of opportunity for her to explore her questions in learnings and tutelage that would be beneficial to those who would eventually come under her academic guidance.

Allison served with SIM for twenty-five years, from 1980 to 2006. However, she did not completely sever ties with the mission organization as she continued to have a role in SIM, sustaining friendships and serving for a term on the International Board of Governors during the restructuring drive of the organization. In the same vein, she never lost touch with friends and colleagues in Chiana, including the Kasena chief, Chiana Pio, Pe Rowland Adiali Ayagittam II, who was a Christian and a personal friend, her Bible Church of Africa friends, as well as the Kasena communities in the south of Ghana. The tributes from these friends at her demise give an insight into the range of her spiritual, mentoring, and financial support to Chiana Christians and churches.¹

Enlarging Perspective

The seed that would grow and blossom into Allison's academic vocation can be traced to her older brother, John, who had become a good friend of Kwame Bediako during their time together at the London School of Theology (LST) in the 1970s. John had stayed connected with Kwame after the latter's return to Ghana. When Allison sought John's counsel on the questions agitating her mind among the Kasena, he readily put her in touch with Kwame Bediako in Accra. Kwame's theological passion for exploring the interactions between the Gospel and African culture had already been noticed by friends like John from their days in LST. Allison made several trips to Accra to follow through with her questions, while also documenting her experience with learning the Kasem language in which she eventually became fluent. That experience produced two books: *A Daily Guide for Culture and Language Learning*, published in 1990, which became a seminal and influential work for those engaged in cross-cultural missions; and *A Handbook for Encouragers, Supervisors and Self Directed Learners*, which followed in 1994.

Alongside her language learning in the 1990s, Allison's reflective mission enterprise in Chiana was flowering into an intellectual discipline. Her expanding interests in the Kasena people led her to explore one of the significant social phenomena that shaped the peoples and communities of precolonial northern Ghana, namely, the slave trade and its aftermath. Allison researched the impact of the trade on the region and organized a seminar around it in February 1998. She edited and

¹ "Allison Mary Howell," https://www.forevermissed.com/allison-mary-howell/about?utm_source=fb_emails&utm_medium=gmail.com&utm_campaign=memorialUpdateNotification&utm_content=visit_memorial_one_authors

published the papers presented at the seminar in the book, *The Slave Trade and Reconciliation: A Northern Ghanaian Perspective*. Describing his sister's mission exploits among the Kasena, John wrote: "Her research was extensive and, if documented academically, would provide helpful knowledge of the culture of the Kasena society. She came to the conclusion that the best way to record the research would be through the discipline of a PhD."²

Expectedly, Allison enrolled in the doctoral program in Religious Studies under Andrew Walls at the University of Edinburgh. As her research evolved into the writing phase, Andrew invited Kwame to be Allison's associate supervisor when she returned to Ghana in 1993. After the PhD program, she returned to her service in mission in Chiana, while preparing the manuscript of her thesis for publication. It was published in 1997 as *The Religious Itinerary of a Ghanaian People: The Kasena and the Christian Gospel*. The book would become a key text for Akrofi-Christaller Institute's MTh/PhD and MA programs.

The Religious Itinerary of a Ghanaian People was a culmination of Allison's multifaceted learning through the years. As John noted: "The publication, which revealed her study of anthropology and experience among the Kasena people, was a foundation for applying her sensitive approach to the nature of the society and its history in its socio-political and environmental context."³ In reviewing the work, Gerrie Ter Haar observed that,

Although one may have some doubts about the problem-oriented approach which dominates the analysis, Howell is at the same time adamant that Kasena conversion to Christianity may not be reduced to such pragmatic orientation. With all means at her disposal in an oral culture, including songs and prayers, she identifies elements of Christian thought and action which shed an interesting light on the reception of the Christian message among the Kasena. Combining anthropological methods and linguistic skills with theological perceptiveness, Howell explains the complex of factors that have shaped Kasena reception of Christianity. Understandably, her conclusions are marked by both missionary sympathy and missionary concern. She shows sympathy for a people's struggle to appropriate the 'transforming power of the gospel' in not always conducive circumstances, to put it mildly; and concern that nearly a century of Christian activity in the region has not resulted in the 'key to conduct' which, in her final analysis, Kasena Christians need most.⁴

After her doctorate, Allison began to contribute to the academic formation of Akrofi-Christaller Centre for Mission and Culture (ACMC), later Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission, and Culture (ACI), as a theological institution. She

² John Howell, in "Celebrating the Life of Professor Allison Mary Howell, 10 November 1951 - 14 November 2023," 11.

³ John Howell, 12

⁴ Gerrie ter Haar, review of *The Religious Itinerary of a Ghanaian People: The Kasena and the Christian Gospel*, *Exchange* 30, No 2 (April 2001), 191-92.

participated in the curriculum development workshops of the Centre in the mid-1990s before the start of academic programs in 1997. That year, Allison joined ACI through an initial secondment from SIM Ghana on a part-time basis. Her first APMC assignment came when she contributed to APMC's annual Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) Mission Fields Conference by helping PCG ministers develop cultural sensitivities in the communities to which they had been sent. She became a Senior Research Fellow in 1999 when her secondment transitioned to full-time appointment.

When in 2006, Allison left SIM to join ACI as a full-time staff member, she worked on the same terms as the Ghanaian nationals. She was appointed the first Dean of Accredited Studies, laying the foundation for the successful operations of the Institute's academic programs. During these growth years, Allison coordinated research by participants in a study process as part of a Gospel and Culture Workshop series published in the *Journal of African Christian Thought*.⁵ She directed the Kasem track of the Bible commentary workshops and saw it through to a successful completion some twenty years later with the publication of the Kasem commentary on John's Gospel in December 2021.

Allison assisted Andrew Walls, not only in establishing the coursework for Aspects of World Christian History, which was later reconfigured as World Christian History as Mission History, but also in putting together the MTh/PhD reader for the course. As part of her expanding role at ACI, after understudying Andrew Walls for some years, Allison assumed full responsibility of his courses and also helped to consolidate the Research Methods course that had been initiated by Kwame Bediako.

In more recent years until her passing, Allison's research at ACI focused on the specific areas of climate change, human need and the environment, and theology and mission. Her first public venture into this field as an academic occurred when she led a weeklong seminar in March 2011 on Mission and the Environment at the Overseas Ministries Study Center (OMSC), New Haven, Connecticut, USA. It signified a pulling together of her academic training and experience as a former international development consultant to multilateral institutions. After serving She capped her years of service at ACI with an elective course she designed and taught as Holistic Mission and Development, eventually creating an MA Option in that field. Through this course and its specialization, Allison placed ACI at the cutting edge of contemporary theological exploration and deepened the uniqueness of ACI's theological enterprise in the West African subregion. After serving eight years as Dean of Accredited Studies, in December 2013, she became Associate Professor and Dean of Research.

An Engaging Ministry

For several years, Allison lived in ACI's modest Guest House in Akropong, during which time, being the only faculty member resident on site, she fulfilled an important role in the social life of ACI by investing her time and efforts in ensuring the psycho-social well-being of students who came to study at the institute. She was particularly

⁵ *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (December 1999).

interested in the international students who left kith and kin to improve themselves for service in the churches of Africa. Knowing how easily these students could feel bored with semi-urban Akropong, she screened movies for them at the institute. Mission history came alive among them in informal interactions as she exposed them to mission classics. Still, with the management of the institute, Allison arranged student weekend tours to significant historical and ecological landmarks like Elmina Castle, Cape Coast, and Boti Falls in southern Ghana.

In the same spirit of Kwame Bediako's generosity toward comparatively disadvantaged persons working and studying at the institute, Allison related with everyone with humaneness. She was particularly sensitive to students from disadvantaged educational and cultural backgrounds. She attended to them with utmost patience by drawing from her formation as a missionary in Sahelian northern Ghana, thus modeling in the academic environment of ACI lessons in Christian formation, patience, humility, and generosity.

Allison's input into the life of ACI and its postgraduate students was not short of financial. She used her extensive contacts and influence to motivate Christians around the world to invest in the lives of students by giving scholarships mainly through two charitable institutions. These scholarships have facilitated the ability of many ACI candidates from all major regions of Africa to complete their degrees without financial debt. She also extended her financial support to the Institute's building projects. In her tribute to Allison, Gillian Bediako noted that "Allison did not fit the traditional missionary stereotype, being willing to serve under African leadership and on African terms. She was willing to use her contacts for the good of ACI in raising funds. The fact that the second phase of our new library development is now complete is due substantially to her efforts to get that phase going."⁶

An Ever-widening Service

Allison moved down to Accra in June 2010, first to Comet Estate in Kwabenya, and a couple of years later in May 2012, to her own house in Kuottam Estates, Palm Valley, Oyarifa, thanks to the generosity of her supporters mainly in Australia. While recovering from illness in 2016, she developed an interest in the study of birds in the community, recorded in scores of photographs of these winged and colorfully feathered friends. For three consecutive years, she gifted the residents with beautiful calendars she produced from these photographs of the different species of birds she had observed, thus raising awareness of local wildlife. The calendars endeared her to the other residents in her community. In her characteristic altruism, Allison left a legacy by recreating an abandoned dumpsite behind the estates into environmentally friendly, pleasant parkland. In appreciation of this value-adding and life-enhancing initiative in their environment, her neighbors named it "Allison's Greens." It quickly became a natural community resort where residents and visitors would go to relax,

⁶ Gillian Bediako, in "Celebrating the Life of Professor Allison Mary Howell," 25.

rest, and reflect. Generous to the end, Allison continued to raise funds for the upkeep and maintenance of the “Greens” until her death.

Allison’s impact during her years with SIM in Chiana was outstanding as she worked with her colleagues to establish health posts and helped to man them, provided the “unofficial” transport service for all manner of needs and emergencies, trained new missionaries to adapt to their new communities and to embrace the emerging cross-cultural challenges, and related to the host community as one of them. In wider SIM roles, she was an encourager, esteemed counselor and compassionate reconciler. On the whole, she made a substantial contribution to Christian mission in Ghana and elsewhere. Yet, her service at ACI was easily the crowning point of her achievements. Her enduring legacy will be “her contribution to the enhancement of the vision and mission of ACI; her contribution to the upholding of academic standards of excellence; her books and other publications; her diverse and positive impact on students and faculty; her advocacy in fundraising, both for scholarships and bursaries that enhanced student numbers in financially lean years, as well as for the second phase of the new library development.”⁷

Juggling her service with a conservative evangelical mission organization and her work with an institution like ACI with its Africanist ethos in her early years of involvement there, Allison demonstrated unusual trust, wisdom, and resilience. Their invitation to her to serve on their strategic organs attests to this strength of character.

Teaching came naturally to Allison. For her, it was not just about sharing her knowledge with her students but a love for them expressed both in her yearning for them to succeed in their studies and in the sacrifices she made for that to happen for them. She would invest her time to search out online bookstores for relevant books and resources for the various ACI courses. Where the books were too expensive and beyond the students’ means, Allison found a way around it by either getting the Institute to order the books or, more often than not, purchasing them herself to place in the Institute’s reference library for students’ common access and use. On some occasions, she would go to the extent of buying the costly books for the concerned students. Expressing the deep appreciation of the many students who had benefitted from Allison’s generous spirit, mentoring role, and availability over the years, three of her former PhD students, now her younger colleagues, edited and published a festschrift in her honor, *Understanding the Gospel, Culture and Environment: Essays in Honour of Allison Mary Howell*.⁸ Unable to attend the launch in person, Allison joined the event in Legon, Accra, online on May 31, 2022. She expressed profound joy and gratitude that her former students had chosen to honor her with a festschrift in her lifetime.

Allison retired from the service of ACI at the end of December 2017, following

⁷ Gillian Bediako, “Biography of Allison Mary Howell,” in “Celebrating the Life of Professor Allison Mary Howell,” 6.

⁸ Ini Dorcas Dah, Ebenezer Yaw Blasus, and Rudolf K. Gaisie, *Understanding the Gospel, Culture and Environment: Essays in Honour of Allison Mary Howell* (Legon, Ghana: University of Ghana Press, 2022).

a carefully thought-out and executed succession plan. A model mentor, she had identified, trained and enabled a few of her former PhD students who had joined the ACI faculty to take over the teaching of her courses. Over the course of about three years, she had gradually brought them in, first, being present while she taught, and, later, being present while they taught. In her student-focused mindset, there was no reason for students not to be able to offer any of her courses just because she was no longer available.

After her retirement, Allison continued to supervise MTh and PhD students. Even after moving back to Australia in February 2019, she continued as an adjunct faculty, teaching her courses and meeting with her students online, sometimes at unreasonable hours, defying the challenging restrictions of ill health. Every December from 2019, she would muster the strength and resilience to attend the graduation of her students at ACI in Akropong, an event to which she always looked forward with deep gratitude and great joy. However, after the graduation of December 2022, she knew that it would take a miracle for her to attend the next graduation in December 2023. Still, in spite of her declining health, she didn't give up working, but continued to supervise her last batch of two PhD students to the completion of their programs. Thanks to Allison's dogged determination and perseverance, at much personal inconvenience, they graduated in December 2023.

Allison died peacefully in the early hours of November 14, 2023, in Sydney, Australia. To honor her dying wish, her remains were interred in Chiana on January 20, 2024. In an age when the word "missionary" has become pejorative among her Western compatriots, formerly athletic, determined, and colorful Allison⁹ was transformed by grace to redefine the vocation with a generous and submissive spirit, serving the last, the least, and the lost. Her works follow her.

John Howell
Maureen Iheanacho
Kehinde Olabimtan

This biography, received in 2024, was written by John Howell, Maureen Iheanacho, and Kehinde Olabimtan. John Howell is Allison's elder brother. He is a company director living in Sydney with his wife, Dawn, and is committed to facilitating support for international mission organizations. Maureen Iheanacho is an independent scholar and researcher in mission studies. She was a colleague of Allison Howell at Akrofi-Christaller Institute, Ghana, where she served as the Executive Assistant to the late Executive Director and first rector, Prof. Kwame Bediako. She lives in Enugu, Nigeria. Kehinde Olabimtan is the community chaplain at St. Stephen's College, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada. He was a Project Luke fellow of the DACB in 2010/2011 at the Overseas Ministries Study Center.

⁹ Catherine Brooks and David S. Howell, "Celebrating the Life of Professor Allison Mary Howell," 8, 13.

Ludwig Adzaklo (b. 1882): Pioneer Bible Translator, Teacher, and Catechist

By Michael F. Wandusim

Ludwig Adzaklo was an outstanding, competent, mother-tongue Ewe Bible translator and a dedicated teacher and catechist of the North German Missionary Society (also known as the Bremen Mission) in former German Togoland (present-day southeast of Ghana and Togo).

Adzaklo was born on November 28, 1882 in Anyako (in present-day Ghana) and baptised on December 29, 1882. Anyako was one of the main mission stations of the Bremen Mission in pre-colonial Togoland. [1] He was born two years prior to Togoland becoming a formal German colony in 1884 and two years after the arrival of missionary Jakob Spieth (1856–1914) in Keta on July 6, 1880. Spieth was a renowned German missionary of the Bremen Mission with whom Adzaklo later worked as a Bible translator in Tübingen, Germany. Adzaklo's parents were Christian converts, but he was raised by his aunt who was a traditional priestess. Archival records indicate that Adzaklo married sometime before 1914. [2] In addition to Ewe, his mother tongue, he was also proficient in German. He received his training as a school teacher at the Bremen Mission *Lehrerseminar* (teacher seminary) in Amedzofe (also written Amedzowe in archival documents), which he completed at the end of 1903. At the start of 1904, he was employed as a teacher at the Bremen mission school in Amedzofe.

Life in Germany as a mother-tongue Bible translator

A few months after commencing his role as a teacher in Amedzofe, Adzaklo received a request from missionary Schröder of the Bremen Mission to travel to Tübingen, Germany and collaborate with Spieth in the translation of the Old Testament (OT) into Ewe. The British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) funded this translation project with an annual sum of 4,000 Marks, primarily to cover the wages of missionary Spieth. Adzaklo's remuneration was provided in the form of gifts and a monthly allowance of 2.50/3.00 Marks [3] in 1905, which was later increased to 5 Marks in 1906 and finally to 6.50/7.00 Marks in 1908 at his request.[4] Although the original funding agreement between the BFBS and the Bremen Mission envisaged a revision of existing Ewe translations of the OT, Adzaklo and Spieth ended up undertaking a new translation because the existing ones were, according to Spieth's report to the BFBS in 1909, "(...) altogether unfinished and partly rather [of] faulty character". [5] It is important to emphasize that Adzaklo and Spieth translated from the Hebrew /Aramaic text available to them at the time and only deviated in a few instances where they followed the "English Revised and the Lutheran Version" as Spieth indicated in the cited report to the BFBS. This is relevant because some existing publications on this translation project erroneously assert that Adzaklo and Spieth translated solely from the German Luther Bible into Ewe.

Adzaklo spent approximately five years in Germany because the Ewe Bible translation lasted from May 22, 1904 to June 23, 1909. In addition to Bible translation, Adzaklo also translated Ewe documents into German (including Ewe letters from Togoland to Germany). As a mother-tongue Bible translator, he was aware of the complexities inherent in Bible translation as a process that was not simple and static, but rather complex and open to diverse translation philosophies. For a West African mother-tongue Bible translation, for instance, Adzaklo espoused the approach of dynamic equivalence (later popularised through the works of Eugene Nida). In a farewell address delivered in Bremen in 1909, shortly before his departure from Germany to Togo, he articulated this understanding as follows:

There are certainly different views about how Bible translation should be carried out. Some wish for an entirely word-for-word translation; others are more in favor of a free translation. Now the question is: 'How was the Ewe Bible actually translated?' I can answer the question as follows. If one were to take some portions of our translation and translate them word-for-word into German, that would not make any sense to the Germans. This settles the question. We have translated according to the thought patterns of the Ewes, which is quite different from that of the Germans and that of the Hebrews. [6]

Furthermore, he travelled to several parts of Germany presenting lectures on the Ewe people in order to create awareness of the mission work in Togoland and to raise funds for the Bremen Mission. Some of the places he visited included Oberhausen, Oldenburg, Tieringen, Herrenberg, and Stuttgart. [7] He may have been an effective public speaker as his public presentations attracted a considerable number of participants. Moreover, through one such public presentation in 1907 in Oldenburg, he attracted the royal attention of the Duchess of Oldenburg, Großherzogin Elizabeth von Oldenburg (1869–1955), who subsequently invited him to her castle on April 14, 1907. In his report on this encounter, Adzaklo reported that the Duchess stated, "I am very interested in hearing about the missionary work and I would like to hear from an indigenous person." [8] In addition to public lectures, he also contributed essays to the Bremen Mission children magazine (*Kinderblatt*) and wrote other articles. Therefore, through his public lectures, Adzaklo reached a diverse audience in Germany, including royals, young people and adults. Consequently, he can be regarded as a significant contributor in the globalisation of knowledge during the colonial era.

Moreover, Adzaklo actively participated in the social and ecclesiastical life of Tübingen. This is evidenced by his involvement (along with Spieth) in several mission festivals (*Missionsfeste*), his membership in the Young Men's Association (*Jünglingsverein*), and in the trombone choir of the *Stiftskirche* in Tübingen. Additionally, he would have been widely known in Tübingen as several individuals, including professors, visited him during his prolonged illness from May 18 to July 6, 1907. This severe illness was most likely a result of exhaustion resulting from his dedication to the Bible translation work. Adzaklo was highly productive during his time in Germany. Nevertheless, he expressed a strong desire to return to Togoland due to his passion for his teaching profession and his family. Eventually, he returned to Togoland in

September 1909. On September 5, 1909 in the *Stephanikirche* in Bremen, a forenoon farewell service was held for him and three others including mission inspector M. Schlunk, who was paying a working visit to the mission field in Togo. Subsequently, another farewell celebration was held that evening at 7:30 pm in the Great Hall of the “Union in Bremen”, during which he delivered an insightful farewell speech. Adzaklo, mission inspector Schlunk, and the others eventually departed Germany from Hamburg on September 10, 1909 at 11:00 am on board the ship, Eleonore Woermann. Prior to their departure, however, another farewell service was held for them in Hamburg in the *Anscharkapelle* on September 8, 1909. [9]

Life and work in Togoland

Adzaklo arrived in Lomé, Togo on September 27, 1909. His life after this time can be reconstructed from relevant publications in the *Monatsblatt der Norddeutschen Missionsgesellschaft*, the monthly mission bulletin of the Bremen Mission. One major role he played upon his return from Germany was his participation in the work of the Ewe Bible revision commission in Lomé, which commenced in October 1910 and concluded in March 1911. The Bible revision commission was led by Spieth and G. Däuble. Other members of the commission were Adzaklo, the venerable Rev. A. Aku, who was the first African head of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Samuel Quist, a head teacher, and two church elders, Joseph Tosu from Anyako and Joseph Kudese from Waya. The commission’s primary task was to review the Ewe Old Testament (as translated by Spieth and Adzaklo in Tübingen). It also reviewed the 1898 revised Ewe New Testament. The main objective of the revision was to ascertain the indigenous intelligibility of the translations. Among the five indigenous members of the commission, only Adzaklo remained until the conclusion of the revision in March 1911. After the revision, Spieth returned to Germany with the revised manuscript for publication. In that same year, the Bremen Mission celebrated its 75th anniversary and the manuscript of the full Ewe Bible was displayed as the “best anniversary gift” of the Mission. [10] This highlights Adzaklo’s essential role in the history of the Ewe Bible translation as undertaken by the Bremen Mission. His commitment in this groundbreaking work among the Ewes of West Africa was informed by his own conviction about the relevance of mother-tongue Bibles for the impact of Christianity in West Africa. At the farewell ceremony for him in Bremen in 1909, he noted:

When we look back at how our country looked 70 years ago, how the priests and sorcerers subjugated the people, we have to admit that the Word of God is a force. Where it makes its entrance, life and peace arise; there the power of darkness gives way. But how does one come into real possession of the Word of God? Only by giving it to him in his own mother tongue. I was allowed to help in this marvelous work during the five years.

How can one read and understand the Bible if one does not have it in his own mother tongue? [11]

Besides Bible translation, he also campaigned passionately against alcohol in Togoland by speaking and writing publicly about the effects of its consumption. For

instance, according to a publication in the monthly mission bulletin, Adzaklo, at a gathering of more than 600 people in Agbetiko in 1910, spoke about negative effects of the consumption of schnapps in Togoland. [12] Later in 1913, he wrote an essay titled, *Macht mobil gegen den Alkohol!* ("Rise up against alcohol!") which was published in the monthly mission bulletin in August 1913. [13] It is in this essay that his views on alcohol and what he meant in 1910 by its negative effects can be assessed. For in it, he called for a mass mobilization against alcohol because its consumption (particularly of schnapps) had become a widespread phenomenon permeating cities and villages in Togoland. Specifically in the cities, he wrote,

drinking habit (*Trinksitte*) is in constant rise. The shop assistants and other native employees imitate the Europeans, by buying expensive drinking glasses, making themselves so-called drinking tables and using them enthusiastically on Sundays and festive days. Whoever takes part in all this is highly respected and counted among the nobility. [14]

However, he perceived this trend as a worrying social development because alcohol consumption, according to him, was causing significant financial losses to farmers who spent their farm proceeds on drinking. In his own words,

One can gladly report that farming has never been in any time as flourishing as it is at present. Here in the inland as well as on the coast, some hard-working people have earned considerable sums of money from farming. But where are all these monies? They have been converted into bottles of alcohol, which they boast more about than the monies. [15]

Apart from its impact on farmers, Adzaklo also indicated that alcohol consumption was causing conflicts among family relatives. Furthermore, he argued, it prevented people from engaging in productive work, particularly artisans "among whom alcohol has set up its table" and "the result of that is, their tools are rusting or eaten by termites because they are hardly used." [16] For Adzaklo, therefore, these negative implications demonstrated that it was "... high time that people finally took [concrete] action against alcohol." [17]

To make the point, Adzaklo cited Amedzofe, his place of work, as an example of a place where concrete actions were being taken in the fight against alcohol consumption. These included the decision of the local Christians, that on Sundays, they would neither drink nor visit non-Christian relatives who traded in palm wine and other alcoholic beverages. In addition, the mission and the local chief in Amedzofe were working hand in hand to combat alcohol consumption, by banning the sale of alcoholic drinks in the community. Moreover, a Blue Cross society was also founded to arm young people against the perceived danger posed by alcohol consumption. "In this wise," Adzaklo stated, "Amedzofe is like a fortress, equipped and armed on all sides and is worthy of imitation." [18] The language and style of the essay suggest that Adzaklo's aim was not just about dissuading people from the consumption of alcohol, but also a total ban on the sale of alcoholic beverages in Togoland, especially in mission stations such as Amedzofe. Ultimately, the hope, by underlying that aim, was "that all young teachers who are trained here [that is, Amedzofe] may enter the Lord's service

free from alcohol!" [19]

As well as being a Bible translator and anti-alcohol campaigner, he continued his work with the mission as a teacher. After his return to Togo in 1909, he worked in the mission school in Lomé and was later called to Amedzofe in 1912 to teach in the seminary, after the duration of seminary course was extended from three to four years. [20] As a teacher, Adzaklo was so committed to his profession that he was not enticed to abandon it for another well-paying position during the difficult days of the First World War, when most teachers of the Bremen Mission left Togoland for the Gold Coast in search of better pay. During this period, a close relative attempted to persuade Adzaklo to join his lucrative business, but he declined arguing, "I am a teacher of my people not only in good times but also in bad times." [21]

In 1916, at the age of 34, he was selected to be consecrated as a catechist, marking a significant turning point in his life. This was a pivotal moment in the work of the Bremen Mission in Togoland, as the mission introduced the catechist course for the first time in Amedzofe. This course was aimed at preparing teachers who had served for a minimum of ten years without interruption for consecration as catechists and subsequently ordination as pastors. Adzaklo was among the first batch of five teachers chosen for this program. He was, however, exempted from the catechist examination due to his time in Germany as a Bible translator. [22] Subsequently, he was consecrated in March 1917 as a catechist. This exemption from the catechist examination in consideration of his five-year stay in Germany indicates that the mission recognized his acquisition of additional competence through the Bible translation work in Germany.

Adzaklo reached another milestone at age 36 when he became the first African principal of the teacher seminary in Amedzofe. The deportation of German missionaries from Togoland in 1918 due to WW1 meant that for the first time in 1918 the seminary was without European leadership and Adzaklo was appointed as a principal (*Seminarvorsteher*). This is evident from the 1918 annual report of the district pastor of the Amedzofe mission district (*Amedzofe-Bezirk*), Rev. Robert Kwami: "The number of seminarians is declining rapidly, [and] only now are we realizing the impact of the war [i.e., WW1] on our schools. For the first time, we began our seminary work on 28 January [1918] without European leadership under [the leadership of] Catechist Adzaklo." [23]

Undoubtedly, this would have marked the pinnacle of his career as an educator and also demonstrated local capacity to take over the mission work in Togoland after the deportation of the European missionaries. Nevertheless, his career as a teacher took a nosedive in the same year when he was deposed as a seminary principal on the grounds of financial dishonesty. Rev. Kwami described the situation as follows:

Things went quite well [under Adzaklo's leadership] until the middle of the year The donations flowed in abundance from all sides and we looked into the future with confidence. But we were to be disappointed. The leader's [i.e., Adzaklo's] insincerity (*Unaufrichtigkeit*) caused mistrust among teachers and pupils, which made the work very difficult. The joy of teaching and learning was gone. The matter came to light during the visit of the Superintendent (*Präses*) [i.e. missionary Ernst

Bürge] and Mr. Adzaklo had to be dismissed. [24] That the “insincerity” was financially related is confirmed by the following excerpt from Rev. Kwami’s letter in 1919 to the Bremen Mission: “Some teachers [in Togoland] also drifted to the Gold Coast due to greater earnings [there]. Fortunately, this did not happen in our district [i.e., Amedzofe]. Only Catechist Ludwig Adzaklo, who was in charge of the seminary last year, caused great irritation in the administration of the seminary funds and was therefore dismissed by the superintendent in November [1918]. [25]

The foregoing account of Ludwig Adzaklo’s life concludes on a rather shocking note, which would have definitely dented his reputation among his contemporaries and soiled his record of achievements in the previous years. Nonetheless, one cannot help but hold that together with the fact that he combined in his young adult life such remarkable roles as Bible translator, educator, catechist, and social activist. Thus, the religious and educational histories of former German Togoland – present-day Togo and southeastern Ghana – would be incomplete without recognizing his contribution. His role as an Ewe Bible translator, for example, was essential for the eventual production of the *first* full Ewe Bible in 1914. Indeed, archival material (from the Bremen Mission and the BFBS) suggests that without Adzaklo, the translation of the Ewe Old Testament in Tübingen would not have been successful. These observations underscore John Ekem’s assertion that “Adzaklo deserves more recognition than has hitherto been extended to him.” [26] Consequently, detailed examination of relevant archival material has revealed that Adzaklo was more than a mere “language assistant” (*Sprachgehilfe*) to missionary Spieth, as existing literature tends to describe him. Rather, he was a co-translator of the Ewe Bible, working alongside Spieth. [27] Finally, given Adzaklo’s stay in Germany and the numerous public presentations he gave there, he can be considered a significant person in the field of colonial knowledge production and dissemination. [28]

Michael F. Wandusim

Notes:

1. See Alsheimer, Rainer. 2007. *Zwischen Sklaverei und christlicher Ethnogenese: Die Vorkoloniale Missionierung der Ewe in Westafrika (1847 - ca. 1890)*. Münster: Waxmann.
2. See StAB 7.1025 Fotos 0316.
3. The archival data on this issue conflicts on the exact amount.
4. The issue of Adzaklo’s allowance is reconstructed from his own letters and those of Spieth which can be found in the Staatsarchiv Bremen (StAB) 7. 1025 29/5 Eingeborene Mitarbeiter in Deutschland.
5. Cambridge University Library, GBR/0374/BFBS/BSA/E3/3/144/1, Spieth to Superintendent of the Translating and Editorial Department, April 18, 1909.
6. Ludwig Adzaklo, ‘Abschiedsrede des Sprachgehilfen Ludwig Adzaklo’, *Quartalblatt der NMG IV*, 1909, Bremen.

7. Cf. Stadtmuseum Tübingen. n.d. 'Missionsgehilfe in Tübingen: Ludwig Adzaklo'. Koloniale Orte in Tübingen. Accessed 7 November 2023. <https://koloniale-orte-tuebingen.de/index.html>.
8. See StAB 7. 1025 29/5, Adzaklo to Schreiber, Mein Besuch bei der Groß-Herzogin von Oldenburg, April 1907.
9. See Monatsblatt der Norddeutschen Missionsgesellschaft (NMG), 1909, pp. 88, 98, 104, 107–8.
10. CUL, GBR/0374/BFBS/BSA/E3/3/144/1, Schreiber to Secretary of the BFBS, 1 November 1910; NMG 1910, p. 118; NMG 1911, p. 27; Ekem 2011, p. 136.
11. Adzaklo 1909.
12. NMG 1910, p. 31.
13. Ludwig Adzaklo, 'Macht mobil gegen den Alkohol!', Monatsblatt der NMG 1913, pp. 93 – 94.
14. Adzaklo 1913, p. 93.
15. Adzaklo 1913, pp. 93 – 94.
16. Adzaklo 1913, p. 94.
17. Adzaklo 1913, p. 93
18. Adzaklo, p. 94.
19. Adzaklo, p. 94.
20. NMG 1912, p. 28; NMG 1913, p. 62; NMG 1914, p. 86.
21. NMG 1915, p. 41.
22. NMG 1916, p. 76.
23. NMG 1918, p. 53; NMG 1919, p. 36.
24. NMG 1919, p. 36.
25. NMG 1919, p. 51.
26. Ekem, John D. K. 2011. *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana): The Historical, Linguistic, and Theological Settings of the Ga, Twi, Mfantse, and Ewe Bibles*. History of Bible Translation 2. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, p. 131.
27. See Wandusim, Michael F. 2024. 'Unsung Heroes of Mission Bible Translation in Colonial West Africa: Ludwig Adzaklo of the Bremen Mission in German Togoland'. *Religions* 15 (3): 314. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030314>.
28. See Habermas, Rebekka, and Alexandra Przyrembel. 2013. 'Einleitung'. In *Von Käfern, Märkten Und Menschen: Kolonialismus Und Wissen*, edited by Rebekka Habermas and Alexandra Przyrembel, 9–24. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

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This biography, submitted on June 5, 2024, was researched and written by Michael F. Wandusim, a Reverend Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) and a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Center for Religion and Modernity of the University of Münster, Germany.

Bishop Stephen N. Ndlovu (1930-2000): Collaborative and Ecumenical Church Leadership after Liberation

By Luke B. Donner¹⁰

Early Life

Stephen Ndabambi Ndlovu was born in 1930 to Christian parents Ndabambi Ndlovu and Deredza Dube in Mazhabazha, Zimbabwe.¹¹ His father had been a cook for a western missionary from the Brethren in Christ Church (BICC)¹² named H.P. Steigerwald.¹³ Ndabambi and Deredza's wedding was the first Christian wedding in Mazhabazha.¹⁴ Both Ndabambi and Deredza were teachers in the local BICC primary school, and so they often hosted visiting evangelists and preachers. The couple had four girls and eight boys, the firstborn being Stephen.¹⁵ The children grew up playing games like *ingqobe* and *umacatshelana* and were trained in practicing Christian piety by their parents, including forms of devotion such as evening prayers and hymn singing.¹⁶

Ndlovu began his primary education at a local school in Mazhabazha in 1938.¹⁷ He eventually went on to study at another school in Gwatemba, before proceeding to Matopo Mission to study level four in 1944. There, he came under the influence of the BICC Bishop H.H. Brubaker, and Ndlovu "felt a real special touch of God."¹⁸ He was

¹⁰ Luke B. Donner, Dr. Robert, History of Missiology, 11 December 2023

¹¹ Some sources say 13 October 1930, while others say 12 June 1930. Cf. N.A., "Uzwile yini ukuthi...uNdlovu useyaqhuba indima eyaqalwa nguKumalo?" *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 86, November 1979,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1071&context=goodwords>, accessed 10 December 2023, 20; Barbara Nkala, "Bishop Stephen Ndabambi Ndlovu," *Celebrating the Vision: A Century of Sowing and Reaping*, Barbara Nkala ed., (Bulawayo: Brethren in Christ, 1998), p. 141.

¹² Unless otherwise stated, references to the BICC after 1973 in this article refers to the BICC (Zimbabwe), not its bodies in North America, Europe, or other African countries. Prior to 1973, the BICC in Zambia and Zimbabwe shared a single administration, an arrangement beginning in 1964 when the North American BICC body relinquished administrative oversight of African BICC churches. See Carlton Wittlinger, *The Quest for Piety and Obedience*, (Napanee, IN: Evangel Press, 1978), 461.

¹³ N.A., "Uzwile yini," 20.

¹⁴ Wendy Urban-Mead, *The Gender of Piety: Family, Faith, and Colonial Rule in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe*, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2015), 211-12.

¹⁵ Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 213.

¹⁶ Nkala, "Bishop Stephen," 141.

¹⁷ N.A., "Uzwile yini," 20.

¹⁸ Nkala, "Bishop Stephen," 141.

baptized by Brubaker, either in that year or the year following.¹⁹ He continued to study at Matopo Mission through level six, and received his Primary Teachers' Lower Certificate there in 1948.²⁰ It was during this time that Ndlovu met his future wife, Otilia Nkala. They were engaged on 20 April 1947, but postponed their marriage for several years.

Rebellion and Repentance

After graduating from the Matopo Mission school, Ndlovu first went on to serve as a teacher in a Christian primary school in a rural village, earning £5 a month.²¹ After some time in that position, Ndlovu left the BICC and spent roughly four years in rejection of the faith he received as a child. He intentionally disobeyed the BICC's strong discouragement of moving to cities by settling in Bulawayo.²² There, he engaged in various practices that the BICC rejected, including smoking cigarettes, and working as the athletics coordinator for the city of Bulawayo, which included facilitating sports like boxing and the gambling that accompanied them, both of which were not condoned by the BICC.²³

Despite making a comfortable living of £16 a month, Ndlovu seems to have increasingly felt unhappy about his alienation from the faith of his childhood.²⁴ Members of the BICC sought him out, and urged him to return to the church. While wrestling over his relationship to Christian faith, Ndlovu took a teaching job in Zvishamba in 1952.²⁵ A BICC evangelist there named Naka-Eva succeeded in prompting Ndlovu to begin preaching again. A BICC missionary named Anna Engle visited the region from South Africa, and met with Ndlovu. After this, Ndlovu felt overwhelmed with the desire to repent and have done with his non-BICC lifestyle. After praying for forgiveness, Ndlovu rode a bicycle to his parents' home in Mazhabazha and was reconciled to them. He continued to teach in Zvishamba, and sixteen of his students came to accept Christ and desired to be baptized as a result of his work. When the BICC missionary Arthur Climenhaga came to preach at the baptism service in 1952, he invited the audience to receive the Holy Spirit. Ndlovu chose to respond, and felt a change in himself.

Early Career

The next year, he married Otilia Nkala in 1953, and Ndlovu served as a teacher at

¹⁹ Nkala, "Bishop Stephen," 141; N.A., "Uzwile yini," 20.

²⁰ N.A., "Uzwile yini," 20.

²¹ Nkala, "Bishop Stephen," 141.

²² Nkala, "Bishop Stephen," 141.

²³ Nkala, "Bishop Stephen," 141; Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 214.

²⁴ Nkala, "Bishop Stephen," 141.

²⁵ Nkala, "Bishop Stephen," 142.

Filabusi.²⁶ Not long after, the new couple moved to Emaguswini because many of Ndlovu's family had been resettled there by the government. As this region was outside the influence of the BICC, Ndlovu and Nkala joined the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (FPCS), in which they served for five years as a teacher and preacher in Mbuma Mission.²⁷

After growing frustration with the strictures of the FPCS, the Ndlovus returned to the BICC, teaching at its Mtshabezi Mission.²⁸ Shortly afterwards, Stephen Ndlovu received his "Junior Certificate by correspondence in 1964."²⁹ During this time, several people, including the American missionary Fred Holland, told Ndlovu that he had a calling to ministry.³⁰ At the BICC general conference of 1969, Bishop Khumalo invited Ndlovu to serve as overseer of the Mtshabezi Mission.³¹ After time spent in agonizing prayer, and with significant influence from his supportive wife, Ndlovu accepted the call, which involved turning down a well-paying job as the overseer of a government school.³² Although he later shared that there were many financial challenges during this time of his life, he nonetheless found that all of his needs were met.³³

In the early 1970s, Ndlovu went to Messiah College in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania to pursue his bachelor of arts degree in religious studies.³⁴ This appears to have been suggested by church leadership in Zimbabwe, with the goal that Ndlovu could return and serve as the principal of the Ekuphileni Bible Institute (EBI), a Bible college that the BICC founded at Mtshabezi.³⁵ However, apparently some of the other teachers at the EBI were less enthusiastic about Ndlovu becoming principal, and so upon his return in 1975, Ndlovu simply resumed his position as overseer of Mtshabezi Mission.

Despite this lack of support at EBI, Ndlovu was named interim bishop while Bishop Khumalo went to study at Messiah College in 1976.³⁶ This was a time of widespread unrest and tension, because the *Chimurenga* (Zimbabwe's War of Liberation) was reaching its peak in the late 1970s.³⁷ Ndlovu was personally threatened

²⁶ N.A., "Uzwile yini," 20; Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 215.

²⁷ Nkala, "Bishop Stephen," 142.

²⁸ Nkala, "Bishop Stephen," 142; Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 215.

²⁹ Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 213.

³⁰ Nkala, "Bishop Stephen," 142-43.

³¹ Nkala, "Bishop Stephen," 143; Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 215.

³² Nkala, "Bishop Stephen," 143; Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 215-17.

³³ Nkala, "Bishop Stephen," 143.

³⁴ Nellie Mlotshwa and Ethel Bundy, "News," *Good Words / Amazwi Amahle*, No. 55, Aug. 1, 1975, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/goodwords/53/>, Accessed 16 November 2023, 3.

³⁵ Nkala, "Bishop Stephen," 143.

³⁶ Mlotshwa and Bundy, *Good Words / Amazwi Amahle*, No. 56, Sep. 1, 1976, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/goodwords/54/>, Accessed 16 November 2023, 1.

³⁷ Martin and Jonson, *Struggle*; Joseph Mtisi, M. Nyakudya, and T. Barnes, "War in Rhodesia, 1965-1980." In *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History from the Pre-Colonial Period to 2008*, ed.s Brian Raftopoulos and A. S. Mlambo, (Harare: Weaver Press, 2009) pp. 141-166.

by guerilla fighters, reportedly spending one night at gunpoint by ZIPRA³⁸ soldiers, and eventually being forced by ZIPRA to shut down the Mtshabezi mission in 1978.³⁹ That same year, the BICC (US) ordered the immediate furlough of all its North American missionaries, and Bishop Khumalo returned to complete his term as bishop.⁴⁰ There are reports of BICC churches and missions being robbed, attacked, or totally destroyed during this time.⁴¹

In these altered circumstances, Ndlovu finally received his position as principal of the EBI in 1978.⁴² During his time in this office, he facilitated a number of evangelistic outings for EBI's students and regularly served on a evangelistic radio program called "Amagugu Evangeli" (Gospel Treasures).⁴³ The next year, Ndlovu apparently served as pastor at BICC's Mpopoma church in Bulawayo, where he helped open a Christian reading room, organize a youth conference, and help set up two new churches (Phumula and Lobengula) near Bulawayo.⁴⁴ In November of 1979, Ndlovu was elected as the new bishop, just four months before the collapse of the Rhodesian Smith regime and the birth of the new nation of Zimbabwe.⁴⁵

³⁸ Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA).

³⁹ Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 223.

⁴⁰ Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 223; Mangisi Sibanda, "Izindaba Ezivela Ewofisini Ka Bishop," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 74, November 1978,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1060&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 5; Nellie Mlotshwa, "Izindaba Ezivela Ewofisini KaBishop," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 75, December 1978,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1061&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December, 2023, 3.

⁴¹ Nellie Mlotshwa, "Conscience not Pricked," and "Villagers Help Recover Stolen Property," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 96, November 1980,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1081&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 5-6.

⁴² Nellie Mlotshwa, "EBI Visits with Tennyson Hlabangana," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 74, November 1978,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1060&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 5.

⁴³ Mlotshwa, "EBI Visits," 5, 12.

⁴⁴ Nellie Mlotshwa, "Babizelwe Amasimu Amatsha Amakhulu," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 79, April 1979,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1064&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 11; Stephen N. Ndlovu, "The Role of Bookrooms in the Life of the Church," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 80, May 1979,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1065&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 7; Nellie Mlotshwa, "Youth Time," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 81, June 1979,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1066&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 4; Nellie Mlotshwa, "Lobengula Church Dedication," *Good Words / Amazwi Amahle*, No. 55, Aug. 1, 1975,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/goodwords/53/>, Accessed 16 November 2023, 5-7.

⁴⁵ Nellie Mlotshwa, "Business Session," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 86, November 1979,

Years as Bishop

Given the turbulence of the period, Ndlovu's career as bishop was marked by dealing with various crises. Almost immediately, he was forced to address the BICC's significant financial problems. It appears that pastors and staff at BICC institutions in Zimbabwe had not kept careful note of their expenditures and income, resulting in the discovery in 1981 that the BICC was in \$30,000 of debt.⁴⁶ Ndlovu essentially slashed the budget across the board by 20% and eventually brought over an American BICC member to serve as the treasurer.⁴⁷ It seems as though the financial situation mostly on track for recovery by the end of 1981, due in no small part due to Ndlovu's efforts, although another mention of financial uncertainty appears once more in 1983.⁴⁸

Additionally, Ndlovu was responsible for resurrecting the BICC infrastructure and institutions that had been damaged or destroyed during the *Chimurenga*. Many of the BICC mission hospitals and schools had been looted during the war, and Ndlovu patiently worked to recover stolen property and to raise funds for repairs and replacements. He succeeded in convincing the US Embassy in Harare, the World Council of Churches (WCC), and the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to all contribute significantly to various reparation projects.⁴⁹ By the Fall of 1983, all of the properties damaged in the war were finally repaired.⁵⁰ Afterwards, he went on to open an additional clinic, and he worked to expand and improve the BICC's secondary

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1071&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 7.

⁴⁶ N.A., "Church Leaders Praise the Board," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 103, April 1981, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1088&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 5.

⁴⁷ N.A., "Church leaders," 5; Ndimande, "News," No. 122, November 1982, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1106&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 6.

⁴⁸ Mbiki, "Umhlangano Wabakhokheli," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 110, November 1981, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1095&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 10; S.S. Ndimande, "Financial Report," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 125, February 1983, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1109&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 2-3.

⁴⁹ Stephen N. Ndlovu, "Bishop's Report on Emergency Trip to Geneva," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 98, November 1980, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1083&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 11.

⁵⁰ Alfred Zulu, "Committee of Trustees," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 133, October 1983, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1117&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 9.

schools.⁵¹

Besides these efforts to reestablish the BICC institutionally, Ndlovu also facilitated the expansion of the denomination. Following the direction of his predecessor and mentor, Bishop P. Khumalo, Ndlovu promoted Donald McGavran's church growth methods.⁵² This included hosting seminars on evangelization, featuring articles on the principles of church growth in the BICC's periodical *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, as well as sending out and supporting BICC evangelists.⁵³ Because of these efforts, the number of communicants in the BICC in Zimbabwe rose from 7,694 in 1985 to over 10,000 in 1987.⁵⁴ Additionally, the BICC began sending its own missionaries to London and Malawi, as well as to the maShona and baTonga in other regions of Zimbabwe.⁵⁵

Although the BICC evangelists under Ndlovu practiced church growth in many ways that seem to generically apply McGavran's teachings, they made some of their own alterations. Primarily, in *Amazwi Amahle* articles describing members' evangelization, BICC workers consistently report concern for the material conditions

⁵¹ Nellie Mlotshwa, "Izindaba Ezivela Ewofisini KaBiahop," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 94, July 1980,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1079&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 10; S.S. Ndimande, "To All Ex-Matopian Students," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 150, May 1985,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1133&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 8.

⁵² A Church Growth Committee seems to have come into being under Bishop Khumalo, and Stephen Ndlovu served on it, cf. Nellie Mlotshwa, "Church Growth Committee," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 79, April 1979,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1064&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 9.

⁵³ Cf. J.D. Moyo, "The Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 136, January-February 1984,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1120&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 3; S. N. Ndlovu, "Ukubutha ibandla," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 97, October 1980,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1082&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 9.

⁵⁴ Stephen N. Ndlovu, "From the Bishop's Desk," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 178, November 1987,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1161&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 11.

⁵⁵ Kirk Q. Moyo, "Church Growth Report for 1985," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 158, January 1986,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1141&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 10-11; E. Moyo, "Brethren in Christ International Fellowship," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 95, August 1980, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1080&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 8.

of those whom they evangelize.⁵⁶ Articles in *Amazwi Amahle* describe various efforts to serve the people's practical needs, rather than just trying to save souls or plant and enlarge congregations.⁵⁷ Secondly, there were some efforts to welcome non-amaNdebele people into majority-amaNdebele congregations, especially in Bulawayo and Harare.⁵⁸ These attempts go against McGavran's notion that ethnic homogeneity in congregations is good for church growth.⁵⁹

Another factor in the growth of the BICC at this time was the significant contribution of women and Ndlovu's support for them. While there is no mention of women's ordination in the sources, reports on the BICC general conference of 1982 indicate that Ndlovu spearheaded the change in the BICC's bylaws, so that women could become deacons.⁶⁰ He specifically cited the fact that many of the rural BICC congregations do not have enough men, and so women ought to be allowed to serve as needed. In fact, baptismal records during this time indicate that the number of women being baptized often outnumbered men.⁶¹

Besides simply being numerically greater, women also played an important role in the BICC during Ndlovu's time as bishop. Although they seem to have been barred from formal ordination, many women served as evangelists, preaching and founding churches away from Bulawayo. One of the most prominent of these is Maria Tshuma, who started a number of congregations among the maShona in Harare and Binga province.⁶² Ndlovu explicitly supported Tshuma's work, and collaborated with her to

⁵⁶ Cf. Kirk Q. Moyo, "Thinking about Church Growth," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 139, May 1984, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1122&context=goodwords>, Accessed 11 December 2023, 9.

⁵⁷ Cf. R. Mthombeni, "Gwaai District Pumula Mission-Tsholotsho," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 162, May 1986, 2.

⁵⁸ Kirk Q. Moyo, "Church Growth Team at Work," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 170, February 1987, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1153&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 2-3.

⁵⁹ Cf. Wagner, Peter. *Our kind of people: the ethical dimensions of church growth in America*, Atlanta, GA: J. Knox Press, 1979.

⁶⁰ Fred Zulu, "Conference Decisions," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 120, September 1982, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1104&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 11.

⁶¹ Cf. Raphael Mthombeni, "Church News from Gwaai District Kana 1," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 149, April 1985, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1132&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 8-9.

⁶² S.S. Ndimande, "News," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 127, April 1983, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1111&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 7; A.V. Masiye, "Dedication that Speaks for Itself," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 164, July 1986, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1147&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 4-5.

promote evangelization.⁶³ Additionally, women organized conferences for themselves often, and invited Ndlovu to speak at several of them, in which he praised women for their service, devotion, and faith.⁶⁴ The church periodical features several articles that have a distinctly pro-women tone, arguing against wife-beating and flipping the narrative of the Fall of humanity as woman's fault to argue that men are failing in their responsibilities and should support women better.⁶⁵ Thus, the BICC under Ndlovu's leadership featured an expansion in women's membership and opportunities for contribution.

In addition to his promotion of evangelization, Ndlovu also worked to facilitate development for BICC communities and for Zimbabwe generally. He helped connect BICC students to the MCC student exchange program so that Zimbabwean young people could study in the US in order to return and help build up Zimbabwe.⁶⁶ He actively recruited teachers and nurses from the BICC in the US, and met with Anabaptist leaders in Central America to learn how they were engaging communities there.⁶⁷ Reports on Ndlovu's sermons feature calls for his hearers to become better citizens, denunciations of corruption, and praise for the national government.⁶⁸ In these ways, and in his articulation that Western missionaries could come to Zimbabwe only if they were willing to serve (rather than lead), Ndlovu's term as bishop has a clearly pro-Zimbabwean tone.⁶⁹

It is unclear exactly how this tone related to Ndlovu's awareness of the anti-amaNdebele violence of 1980-87 known as the *Gukurahundi*. This violence was to some degree state-sponsored, as the Fifth Brigade went throughout rural Matabeleland,

⁶³ Elias Moyo, "Brethren in Christ Fellowship News (UK)," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 168, December 1986,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1151&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 11.

⁶⁴ Mbiki, "Umhlangano Wabomama WeKhisimusi eMpopoma," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 147, February 1985,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1130&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 4.

⁶⁵ Ian Dumakude, "Woman and Jesus," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 125, February 1938, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1109&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 7.

⁶⁶ Stephen N. Ndlovu, "News from the Bishop's Desk," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 126, March 1983,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1110&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 8.

⁶⁷ N.a. "Bishop's Tour to Overseas," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 132, September 1983, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1116&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 9.

⁶⁸ Fred Zulu, "City Status Commemorated," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 123, December 1982,

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1107&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 10.

⁶⁹ Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 225.

wantonly perpetrating violence against amaNdebele people, due to concerns that the largely amaNdebele-supported political party ZAPU⁷⁰ would attempt to overthrow Mugabe's maShona-majority party, ZANU.⁷¹ Reading Ndlovu and others' words in *Amazwi Amahle*, one is hard-pressed to conclude that the pronationalist sentiments of the authors are inauthentic. At the same time, it seems reasonable to conclude that some of the promotion of good citizenship and praise of the national government may have been in part to allay government concerns of an insurrectionist amaNdebele movement.

What is clear is that Ndlovu worked to mitigate the violence of the *Gukurahundi*. He met with the heads of the denominations in Zimbabwe in Harare on 18 September 1981 in which he appealed to them for help to pressure the government to stop the violence.⁷² Apparently, he and the other leaders of denominations met with Mugabe in 1982 with the same goal.⁷³ One member of the BICC later stated that the number of killings decreased (although the number of beatings increased) as a result of these meetings.⁷⁴ Ndlovu met with the heads of Zimbabwean denominations again in 1983, a meeting which Ndlovu believed helped to precipitate the Unity Accord of 1987, joining ZAPU and ZANU and ending the *Gukurahundi*.⁷⁵

As all of these efforts make clear, Ndlovu was highly collaborative and ecumenical. During his time in office, he was a member of the Ministers' Fraternal Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Christian Council, and the Heads of Denominations Continuation Committee.⁷⁶ He was vice-president of the Mennonite World Conference as well as the chairman of the Africa Mennonite Brethren In Christ in 1981.⁷⁷ He also served as president of the All Africa Mennonite And Brethren In Christ Churches in 1983.⁷⁸ He collaborated closely with the MCC, participated in

⁷⁰ Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU).

⁷¹ Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). Sara Rich Dorman, *Understanding Zimbabwe: From Liberation to Authoritarianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 1–11.

⁷² S.S. Ndimande, "News," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 109, October 1981, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1094&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 7; Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 226.

⁷³ S.S. Ndimande, "News," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 117, June 1982, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1101&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 8; Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 227.

⁷⁴ Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 227.

⁷⁵ S.S. Ndimande, "News," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 128, May 1983, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1112&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 6; Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 227.

⁷⁶ Doris Dube, "Changes at Conference: September 1989," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 201, December 1989, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1183&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 6–7.

⁷⁷ S.S. Ndimande, "News," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 108, Sept. 1981, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1093&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 11; N.a. "Bishop's Tour," 9.

⁷⁸ Ndimande, "News," No. 108, Sept. 1981, 11; N.a. "Bishop's Tour," 9.

WCC talks in Geneva, and often traveled to Europe, and North and South America to meet with other Christian leaders.⁷⁹ In Zimbabwe, he collaborated with pastors of different denominations on many occasions, emphasizing the unity of the Church often in his messages.⁸⁰

Despite these contributions and achievements, Ndlovu was not without critics. From outside the BICC, Ndlovu faced extreme animosity from squatters who moved onto the BICC farmland at Wanezi when he tried to rehabilitate the BICC farm there (and eventually succeeded).⁸¹ As one person stated while reflecting on Ndlovu's work as bishop, "There were times when a cry for Ndlovu's head curdled our blood as was the case in dealing with squatters at Wanezi Mission farm."⁸² Additionally, the new Zimbabwean government instituted new rules concerning private education, which required that Ndlovu work with people who were at times quite opposed to the expectations and goals of Christian living and formation.⁸³

Within the BICC itself, it seems that there was also resistance to Ndlovu, although there was apparently widespread respect. In 1982, for example, several of the overseers did not come to meet with Ndlovu at the appointed time, and there is mention in *Amazwi Amahle* of some laity siding with the bishop's executive board and others with the overseers.⁸⁴ There is no discussion, however, as to the root of that division. There were also criticisms of Ndlovu's multiple attempts to change the administrative structure of the BICC (Zimbabwe), and mention of tensions and anxiety at various general conferences.⁸⁵ And so, in 1989, the BICC elected Martin Senda as the next bishop as Ndlovu completed his second term in office.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ N.a. "Bishop's Tour," 9; Ndlovu, "Bishop's Report on Emergency Trip," 11.

⁸⁰ Cf. S.S. Ndimande, "Umkhosi wesakhiwo senkulumane," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 152, July 1985, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1135&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 10.

⁸¹ S.S. Ndimande, "News," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 110, November 1981, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1095&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 8; Ndlovu, "News," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 126, March 1983, 8.

⁸² Dube, "Changes," 7.

⁸³ Dube, "Changes," 6-7.

⁸⁴ S.S. Ndimande, "News," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 112, January 1982, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1097&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 8; Msunduzwa Sibanda, "Okhulisa ibandla nguJesus," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 113, February 1982, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1098&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 12.

⁸⁵ Zulu, "Conference Decisions," 11-12; Fred Zulu, "The Prayer that Changed the Conference," *Amazwi Amahle / Good Words*, No. 121, October 1982, <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1105&context=goodwords>, Accessed 10 December 2023, 2-3.

⁸⁶ Dube, "Changes," 6-7.

Later Life

After his years as bishop, Ndlovu became a professor at the Theological College of Zimbabwe in Bulawayo.⁸⁷ Additionally, he served as a senior *umfundisi* (pastor) at Mpopoma BICC church in Bulawayo. With his wife, he had five children (one girl and four boys), and throughout his life, he helped support his younger siblings, particularly after their parents' death.⁸⁸ He lived on a homestead not far from Bulawayo where he raised chickens, selling the meat and eggs in town.⁸⁹ He continued his work from 1990 until his death from cancer in 2000.⁹⁰

Luke B. Donner

This biography, received in 2024, was written by Luke B. Donner, a PhD student at Boston University at the Center for Global Christianity and Mission (<https://www.bu.edu/cgcm/>) as part of the course History of Missiology taught by Prof. Dana Robert (11 December 2023).

⁸⁷ Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 231.

⁸⁸ N.A., "Uzwire yini," 20; Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 213.

⁸⁹ Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 203-4.

⁹⁰ Urban-Mead, *Gender*, 231.

Sengu Mbongu Rebecca (ca. 1920-1985) : Finding Freedom at the Crossroads

by Ba-Dia-Ngungu Mundedi Bercie

Sengu Mbongu Rebecca (a name the Pende pronounced "Lebeka"), was a woman at the crossroads of traditional religion and Christianity. As a servant of God and others, she sowed the seeds of emancipation for Mennonite women in Kasai Occidental. Sengu voluntarily stepped out of her culture, which did not send girls to school, but rather treated them as objects. She peacefully and politely embraced Christianity without outside pressure. After she was liberated from the grip of her ancestors, which was based on the inequality of the sexes, Sengu influenced other women to awaken spiritually and intellectually for the growth of the Church of Nyanga, the current headquarters of the Nyanga ecclesiastical district.

Birth and family life

Sengu Mbongu Lebeka was born around 1920. Her father, Mbongu, and mother, Ngombo Pulu, came from the village of Kipoko, Bapende sector, Tshikapa territory, Kasai province, Democratic Republic of Congo. Sengu was the eldest of four children. The second child, who was the only boy, tragically died at an early age. There were only three girls left in the family. Back then, women had no place in society. They spent most of their time in the kitchen and in the fields.

In those days, a boy was considered his father's right-hand man. Boys were seen as more useful than women in society, especially in building houses. Therefore, Sengu's father decided to marry a second wife in the hope of having boys. Sengu was forced to live in a polygamous family. Unfortunately for her father, this second wife was sterile.

Sengu grew up in an environment where her father's influence on her upbringing was minimal. Her father lacked affection and care for his daughters. He didn't send them to school because he didn't expect anything special from them. Indeed, in those days there was discrimination in schooling. Children from noble families were exempt from modern schooling, because it was thought that after graduation, they would be sold into the service of the whites to become slaves. People preferred to send children from slave or captive families, since they would not be able to rule according to the Pende custom of Western Kasai at the time.

Sengu had a very hard time with this erroneous belief that girls should be relegated to a lower status and that only children from captive families should be sent to school. Slowly and steadily, she freed herself from her father's authority and single-handedly carved out a place for herself in a different educational environment. As a visionary, she gave herself body and soul to the modern school system, much to the disdain of the other members of her community.

Sengu's conversion and emancipation

Faced with her father's negligence and irresponsibility, Sengu was not discouraged. On the contrary, all the frustrations accumulated since her youth motivated her to forge ahead. "Opportunity makes the thief," as the saying goes. In this case, it was by hearing the gospel preached by her cousin that she found the answer to the worries and stresses of her early years.

Mazemba Phulu, Sengu's first cousin, was an early catechist. After finishing Bible school in Ndjoko Punda, he returned to become a local evangelist. He preached God's love to everyone, regardless of gender. For Mazemba, men and women were equal before God. They were entitled to the same benefits.

Sengu was surprised to hear this message that God was the Father who loved everyone.

She decided to leave her father's home, where she had never experienced the love of a biological father, to live in an environment where the Father's love was unlimited.

In 1922, she arrived at the Nyanga mission for the first time. Without further ado, she enrolled in the mission school where God the Father was love. She entered the girls' residence, called a "convent" in those days, where the girls stayed while they studied. At the convent, literacy was a golden feature of the curriculum. The girls were supervised by missionary women, including Agnes Enns, nicknamed Mama Luhunya. Among other things, they learned Christian values, housework and cooking. They were prepared for marriage.

For Sengu, becoming a woman who could read, write and calculate was already the beginning of emancipation. Her conversion to Christianity was part of a peaceful revolt. It expressed her refusal to observe the tradition whereby a child from a noble family could not go and live alongside the whites, for fear of going astray and losing her royal inheritance. But she was also rebelling against the idea that a woman had no value in society. On December 25, 1932, she was baptized with the name Rebecca, which was modified to Lebeka in Pende circles.

Sengu's marriage

That same year, 1932, Sengu found a husband by the name of Mukuama Mbuya Josué. Mukuama was from the same village as Sengu and had come to Nyanga two years after she had, in 1924. According to the thinking at the time, both families had had the opportunity to discover each other's potential. And since they were both mission school students, the missionaries welcomed this union as well.

Sengu and Mukuama were married on September 3, 1932. From their marital union, the Lord was gracious to them and gave them eleven children: nine boys and two girls. Their first daughter was called Ndjindji, which is why Sengu was sometimes referred to as "kina Ndjindji" (Ndjindji's mother).

After being trained in carpentry by the Mennonite missionaries, Mukuama became a skilled carpenter who mentored others. Almost all the houses in Nyanga were roofed by him. After their marriage, Sengu and her husband settled in their village of Kipoko, 24 km from the Nyanga mission, until 1943. In 1944, the couple moved to

Kindu in eastern Congo. Mukuama was called by another Protestant mission as a carpenter to help build a station, and Sengu looked after the moral and spiritual guidance of the women. After a short stay in Kipoko from 1948 to 1950, the couple returned to Nyanga in 1950 and spent the rest of their lives there.

Sengu, comforter of the afflicted

As if the frustrations of her youth weren't enough, Sengu became a mourner for her children and for countless other victims outside her family. During her lifetime, misfortune kept knocking at her door. While they were in Kindu, she lost two boys, Kiseka and Manguanda, to smallpox within two weeks, and a third the following year. On their return to Nyanga, a fourth boy, Kipoko Freddy, died while a pupil in the Collège de Nyanga's fourth humanities class in 1968.

Accustomed to tears, Sengu couldn't let a grieving family pass without showing sympathy. She had a reputation as a singer, entertainer and comforter of the afflicted. She spent all her time praying, exhorting the afflicted with biblical words, and contributing materially to any unfortunate situation.

Sengu believed in the resurrection of the dead. Her faith was not shaken by these events. She kept repeating the verse from Psalm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," which translates into Kipende as "*Yehowa Nzambi udi mubambi wami ngushiko nu kima ndaka.*" This has remained a family verse. Even her great-grandsons and great-granddaughters still have it on their lips whenever an unfortunate situation arises.

Sengu and her husband were united in their desire to see their children go to school. Thanks to their work in the fields, their home was never short of food, which encouraged the children to attend school without any excuses. All her children went to school, and some went on to gainful employment. This is the case, for example, of her second son Mbuya, who studied at the *École des moniteurs* (teachers training institute) in Nyanga. He later became principal of many CMCo schools.

Sengu, protector and mother of orphans

As an adult, Sengu adopted the tough methods she had experienced in her father's home, but transformed them with hospitality and charity. She was an extraordinary gift-giver. Her crops were not sold or bartered but given as gifts to the afflicted. She welcomed people from all walks of life, without discrimination.

Because of her proven social skills and, above all, her concern for children, Sengu was known in the region as *Kasashiye*, which literally translates as "rearer of orphans." In addition to her biological children, she gathered together orphans and vulnerable children from both her husband's and her own sides of the family, and saw to their education. For example, Sengu looked after her niece (her sister's eldest daughter), whose little brother was always beating her up. She decided to bring her from the village to the Nyanga mission and was responsible for her schooling.

I too was adopted by Sengu at the age of seven months after the death of my mother, who was the wife of Sengu's son Mundedi André. Generally speaking, our

matriarchal society does not accept that a motherless child be adopted by the husband's family. But amazingly, Sengu was able to snatch me out of the hands of my maternal aunts and uncles, thanks to the gift God had given her. Until a later age, I didn't know that she was my adoptive mother, because I enjoyed the same living conditions and treatment as her biological children. And even when I learned that my biological mother had already passed away, nothing could make me call her an adoptive mother. It was only towards the end of her life that I was informed that she was my grandmother.

Sengu's Christian influence was pervasive throughout her family and the Mennonite community in and around Nyanga. Every evening, Sengu initiated a family prayer time. She taught her children religious hymns and Bible meditations. Her example influenced almost all her children to serve God in one way or another, for example as church elders, pastors and choir members. In my case, it awakened my vocation to serve God full-time during a period when very few Congolese Mennonite women were undertaking theological and pastoral studies.

In Nyanga, Sengu guided the Mennonite women in their spirituality by organizing meetings where the Word of God was given pride of place. She was one of the "Bible women" (as they were called by the missionaries) who carried out door-to-door evangelism. When these women visited a family, they evangelized the entire family. She also mobilized Mennonite mothers to accompany afflicted families with consolation and material assistance. Today, these practices are widespread within the women's federations of the 27th CMCo. This tradition of assistance, initiated by the women, has even been extended to birth, baptism and marriage ceremonies, and has now been adopted by all members of the community.

Sengu was an early advocate of higher intellectual education for girls. She was one of the visionary women behind the creation of the Lycée Miodi in Nyanga, which trained girls in tailoring and dressmaking. This school, founded in 1973, was the first of its kind within the CMCo. The school recruited girls from the 27th CMCo and 4th CEFMC⁹¹ in the provinces of Kasai Occidental, Bandundu and the city-province of Kinshasa. Sengu played a key role in encouraging mothers to send their daughters to this school.

Sengu in medical service

Sengu was a midwife at the Nyanga hospital maternity department.⁹² She trained as a midwife and graduated proudly in 1958 with a midwife's certificate. This event was celebrated with much pomp and ceremony, as Sengu Rebecca and Kake Elisabeth were among the first two black women in the Mennonite area, and especially in Nyanga, to

⁹¹ Communauté des Églises des Frères mennonites au Congo (Community of Mennonite Brethren churches in the Congo).

⁹² *Annuaire de l'Église mennonite du Congo (EMC) de 1961 à 1969*, p. 8.

obtain such a document attesting to training given and monitored by whites.⁹³ This shattered the myth that a woman could not study or take on responsibilities in Pende society.

As a midwife, Sengu's hospitality became even more outstanding, as she received without distinction people from all walks of life who came to await delivery or who came to the dispensary for medical care. She provided them with her own produce from her fields. Mukuama Jadot, her second youngest son, recalls a striking incident:

One day, a woman in labor showed up at the maternity ward during the white director's hours. Curiously, the newborn baby poking its head out was an albino. The director of operations was afraid to deliver the child and she shouted for Sengu's help. Sengu promptly ran into the delivery room and found the director trembling with fear, not daring to approach. Sengu took charge of the delivery, saving the lives of both mother and child, who had been born albino. There were cries of joy, amazement, and spreading the word. In a word, Sengu's exploits.⁹⁴

When Sengu worked at the Nyanga maternity ward, she put her moral, intellectual and social skills to the test. She was always punctual in her service to others, helpful, cooperative, humble and honest. Indeed, during her time at the maternity hospital, she was often late arriving at the family home because she had to monitor the women in labor. Even if a birth took place outside her active working hours, she would wait until the woman gave birth.

Sengu refused to let her husband manage the money she received at the maternity ward. On several occasions, questions about the management of these finances and Sengu's late arrival home led to arguments between Sengu and her husband.⁹⁵ On the other hand, because of her qualities, she was much admired and loved by her expatriate missionary partners, who gave her many gifts, including a well-built house made of durable materials, where she lived until her death.

Sengu in service to the church

A fervent and zealous Christian, Sengu was a lifelong servant of the Lord. She had her hands full, serving sometimes as a choir member, sometimes as a discussion leader on topics dealing with life in the Christian home. She tackled marital problems, and preaching was also one of her tasks. She exhorted mothers with themes like "Arise, be

⁹³ The date of her accreditation as a midwife by a training course provided by the Belgian colonial state is given in Elda Hiebert, "Sengu Rebecca," *The ALMM Messenger* 41 no. 1 (Spring 1973): 18-19.

⁹⁴ Mukuama Jadot, second youngest son of Sengu Rebecca, aged 68, interviewed by Mundedi Bercie on June 22, 2023 in Tshikapa.

⁹⁵ Mbuya Zachée, Sengu's second son, interviewed by Mundedi Bercie on May 29, 2023 in Nyanga.

enlightened" from Isaiah 60:1. This theme was the mainstay of her numerous sermons during meetings with women at all levels. Because of her good works, she was elected president of women in the Nyanga district at the EMC general conference held in Charlesville (Djoko Punda) in December 1967, despite her absence due to the death of her son's wife.

Sengu also served as president of all the CMZa (Communauté Mennonite au Zaïre, now CMCo) mothers. It was in this capacity that she participated with other community leaders in an evangelization tour that was organized throughout all the districts. The delegation included Kabangy Moïse, Bukungu Mishumbu François, Levi Keidel and herself.⁹⁶

Sengu was instrumental in awakening the consciousness of women in Nyanga and other CMCo districts. At assemblies, she would speak alongside the men and give her views on major Christian issues. For example, at a women's conference in Mukedi in 1963, she and other women "implored the men to give the women their place in the church and in the home."⁹⁷

Even at this early date, Sengu foreshadowed the emancipation of Congolese Mennonite women. She was a decisive and rigorous woman who asserted herself and loved discipline. In this she differed from other women of her time, who could only say yes, even if the thing wasn't right. Because of her courage, many men liked her and said she was like a man. And through her, many women converted and became good wives, educators and collaborators with their husbands, who didn't complain about their wives' behavior.

Sengu, a woman of healthy, non-conflictual relationships

A good counselor to couples in conflict, Sengu accompanied many couples in achieving their family goals. She had a perhaps innate ability to resolve conflicts by peaceful means, and she nurtured her relationships by practicing material aid when necessary. However, where correction was needed, she did so by combining love with rigor.

One day, Sengu's husband was arguing with his neighbor about who owned a particular hen, almost to the point of a fistfight. When Sengu arrived, she calmed her husband and the neighbor down and proposed a solution, saying, "The hens are loose. Let's observe in the evening which house she'll go to, and we'll find out who the owner is." That evening, the hen went to Sengu and her husband, and that was the end of the dispute. Sengu had reconciled the two families through prayer and wisdom.

Sengu Lebeke's final days on earth

Sengu retired as a midwife in 1977. Both retired, Sengu and her husband continued to work in the fields. Despite their advanced age, their granary was not short of

⁹⁶ Rapport du comité de gestion de l'AIMM, April 1974, p. 2.

⁹⁷ Gladys Buller, "We had to go forward," *AIMM Messenger* (Jan-Mar 1963): p. 4.

provisions. With their fishponds and a few fruit trees in their plot, they had a source of income until the onset of Sengu's illness.

Sengu ended her earthly sojourn on February 2, 1985, stricken by a heart attack after a long and painful illness. Throughout her ordeal, she kept asking God to come and take her instead of letting her suffer like this.

Sengu did well in the Lord's field. She led many to conversion, and above all she urged mothers to awaken and be enlightened. In light of her activism in Christ, Sengu is still alive. Her name remains immortal in the annals of Anabaptist-Mennonite Christian history, where she was a fighter for the Lord until her last breath.

Ba-Dia-Ngungu Mundedi Bercie

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Kibundji Kizembe Pierre, former director of Nyanga primary school. Interview by Mundedi Bercie on May 30, 2023 in Nyanga.

Malenga Kombe, Nyanga's current district chief. Interviewed by Mundedi Bercie on May 30, 2023 in Nyanga.

Mbuya Zachée, Sengu's second son. Interviewed by Mundedi Bercie on May 29, 2023 in Nyanga.

Mukuama Jadot, Sengu's second youngest son. Interviewed by Mundedi Bercie on June 22, 2023 in Tshikapa.

Ndeketa Makuanga, former president of women in Nyanga. Interviewed by Mundedi Bercie on June 26, 2023 in Tshikapa.

Rapport du comité de gestion de l'AIMM, April 1974. Personal copy of Kholoma Esther (native of Nyanga already deceased) found in her family home by Katunda Marie Louise. Accessed by the author in Tshikapa on June 24, 2023.

Tumba Marie Louise, CMCo pastor from Nyanga. Interviewed by Mundedi Bercie on June 22, 2023 in Tshikapa.

Tuseku Suzanne, former president of the Kalonda district women. Interviewed by Mundedi Bercie on May 22, 2023 in Kalonda.

This article is the product of research by Ba-Dia-Ngungu Mundedi Bercie, director of CMCo's Kalonda Bible Institute from 2016 to the present, and adopted daughter of Sengu Rebecca. She worked under the supervision of Dr. Anicka Fast and Dr. Michele Sigg as part of the Congolese Mennonite Biography book project (March 2023).

Photos:



Sengu Rebecca, fifth from left, Bible in hand, with other newly elected women in Nyanga in the 1950s (the 1950s date comes from the inscription on the back of the photo). Photo used as illustration in a 1963 AIMM article detailing the work of the Bible women of Nyanga. Source: AIMM Records, Series 6 (audiovisual materials), Box 160 (Congo at Nyanga photos), Dossier: Nyanga 1950s-1970s.

Additional photos in the next article “Finding hidden faces: An exciting day in the AIMM archives.”

New Currents in Research: “Finding hidden faces: An exciting day in the AIMM archives”

By Anicka Fast⁹⁸
23 June 2023

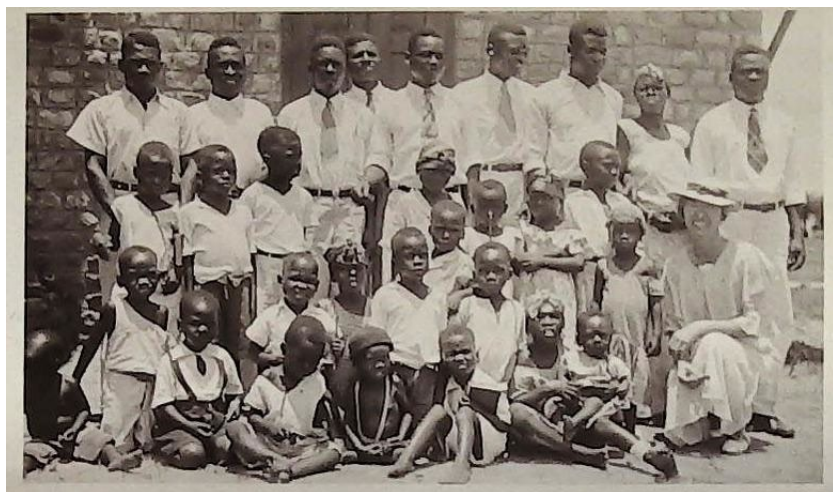
During a busy two-week trip to the United States, crammed full of meetings and visits, I had managed to reserve a day and a half for some time in the MC USA archives in Elkhart, Indiana. I planned to consult the [records of Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission](#) (AIMM)’s work in Congo. I was familiar with this collection, which contains 139 linear feet of materials created between 1905 and the early 2000s, from my dissertation research. Between 2016 and 2020, I had spent days frantically scanning documents on four separate occasions. I had scanned more than what was relevant only to my own research, hoping that the scans would one day be useful for Congolese Mennonite historians, and indeed I have had opportunities to share those scans with researchers in Congo.

This visit, however, was different. This time, I was coming to look for photos of seven Congolese Mennonite men and women whose biographies will be featured along with nine others in an upcoming book to be published in Langham’s Global Perspectives Series. These seven had been members, during their life, of the Mennonite Church of Congo ([Communauté mennonite au Congo](#) or CMCo) or of the Evangelical Mennonite Community ([Communauté évangélique mennonite](#), CEM) – two church communities that were closely associated with the work of the Congo Inland Mission, founded in 1911 and later renamed as the [Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission](#). Participants in a history-writing workshop in March 2023⁹⁹ were now busy researching and writing their biographies, and as one of the course instructors, I had promised to look for photos and perhaps other archival materials to assist in their research. The workshop has a WhatsApp group in which participants actively encourage and spur each other on in their research, sharing photos of their interviews in progress, asking questions about transcription conventions, reminding each other of upcoming deadlines, and sharing personal challenges and prayer requests. As I settled down with my laptop and scanner at one of the large tables in the quiet archives, I sent a note to the group telling them that I was in the archives and asking for any additional requests. Several responded

⁹⁸ Dr. Anicka Fast is a Specialist in church history and missiology for francophone Africa with Mennonite Mission Network, a Visiting Researcher at Boston University Center for Global Christianity and Mission and a Research Fellow at the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism at Goshen College. She is on the DACB International Editorial Board.

⁹⁹ Charly Ntumba Malembe, “Church History Writing Workshop for Congolese Mennonites March 20-24, 2023 - Centre Universitaire de Missiologie, Kinshasa, DR Congo. A Personal Report.,” *Journal of African Christian Biography* 8, no. 2 (April 2023): 60–61; Charlie Malembe, “Discovering My Spiritual Ancestors,” *Anabaptist World*, June 2, 2023, <https://anabaptistworld.org/discovering-my-spiritual-ancestors/>.

immediately, wondering about the names of AIMM missionaries who had worked on a particular station, or requesting me to look for correspondence from a particular Bible school director. I began my search for the photos by narrowing down the locations where each of the biographical subjects had lived. I asked and received additional information about approximate birthdates, names of spouses, and names of AIMM missionaries with whom they had closely associated, to help me in my task. I decided to begin with Djoko David, a Pende man from Mukedi, born around 1895. I knew that he had been among the first Kipende-speaking believers on the Mukedi mission station, and that he had welcomed and taught Kipende to a Luba evangelist, Nsongamadi, in 1920.¹⁰⁰ I selected a box from about half a dozen contained in the [Audiovisual records series](#), found a scrapbook donated to the archives by a long-term AIMM missionary who had been among the first to work at Mukedi in the 1920s, and began to browse through the photos pasted onto heavy cardboard pages. Many were unlabeled. Others contained information about only a subset of the people on the photo – often, unfortunately, only the white people. Finding no labeled photo of Djoko David, I started scanning and saving a few photos of groups in which it seemed he might be



included. But this became laborious and I began to be anxious that I would get bogged down in 1920s Mukedi photos and never get to the other six people whose photos I hoped to find. However, after a couple of hours, I finally found a photo with a label that included Djoko David's name. There he was, third from the left in the back row of a large group!

Then after another half hour, I found a family photo of Djoko with his wife and children from the 1930s! It was only about 2x3 inches, but it was clearly the same

¹⁰⁰ Fast, Anicka, "Becoming Global Mennonites: The Politics of Catholicity and Memory in a Missionary Encounter in Belgian Congo, 1905-1939" (PhD. diss., Boston University, 2020), 373–74.



person.

Djoko's wife's and children's names were not labeled, although I knew from the author of Djoko's biography, Mihala Donatien, that Djoko had married Kwangu Rebecca in 1929. I quickly shared the photo in the WhatsApp group, and Mihala responded with excitement and thanks. And that was the end of my first half-day of searching. On the second day, I returned with some trepidation, hoping that I would be able to find photos of the remaining subjects more efficiently. The day was a long slog through several more boxes, but I did get lucky. It's hard to describe the feeling of turning over page after page of photos and then unexpectedly having a name catch my eye. Suddenly a person who had only existed for me as a name came alive with a smile, a

distinctive hairdo, or a twinkle in her eye. I knew how much the photos would mean to the authors of the biographies and to the families of the subjects, and so I usually had to wipe away a tear when I came across these treasures.

The labels on the photos overwhelmingly favored the AIIMM missionaries; after this came prominent pastors, and then their wives. Photos were full of unnamed Congolese women, laymen, and children. To find photos of these less prominent figures, I had to trace the relationships that they had developed with those considered more worthy of inclusion in the historical record. Although I found it disconcerting to have to navigate through this maze of patron-client-like relationships, the results were worth the effort.

Khelendende Léonie, for example, was the daughter of pastor Khelendende Pierre, a prominent pastor at Kandala station in the 1950s. Photos of pastor Pierre were relatively plentiful in the Kandala station files. Here is one of the pastor and his wife in the 1950s.

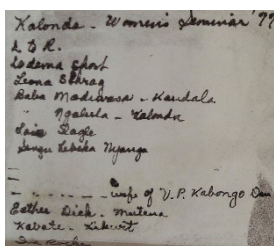
Not long after this, I was jubilant to find a photo that showed the couple with their two children. Might one of these be Léonie? I sent it off the author of Léonie's biography, Charly Malembe, and she quickly responded,





“WOW!! Pastor Leonie Khelendende is the younger daughter. Pastor Khelendende [Pierre] had only two daughters: the elder is Mama Anselme and the younger is Pastor Leonie Khelendende Ndoti.” I was moved to consider that this little girl, photographed with such an intense gaze, would later make a significant contribution to the

Mennonite church in Congo.



In another case, I almost missed a find. I was looking for Sengu Rebecca, who was born in the 1920s and lived on Nyanga station. In a folder of photos from a 1977 women's seminar at Kalonda, my eye caught Sengu Rebecca's name on the back, in blurred print and with an alternative spelling.

I quickly turned over the photo and saw her there, sixth from the left. Her face looked familiar and I thought I had seen her on some other photos. Again

I was able to get in touch with the author of her biography, Mundedi Bercie, for corroboration.



Sengu Rebecca, sixth from left, with other participants at a CMZa women's seminar in 1977. From left to right: Lodema Short, Leona Schrag, Baba Madiwasa (Kandala), Baba

Ngalula (Kalonda), Lois Slagle, Sengu Lebeka (Nyanga), unknown, unknown, unknown (wife of vice-president Kabongo), Esther Dick (Mutena), Kabate (Kikwit), Ina Rocke. Source: AIMM Records, Series 6 (audiovisual materials), Box 158 (Congo



mission photos), File: Women's seminar 1977 Kalonda.

Then I found her smiling in a group of Bible women at Nyanga. Sengu Rebecca is third from the left. The label on the back said she was also known as Kina Njinji. The photo as a whole was labeled "Bible women," late 1960s or 1970s. (Caption: Sengu Rebecca, "president of

the women," is third from left. Source: AIMM Records, Series 6 (audiovisual materials), Box 160 (Congo at Nyanga photos), Dossier: Nyanga 1950s-1970s.)

Bercie responded enthusiastically to this photo with "Wow, that's really her." She was able to clarify that Ndjindji was the name of her oldest daughter, which is why she was known as Kina Ndjindji ("mother of Ndjindji").

Bercie also sent me a photo of Sengu Rebecca that she had found in Congo during her interviews. Rebecca is standing on the right. (Caption: A women's leadership team in Nyanga. From left to right: Kavundji kina Leta, Kholoma Esther kina Tshumba, Sengu Lebeka kina Ndjindji, date and photographer unknown. Photo in the possession of Sengu's grandson Khenda Kindjingu.)



And finally, I found a close-up of Sengu Rebecca from the 1970s, again labeled with both names. (Caption: Sengu Rebecca Kina Ndjindji, CMZa women's president, 1970s. Source: AIMM Records, Series 6 (audiovisual materials), Box 160 (Congo at Nyanga photos), Dossier: Nyanga 1950s-1970s.)

Sengu Rebecca or Kina Ndjindji. Bible woman, president of CMCo women in 1970s, mother of Ndjindji. A smiling member of a group of evangelizing women friends. I am filled with desire to know this woman, and to hear her story through the research of Bercie Mundedi, another strong and confident CMCo woman living and speaking fifty years later in a male-dominated world.

I was able to find photos of two more of the biographical subjects: Mbuyi Kapinga Rosalie and Kazadi Matthieu. It was easy to find photos of Kazadi, since he had traveled to the United States, served as church president for years, and been the founder of the CEM. Rosalie's photos were a luckier find. She turned up in a set of photos of a home economics class, taken by a visiting photographer in 1964 and carefully classified and labeled.



Mbuyi Rosalie and Kamba Jeannette, washing dishes – I'm hoping to find out soon from Kalubi Liévin, author of Mbuyi's biography, which of these young women is Mbuyi.

I found nothing on Kholoma Esther or Masheke David. For Masheke in particular, I was surprised to find nothing. From the draft biography of him by Birakara

Joly I knew he was a key figure in the founding of the station of Banga, a powerful evangelist and a peacemaker who had helped to smooth relationships among the first multi-ethnic leaders of the Banga church district. But the many photos of the early years of Banga's existence showed no trace of him, perhaps because he was not an ordained pastor and had not been one of these official district leaders. I even skimmed through about 50 pages of reports from an AIMM missionary on the station to the home board – again no mention of Masheke. I was moved to know that today, someone considers his contribution worth excavating. I sent several group photos to Joly with the hope that he might recognize Masheke on one of them, and am waiting to hear back.

Toward the end of the afternoon, I spent some time with Roberta Yoder, the very competent archival assistant, to identify theses written by African writers in the AIMM collection. AIMM has given permission for these to be transferred to the Mennonite Historical Library so that the hard copies will be more accessible to researchers. If I can manage to get the permission of their authors next time I'm in Congo, these theses can also be digitized by staff at the institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and made freely available online on the [Bibliothèque numérique anabaptiste](#). Balancing on a chair, Roberta was energetically pulling down heavy boxes of theses from top shelves and I was scanning them for African authors. Together, we identified 10 theses or dissertations, most in French, that we hope can soon be available more widely.

By the end of the day, I was tired and had a headache. But I was also filled with delight and with new ideas. This was the first time I had seen Congolese Mennonites engaging with the contents of the AIMM archives. And it felt like a new way of doing research – in collaboration with Congolese colleagues via WhatsApp, driven by their agenda and research priorities. The contents of the AIMM archives, as biased as they are, offer critically important, well-preserved primary sources for the documentation of the Mennonite church in Congo. I started to imagine pairing up history students in North America with Congolese historians – could this kind of archival research project be reproduced? Those located in the North could use their location to facilitate access to researchers in the South, allowing their colleagues' versions of the stories to take center stage. Meanwhile, they would gain a new perspective on mission archives themselves, which could feed into their own research. Similar collaborations could help identify priority archival documents for digitization, label photos in a more satisfactory way, find and digitize photos in Congo for preservation, and identify more potential biographical subjects. Archivists could find new energy and meaning from such intercontinental and inter-church collaborations. Overall, this was definitely worth a few headaches!¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ This article was originally published as a blog post at: <https://www.mennonitemission.net/blog/4940/Church-history-researcher-finds-hidden-faces-in-MC-USA-archives>

Book Highlight

Ini Dorcas Dah, *Women do More Work than Men: Birifor Women as Change Agents in the Mission and Expansion of the Church in West Africa (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana)* [Regnum Africa, 2017], 180-188.

Imhobnuor Kambou and her Impact on l'Eglise Protestante Evangélique du Burkina Faso¹⁰²

Imhobnuor Kambou,¹⁰³ commonly known as Mankpin,¹⁰⁴ Madimanselsel,¹⁰⁵ Signeur,¹⁰⁶ or Maman Anne,¹⁰⁷ was born in Tassèb, Malba, in 1935 and died on 10 January 2008 in Gaoua after a short sickness.¹⁰⁸ When Kambou was a young girl, a woman took her in to help her look after her son, Ernest Palé. When Kambou reached nubility age around 1950, the woman's husband decided to take Kambou as a second wife, upon the advice of his wife.¹⁰⁹ After discussing the matter with Kambou's family, her parents agreed to the marriage.¹¹⁰ According to Palé, Kambou had two children in Malba, but they both died. Then the family moved to Gaoua where she had a boy in 1954 (Diinté Kambou). She gave birth to another son in 1960 who also passed away, and she finally had a girl, Manlé Kambou, in 1963.¹¹¹

Ernest Palé recounted that after Kambou gave birth to her daughter, Manlé, the relationship between her and her husband broke down and she left him. She went away for some time and came back to her husband's home. She stayed for a while and moved out again. After this second departure from her husband's home, she went to stay with other relatives. Living with those relatives did not improve her condition.¹¹² Therefore, after several vain attempts to live with people, Kambou decided to move and stay in l'EPE's compound in Gaoua in order to be closer to the church and to take care of the premises.

¹⁰² An earlier version of this chapter was published in the *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 17, No. 2, December 2014, 16-24; Imhobnuor Kambou died in 2008. Neither the church nor her family has a manuscript on her life. Her story is only orally told.

¹⁰³ Imhobnuor Kambou was her birth name.

¹⁰⁴ 'Mankpin' is the Birifor term for grandmother. This name was also commonly used in referring to Imhobnuor Kambou because of her age and to show politeness to her.

¹⁰⁵ Madimanselsel is a mispronunciation of the French word 'Mademoiselle'. Kambou used this name to refer to any unmarried girl, and along the line some people started calling her Madimanselsel.

¹⁰⁶ 'Signeur' is a mispronunciation of the French word, 'Seigneur'. Kambou liked using this word in her prayers. Those who called her Signeur, used it to make fun of her.

¹⁰⁷ Maman Anne was Kambou's Christian name.

¹⁰⁸ Ernest Palé, Interview, 24 December 2013, Gaoua. Most of the information about Imhobnuor Kambou was collected through interviewing Pastors, family members and personal observation.

¹⁰⁹ Diinté Kambou, Interview, 23 December 2013, Gaoua.

¹¹⁰ Ernest Palé, Interview, 24 December 2013, Gaoua.

¹¹¹ Ernest Palé, Interview, 24 December, 2013, Gaoua.

¹¹² Palé notes that at this point she had converted to Christianity.

Manlé pointed out that her mother converted to Christianity before 1960 because she was already a Christian before the birth of her late brother in 1960, but she could not remember the exact date. There is an indication that Kambou was baptised on 23 March 1986 at l'EPE, Gaoua and was the 59th member of the church.¹¹³ Kambou, therefore, might have converted in Gaoua between 1954 and 1960, because the first Evangelical Chapel of Gaoua was built in 1950¹¹⁴ and Diinté was born in 1954 in Gaoua. Ernest Palé indicated that Kambou was a *dāa* brewer, but when she converted she stopped this income-generating activity. He also stated that it was after Kambou's conversion to Christianity that her relationship with her husband broke down, but he did not identify Kambou's conversion as the cause of the misunderstanding between Kambou and her husband.

Kambou was among the first Birifor women who converted to the Christian faith in Burkina Faso in the Gaoua area. Kambou's conversion to Christianity resulted in her husband persecuting her. Albert Palenfo explained:

If one has to talk about a person who suffered for her conversion to Christianity, she is Maman Anne. Her husband was the son of Jamanā Ompiré. In the same way Ompiré maltreated Samba because he converted, this man also maltreated his wife Imhobnuor. He did everything he could to force her to abandon her faith; he beat her and did all sorts of evil things to her, but she stood firm in her faith. Finally, he sent her away, thinking that his action would make her abandon her faith, but she continued following God. Even her own children tried all they could to persuade her to come back and follow their father's way. But she refused and followed God until God called her home to Him.¹¹⁵¹⁷

It is evident from Palenfo's account that Kambou's conversion resulted in her being persecuted by her husband.

In Birifor culture, when there are difficulties between husband and wife over an issue and the woman refuses to comply with the husband's demands, often he would both abuse her verbally publicly and maltreat her physically. If the husband intentionally divorces her, he would break the cooking hearth of the woman and throw her *ḍiũ dũv* (sour water for cooking *saab*) away. Sometimes the man will not do this, but will simply throw the woman's possessions out of the house. Through this action, the woman is informed that the marriage is over and she has to leave. Therefore, even if Kambou's husband was torturing her and verbally said she should leave the house without taking any of the above actions, she would traditionally bear the blame for

¹¹³ Kambou Inwobnuor Anne, Carte de Membre de l'Eglise Protestante Evangélique, Siège: Bp. 8, Gaoua Burkina Faso, No. du Registre: 59.

¹¹⁴ Mady Vaillant, *Cheminement du Travail Pionnier au Partenariat WEC/EPE* (Ouaga: ANTBA, 2008), 37). The story of the conversion of the Birifor, as seen in Chapter Four, also shows that it took 20 years before other Birifor converted to Christianity in the Protestant Church, after Samba (first Birifor) converted in 1936.

¹¹⁵ Albert Palenfo, Interview 13 January 2014, Gaoua. Original in French, free translation by the author.

leaving her husband. In addition, in the Birifor language when a marriage breaks down, the Birifor say a ‘*pɔɔ yi na*’ (literally, the woman has left), whether her husband sent her away or she decided to leave.

Kambou’s conversion made life unbearable for her in her husband’s house. From the evidence available, she apparently endured about ten years of suffering in her husband’s house. However, she did not waver from her faith. Her husband sending her away had serious consequences for her children. Although the Birifor are matrilineal, this practice seems to be more theoretical than practical. Kambou had, therefore, to leave her children with her husband.

Kambou came to be regarded as a ‘*nĩ fāa*’ (outcast) by the Birifor for leaving her husband. This term ‘*nĩ fāa*’ is used by the Birifor in two ways. They refer to people who abandon the Birifor religion as ‘*nĩ fāa*’ (plural: outcasts). A woman who does not stay with her husband and children is also called ‘*nĩ fāa*’. Furthermore, many traditional Birifor initially saw Christianity as a foreign religion, which would have heightened them regarding Kambou as a ‘*nĩ fāa*’.

Normally, the church does not encourage Christian wives to abandon their non-Christian husbands, but in Kambou’s case, she had no other choice. Moreover, she was the second wife and, therefore, by canon law,¹¹⁶ her marriage was not even legal. Therefore, whatever the cause of the separation, it enabled her to serve God as she did till her death. Even after her husband’s death, Kambou could have moved to stay with her son, because he had then built his own house. However, Kambou’s son, Diinté, was also one of the famous traditional priests in Gaoua with large shrines built all over his compound. It was only when she died that her body was taken to her son’s house for the funeral. According to Imhobnuor Kambou’s granddaughter, Yerri Isabelle Kambou, Imhobnuor Kambou would not even eat food cooked in her son’s home, because of the



utbe in her son’s house.¹¹⁷

After her conversion, Imhobnuor Kambou started to regularly clean the church premises. She made that activity her primary work when she moved to the church’s compound, and she was meticulous in her cleaning work both inside and outside the church.¹¹⁸

Photo 31: Imhobnuor Kambou sweeping the church compound

¹¹⁶ Note that the Evangelical Protestant Church of Burkina Faso also has marriage by canon law.

¹¹⁷ Yerri Isabelle Kambou, Conversation, 10 January 2015, Akropong-Akuapem.

¹¹⁸ Sié Joël Dah noted that the Evangelical Protestant Church was inaugurated on 17 July 1985. Therefore, Kambou might have moved to the church’s compound after this date.

(Source: Manlé Kambou's photographs, no date).

Imhobnuor Kambou also visited both church members and non-Christians in town. She had a special programme for sick people in the community and the hospital. Palé and Palenfo explain that after cleaning the church on Tuesdays, Kambou would go to the hospital and move from bed to bed, praying for the sick. She would not do anything else until she had finished visiting all the sick people in the hospital. Every Sunday, she visited church members before the church service at 10 am.¹¹⁹

Palenfo described how Imhobnuor acted as an informant to suggest whom he needed to visit when he was ministering at the Central Evangelical Protestant Church of Gaoua. Whenever someone was sick or had a problem, he and Kambou would discuss the situation. She knew about people's lives because she never tired of walking from house to house and to the hospital.¹²⁰ In other words, Kambou valued other people's lives and sensitised the church about the importance of visiting people.

Another aspect of her life was her focus on prayer. In Sunday church services, she loved to praise and pray to God. In every day situations, she took every opportunity to pray, because for her, people could find solutions to their problems only from God. She prayed individually for people in the hospital, because she believed that even though the doctors were treating them, there was no way they would be healed, if God did not intervene in their situation.

In Kambou's worldview, whenever she faced a difficult or confusing situation, she would link it with the work of *kɛtɔble* (evil spirit). For instance, in 1997, Kambou had a quarrel with some of the children living in the church's compound over a cup. She had a similar drinking cup to that which the school children were using. One day, she could not find hers. When she saw the children using a cup like hers she took it from them. That led to a quarrel between them. She later called the person who gave her the cup and the woman indicated that she really had given her that kind of cup. However, she relinquished and gave the cup to the children because they insisted it was theirs. The next day, however, she found her cup. She therefore concluded that the *kɛtɔble* had taken her cup and brought it back the following day, thus causing her to quarrel with the children.¹²¹ For her, only an evil spirit would create unpleasant situations for and between people, whereas God's Spirit would make life peaceful for them.

Kambou was also noted for her generosity within the church and the community at large. Although she was 'poor', she did not let it restrict her generosity. Palenfo explained that sometimes, she would not have food, but when someone gave her food and she heard that another person did not have something to eat, she would take her

¹¹⁹ Palenfo, Interview, 13 January 2014, Gaoua.

¹²⁰ Palenfo also notes that sometime, Kambou would be sick, but if she could still stand up, she would walk around to visit someone. Concerning Kambou's work, although I interviewed family members and pastors, anyone who grew up in the town, whether Christians or not could testify about her commitment in the church and how she sacrificed her life for many people.

¹²¹ Conversation with Kambou, 1997, Gaoua.

food to that person.¹²² She liked to share whatever she had with anyone she found in a difficult situation. Whenever a person gave birth, Kambou would go to the bush to look for firewood,¹²³ and prepare food which she would take to the person. For instance, in 1992, when my (Ini Dorcas Dah) mother gave birth, Kambou came with those items to greet her and the newly born baby. What is significant about Kambou's action is that it is very difficult to find firewood in the vicinity of Gaoua, where Kambou lived. One has to buy it or walk at least 10 to 15 kilometres to be able to find some. However, Kambou did not consider either the distance or the cost a burden. All she was concerned about was trying to help as much as she could. She gave out what was useful to her. She denied herself for others; because while some people saw her as a needy person, she could see that others were in greater need than herself.



Photo 32: Imhobnuor Kambou and her daughter, Manlé Kambou, at la Mission Protestante Evangélique de Gaoua, Burkina Faso, after she went to present a gift to WEC missionaries (Source: Manlé Kambou's photographs, no date).

Another aspect of Imhobnuor Kambou's life was seeking justice for everyone. In writing about justice, Valdir Raul Steuernagel affirms 'justice as a fundamental expression of God's search for transformation, as a mark of mission and the need to integrate it into our portfolio of mission'.¹²⁴ This statement was reflected in Kambou's life. Yvonne Hien indicated that

Imhobnuor Kambou was a woman of integrity and could not bear to see injustice.¹²⁵ Kambou always tried to please God as best as she could. She did not tolerate evil and

¹²² Albert Palenfo, Interview, 13 January 2014, Gaoua. Palenfo remarked that while they were crying sometime for Kambou's condition, she would be crying for another person's case. She used to share everything she had with other people in the community. Yvonne Hien stated the same thing. All the people who knew Kambou when she was alive can testify to this, including the author. Yvonne Hien, Interview, 11 January 2014, Gaoua.

¹²³ The Birifor believe that when a woman gives birth, she must not bathe with cold water otherwise she will die from blood coagulation in her womb. Therefore, many people will bring firewood as their contribution in order that the new mother does not run out of hot water.

¹²⁴ Valdir Raul Steuernagel, 'To Seek to Transform Unjust Structures of Society (i)', in Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross (eds.), *Mission in the 21st Century, Exploring The Five Marks of Global Mission* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2008), 62-76 (64).

¹²⁵ Yvonne Hien is a pastor's wife and works with her husband in the Evangelical Radio Station of Gaoua.

would walk to Hien's house to challenge Hien and her husband when she thought they were behaving in an ungodly way. Hien explained that Kambou also did this with all the pastors who worked in l'EPE, Gaoua, during her lifetime. She did not fear the pastors, although she respected them. However, if she felt their behaviour was evil, she would point this out to them and warn them to return to God.¹²⁶ Imhobnuor Kambou had understood that she had a responsibility to warn everyone, including pastors, who strayed from God's way, just as God commissioned Ezekiel to warn Israel.¹²⁷ Her yearning to see everyone live in a godly manner illustrates her commitment to Christian mission for the transformation of the people's lives.

Finally, Kambou enjoyed singing in the church. Although no recording of her singing remains, she loved three songs, one of which was her favourite that she had composed:

<i>Yuoro pan</i>	Open the door,
<i>Jeeju wa na wa yuoro a pan}</i> (2x)	Jesus came to open the door.
<i>A ulo na yuoro pan</i>	He who opens the door,
<i>Jeeju wa na wa yuoro pan</i>	Jesus came to open the door.
<i>Bo ine v cir vji</i>	Why did He shed His blood?
<i>A ulo wa yuo a si ma kpe</i>	When he opens we enter
 1. <i>Wie nibe</i>	Relieve people,
<i>Jeeju wa na wa wie nibe}</i> (3x)	Jesus came to relieve people,
<i>Uwa na wa wie nibe</i>	He came to relieve people,
<i>A ulo na wa ka tew yow nibe</i>	He came for the world to be easy for people.
 2. <i>Faa nibe</i>	Deliver people,
<i>Jeeju wa na wa faa nibe}</i> (3x)	Jesus came to deliver people,
<i>Uwa na wa faa nibe</i>	He came to deliver people,
<i>A Ulo na wa ka tew yow nibe</i>	He came for the world to be easy for people.
 3. <i>De kuu kpi</i>	Take death to die,
<i>Jeeju wa na wa de kuu kpi}</i> (3x)	Jesus came to take death to die,
<i>U wa na na de a si kuu</i>	he came to take our death,
<i>A Ulo na wa ka tew yow nibe</i>	He came for the world to be easy for people.
 4. <i>Tabala ata</i>	Three tables,
<i>Jeeju i na tabala ata}</i> (3x)	Jesus is three tables.
<i>Ui na tabala ata</i>	He is three tables,
<i>Ulo na wa ka si ma duoro</i>	He who came for us to climb onto. ³⁰

This song¹²⁸ is a proclamation of what Jesus came to do on earth. The refrain of the

¹²⁶ Yvonne Hien, Interview, 11 January 2014, Gaoua.

¹²⁷ Ezekiel 3:16-21.

¹²⁸ Free translation by the author.

song alludes to the doors opening with the tearing of the curtain in the Temple, from top to bottom, when Jesus died on the cross and gave access to everyone into the Most Holy Place.¹²⁹ One can also identify Isaiah's description of Jesus' life, which sets humans free.¹³⁰ In stanzas 1 and 2, Kambou indicates that Jesus came to relieve and deliver people. When Kambou's song is linked to Birifor traditional life, there are two possible meanings. First, she is showing how Birifor people are freed from the burden of looking for fowls and animals to repeatedly perform sacrifices in order to enjoy life, because with Christ's sacrifice, the Birifor no longer need those sacrifices. Second, as noted in Chapter Four, some traditional Birifor have become dissatisfied with their divinities and have found a greater satisfaction in Christ. Thus, Imhobnuor Kambou can say in stanza 3 'Jesus came to deliver people'. This is the whole idea of Jesus being a greater power.

The third stanza explains the sacrificial death of Christ on behalf of human beings. When Imhobnuor Kambou says 'He came to take our death', she is expressing the fact that we were the ones supposed to die. However, Jesus came to die for us in order to make our condition easy. Kambou does not mean 'easy' in the sense that we do not have to toil anymore.¹³¹ Rather, it refers to the freedom we have in Christ regardless of our ethnic group or gender. Kambou's reference to three tables in stanza 4 is not clear. Many Birifor assume that it is a reference to the Trinity, but Kambou is only referring to Jesus. When the Birifor want to reach higher heights, they will stand on top of the tables put one on top of another. Thus, her words imply that Jesus can help people reach beyond their scope.

Through this song, Kambou uses biblical words and practices familiar to the Birifor to demonstrate what Christ did and who he is to human beings. The main idea that runs through the whole song is the sacrificial death of Christ for humankind. Kambou relates it mostly to her traditional Birifor context and this is why she describes Christ as the one who makes the world easy for people. A Birifor person who performs sacrifices to seek peace is able to relate to Kambou's song and particularly to the term 'easy' because the Birifor's sacrificial system is burdensome.

Kambou would sing this song on Sundays during church services, on New Year's Eve, at evangelisation campaigns and at most Christian gatherings. According to Palenfo, Kambou would leave the church very sad, if the liturgist did not give her the opportunity to sing this song on a Sunday.

Kambou died on 10 January 2008. Even though she was old, she was not sick for a long time. She was admitted to the hospital on a Monday (7 January 2008) and passed away on a Thursday (10 January 2008). The Birifor believe that only wicked people fall sick for a long period of time, troubling their relatives, before dying. Therefore, many people saw the way she died as a proof of her '*pv-pilaa*' (literally, white belly: pure heart).

¹²⁹ Matthew 27:51.

¹³⁰ Isaiah 53:4-6.

¹³¹ She herself did not have an easy life after her conversion to Christianity.

When the church performed her funeral, a woman sang Kambou's song, in remembrance of her participation in the church's life. Although the woman singing the song did not sing it with Kambou's emotion and expression, many people wept because they realised how much they would miss her because of all she did in the church and in the community. The woman could not complete the song. She herself stopped and joined the weeping crowd. Many people in the church, including some pastors did not realise the significant role Kambou played in the church. It was only after her death that some pastors started praising her from the pulpit. Some pastors, who were very rude to her when she was alive, started telling people in their sermons that no one in the congregation could do what Kambou did when she was alive. But, as the saying goes, 'We do not value the good thing we have, until we have lost it for good'.

Although Kambou had a difficult life in which her marriage broke down and she had to leave her children, she did so for the sake of Christ. In spite of their loss, her children still interacted with her while she cared for them and they respected her. One can see in Kambou a faith and determination similar to that of Perpetua in the third century who renounced her child and willingly underwent martyrdom for the sake of Christ.¹³² In Kambou's case, her decision to follow Christ resulted in her being ostracised from her children. Her prayerful life also impacted the church positively. The impact of her evangelistic work in the town and the hospital is hard to assess, but it was done out of love for Christ. Kambou also used her own resources to serve God by sharing everything that she had with people around her. Finally, Kambou's presence in the church helped some pastors to keep in touch with their church members and other people who needed spiritual assistance in the community.

Author Dr. Ini Dorcas Dah received her PhD from Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture in Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana. She is the author of *Women do More Work Than Men*; *Birifor Women as Change Agents in Mission and Expansion of the Church in West Africa* (Regnum Africa 2017/Wipf and Stock 2018) as well as other books and articles on Christian mission and women in Africa. She is a lay preacher, and the founder and president of an evangelical association for women's development (AEJDF) in Burkina Faso.

¹³² Henry, Wace and William, C. Piercy (eds.), *A Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature to the Sixth Century A. D., with an Account of the Principal Sects and Heresies*, Reprinted from the edition originally titled *A Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature Published by John Murray*, London, 1911 (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 829-830. For a full description of Perpetua's life and her martyrdom, also see Rosemary Rader, 'The Martyrdom of Perpetua: A Protest Account of Third-Century Christianity', in Patricia Wilson-Kastner, G. Ronald Kastner, Ann Millin, Rosemary Rader and Jeremiah Reedy, *A Lost Tradition, Women Writers of The Early Church* (Washington: University

Book Review

Jean Luc Enyegue, SJ. *Competing Catholicisms: The Jesuits, the Vatican, and the Making of Postcolonial French Africa* (Woodbridge, UK: James Currey, 2022). Hardcover, 9781847012715. Paperback, 9781847013774. Ebook, 9781800102910.¹³³

In *Competing Catholicisms: The Jesuits, the Vatican, and the Making of Postcolonial French Africa*, Jean Luc Enyegue, a Jesuit priest and director of the Jesuit Historical Institute in Africa in Nairobi, examines the role that the Jesuit missions played in shaping the development of Catholicism in Cameroon and Chad – a much narrower geographical scope than the book title suggests – between roughly the end of the Second World War and the end of the Second Vatican Council. Over the course of nine chapters, Enyegue shows how competition between the Vatican and Jesuits over their divergent visions for the future of Catholicism hindered the Africanization of the church in Chad and Cameroon and “secured the survival of Christianity as a missionary movement” (8). While the Vatican was actively trying to indigenize the church throughout Africa, Jesuits sought to preserve European control of the church.

Enyegue develops his argument over three parts. Part 1 analyzes the foundation and development of the Jesuit mission in Chad between 1935 and 1946. In this section, Enyegue argues that the Jesuit mission in Chad, founded by Frédéric de Bélinay and then led by Joseph du Bouchet, was engaged in a process of “Frenchification” by which they sought to reassert France’s imperial ambitions in Chad following the nation’s “humiliation” during the second world war and the collapse of its colonial empire” (25, 28). The alignment between the Jesuit mission and France’s strategic ambitions in Africa meant that all of the mission’s personnel were citizens of France, thereby hindering the Vatican’s objective to advance “clerical Africanisation” (90).

Part 2 analyzes how the Jesuits deployed “popular education” as a form of evangelism in Chad in order to foster the emergence of “loyal auxiliaries” to the colonial government and prevent the development of a nationalist Christian elite that would ultimately displace European leadership (98). This section also shows that, unlike the Protestants, Jesuits were willing to accommodate local cultural rituals, specifically the Sara male initiation rite of the *yondo*. The potent combination of cultural syncretism and the absence of a targetable Catholic elite made the Jesuits less vulnerable to persecution during Chad’s Cultural Revolution (1973-1975) than the Protestant churches whose lack of tolerance for indigenous rites that were not Christian made them easy targets for Chad’s president, Francois Tombalbaye, as he went about trying to make Christianity “distinctively Chadian” by stripping it of “its Western, civilising,

¹³³ This review was originally published in the *Leeds African Studies Bulletin*, no. 84 (2023). The original review can be read here: <https://lucas.leeds.ac.uk/article/review-of-jean-luc-enyegue-sj-competing-catholicisms/>.

cultural and imperialistic components” (156).

In Part 3, Enyegue explores how the Jesuit mission functioned in both Chad and Cameroon following independence. He shows that while Europeans continued to dominate the church in Chad, the “creation of the Jesuit Region of Cameroon and the appointment of a Cameroonian as its superior” in 1968 represented a successful example of “Africanisation, as envisioned by the Vatican and demanded by Africans themselves” (195). But within five years, the Jesuits changed tack – the Society of Jesus again hindered the Vatican’s Africanization agenda by creating the Vice-Province of West Africa in 1973, which displaced Cameroonian leadership with Europeans who rejected Cameroonian Jesuits’ vision for the Africanization of the church.

Enyegue marshals an impressive range of archival sources. He not only conducted research in Jesuit archives located at Vanves, Rome, Doula, and Nairobi, but diocesan archives in Yaoundé as well. In N’Djamena, Enyegue visited the archives at the Jesuit Centre for Studies and Training for Development and the archives of the Christian Assemblies of God. He also reports in his introduction that he conducted interviews with a “dozen lay and Jesuit Interviewees who were witnesses of part of this history,” but only two interviews are cited in the bibliography at the end of the book (19, 273). One thing that is not clear from this book, however, is whether Enyegue would have been able to access these Jesuit sources if he were not a member of the Society of Jesus himself. The answer to this question is important because it determines whether a historian who does not share Enyegue’s same position as a Catholic priest could build on this project.

Enyegue’s reliance on archival sources is not without its shortcomings. The chapters on the history of Catholic church in Chad, for example, privilege the voices of European Jesuits, such as Frédéric de Bélinay, Joseph du Bouchet, and Paul Dalmais, because the “[e]nforced delay in recruiting Chadian Jesuits accentuated the lack of African Catholic voices in Chad” (19). When African voices are incorporated into the narrative where Enyegue shifts his focus from Chad to Cameroon, the dominant voices are those of Cameroonian Jesuit “theologians and philosophers,” including Engelbert Mveng, Fabien Boulaga Eboussi, and Meinrad P. Hebga, whose perspectives, some would argue, might not be representative of the Catholic African experience in Cameroon (19). To correct for this limitation of his sources, however, Enyegue includes a chapter on Emmanuel Teguem, “a working class Jesuit brother,” in which he demonstrates that the concerns of working-class Cameroonian Jesuits aligned with that of the Cameroonian Jesuit leadership—specifically on “the need to build an Africanised Church that responded to the actual cultural, spiritual, and material needs of their people” (252). Thus, Enyegue demonstrates that there was some commonality in the Cameroonian Jesuit experience from the bottom up.

Competing Catholicisms is an important book for three reasons. Firstly, Enyegue’s monograph reminds us that the study of Christianity in postcolonial Africa should not neglect the historical mission churches. In recent years, scholars of Christianity have primarily been focusing their efforts on understanding and explaining the rapid growth of Pentecostalism across Africa for the past twenty years or so, but mission churches have remained important religious players since African nations achieved their political

independence and ought to be studied in their own right and not simply in relation to Pentecostalism (for example, see J.D.Y Peel's *Christianity, Islam, and Orisa Religion: Three Traditions in Comparison and Interaction* [2016]). Secondly, *Competing Catholicisms* makes a strong case for researching and writing institutional history, which has fallen somewhat out of fashion. Thirdly, at a time when studies of religion in Africa are predominantly focused on locating instances of discontinuity—in part because Pentecostal and Charismatic forms of Christianity seek to create rupture in the lives of adherents—Enyegue shows that cultural and institutional continuity remain powerful forces in the shaping of the history of—and probably also the contemporary dynamics in—Christianity in Africa.

Competing Catholicisms also adds to scholarly debates about aid and development in postcolonial and contemporary Africa in two significant ways. First, Enyegue argues that “nongovernmentality” (see Gregory Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: The Road to Nongovernmentality* [2015]) actually preceded “the rise of humanitarian NGOs on African soil” (11). Before non-governmental organizations began popping up across independent Africa, the Catholic Church had been facilitating “transnational networks of solidarity and aid” in French Africa for decades (11). Second, Enyegue challenges the idea that “the social commitments of Catholicism in Africa . . . diminishes true evangelism” (12), as Paul Gifford has argued in *Christianity, Development, and Modernity in Africa* (2016). For progressive Jesuits in the 1970s, “evangelism was synonymous with being a living witness to the gospel by serving the poor” (12).

A minor point of criticism of *Competing Catholicisms* is that Enyegue missed an opportunity to connect his discussion about “tensions within Catholicism” with the work of historians studying similar tensions within Catholicism outside of French Africa (9). In his monograph, *Catholicism and the Making of Politics in Central Mozambique, 1940-1986* (2019), for example, Eric Morier-Genoud, a reader in African history at Queen's University Belfast, analyzes the relationship between religious orders, including the Jesuits, Franciscans, White Fathers, Marist Brothers, Burgos Fathers, Pipcus Fathers, and the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, and the church hierarchy in the Diocese of Beira in Mozambique to make sense of how politics are made in the Catholic Church. By placing his own research into dialogue with work of Morier-Genoud, Enyegue could have helped us better understand what insights about church tensions he analyzes in Chad and Cameroon are generalizable to the Catholic experience across African geographies, and which are specific to Cameroon and Chad.

Nevertheless, *Competing Catholicisms* is a thoughtful study of the Catholic Church in postcolonial Africa that will be of interest not just to historians of Christianity in Africa, but also historians of Chad, Cameroon, European decolonization, and imperial France.

David Dmitri Hurlbut, PhD is a visiting researcher at the Center for Global Christianity and Mission at the Boston University School of Theology.

Recent Print and Digital Resources Related to Christianity in Africa

Compiled by Beth Restrick, Head, BU African Studies Library

Asamoah-Gwadu, J. Kwabena. **Pentecostalism in Africa: Experiences from Ghana's Charismatic Ministries.** Fortress Press, 2021. \$12.99 (pbk). www.amazon.com ISBN-10: 1506483739, ISBN-13: 978-1506483733.

Description: Pentecostalism is the fastest growing stream of Christianity in the world. The real evidence for the significance of Pentecostalism lies in the actual churches they have built and the numbers they attract. In Africa, Pentecostalism has virtually become the representative face of Christianity with even historic mission denominations 'pentecostalising' their otherwise formal liturgical structures to survive. This work brings to a wider audience the insights and analysis from the author's book, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context*. It interprets key theological and missiological themes in Ghanaian Pentecostalism by using material from the lived experiences of the movement itself.

Dah, Ini Dorcas, Blasu, Ebenezer Yaw, Rudolf K. Gaisie (Eds.). **Understanding the Gospel: Culture and Environment: Essays in Honour of Allison Mary Howell.** Ghana Library Authority, 2022. \$26.18 www.alibris.com ISBN10: 9988334818, ISBN13: 9789988334819.

Description: Those who set out to teach but end up becoming learners often leave a legacy that benefit not only the context of the encounter but flows over to nourish the wider environment. Such is the impact of the work of Allison Howell that this festschrift represents, especially in the fields of missiology and contextual theology. Her work illustrates the spirituality that marks her presence in the mission and church in Ghana and urges the church to engage the real life of the people among who it serves. This festschrift further illustrates not only her impact on the theological scene in Ghana but also throughout Africa and beyond, making Howell's work a treasure for many beyond the shores of this continent. I congratulate those who have made themselves available for the works, words, and wisdom of Allison Howell's teachers, mentors, and mentees. "Understanding the Gospel, Culture and Environment, Essay's in honour of Allison Mary Howell" will be a great read for all academic theologians and all Christians.

--Prof. Mercy Amba Odoyuye, Talita Kumi, Centre for Women in Religion and Culture, Trinity Theological Seminary, Accra

Howell, Allison M. **Religious Itinerary of a Ghanaian People: The Kasena and the Christian gospel.** Revised ed. edition. Africa Christian Press, 1988. 394 pages. ISBN: 9789964877071, 9964877072 OCLC Number / Unique Identifier:265792429

Description: A detailed piece of research into the continuing story of African religion and the evolving story of Christianity; a study of the Kasena Christians of northern Ghana whose first contact with Christianity occurred within the present century, and who revealed no acceptance of it until its second half. The author describes the background of Kasena society and family life, traditional beliefs and thought, mechanisms for resolving crises and personal problems, and natural environment. Her narrative traces the stages of the coming of the whites, conversion, Christian thought and action amongst the Kasena, and the emerging characteristics of what became a distinctly non-European model of Christianity. It winds up with a discussion about the implications of the Kasena experience for the gospels and theology, and for the conversion of other peoples. The author, anthropologist, and Senior Research Fellow at the Akrofi-Christaller Memorial Centre for Mission Research and Applied Theology in Ghana, lived and worked amongst the Kasena people in northern Ghana from 1981 to 1990. She reproduces here many of her first hand experiences: photographs, interviews, experiences of conversion, indigenous prayers and hymn texts, many of which are transcribed in full as appendices. (Amazon)

Urban-Meade, Wendy. **The Gender of Piety: Family, Faith, and Colonial Rule in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe.** Ohio University Press, 2015. \$70.00 (hbk) www.amazon.com ISBN-10: 0821421573, ISBN-13: 978-0821421574. (Available for online loan at www.archive.org)

Description: The Gender of Piety is an intimate history of the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe, or BICC, as related through six individual life histories that extend from the early colonial years through the first decade after independence. Taken together, these six lives show how men and women of the BICC experienced and sequenced their piety in different ways. Women usually remained tied to the church throughout their lives, while men often had a more strained relationship with it. Church doctrine was not always flexible enough to accommodate expected masculine gender roles, particularly male membership in political and economic institutions or participation in important male communal practices.

The study is based on more than fifteen years of extensive oral history research supported by archival work in Zimbabwe, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The oral accounts make it clear, official versions to the contrary, that the church was led by spiritually powerful women and that maleness and mission-church notions of piety were often incompatible.

The life-history approach illustrates how the tension of gender roles both within and without the church manifested itself in sometimes unexpected ways: for example, how a single family could produce both a legendary woman pastor credited with mediating multiple miracles and a man—her son—who joined the armed wing of the Zimbabwe African People's Union nationalist political party and fought in Zimbabwe's

liberation war in the 1970s. Investigating the lives of men and women in equal measure, *The Gender of Piety* uses a gendered interpretive lens to analyze the complex relationship between the church and broader social change in this region of southern Africa. (Source: Amazon)

Open Access Resources

Bediako, Gillian Mary. **Pioneering a Theological Curriculum for Our Time and Place—The Case of Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission, and Culture.** *Religions*. Vol. 14, No. 10, 2023, 1327.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14101327>

Abstract: “Decolonizing the mind” (Ngugi) is an ongoing task, even after 50 years or more of political independence. This is particularly the case with respect to theological education, where norms and structures still faithfully follow the Western pattern laid down in the colonial era. New initiatives in theological curriculum development that authentically connect with African issues and concerns and enable theological institutions to break from the shackles of these are an ongoing need, with developments on the African continent making such initiatives ever more urgent. This paper describes and analyzes the pioneering approach of the Akrofi-Christaller Institute (ACI), an indigenous Ghanaian institution, the background to its emergence and the process of implementation over the course of the past 25 years that has produced a successful, full-orbed and wide-ranging theological curriculum connecting with religious, cultural, social and inter-faith issues; the facilitating factors and the challenges on the journey and lessons that could be learned by other institutions wishing to indigenize their curricula. It is hoped that Kwame Bediako’s thinking on curriculum design for theological education which has shaped the ACI story of curriculum innovation, as well as the story of its implementation and ongoing development, may provide a model for other institutions desirous of breaking free from the colonial mode, in Africa and beyond in the non-Western world, and facing similar issues. After briefly setting ACI in its historical context, the paper goes on to elucidate the overall vision of the Institute that undergirds the curriculum and provides the rationale for its development. It identifies the fundamental pillars on which the curriculum rests and outlines a model for the basic framework of the curriculum. It then goes on to analyze the ways in which such a vision and framework enable a fresh approach to what has hitherto been seen as normative in the theological disciplines, with a view to creating space in the curriculum to address present-day African (and other non-Western) felt needs in mission and ministry. The paper touches on more recent developments to the original curriculum in response to emerging contextual issues and concludes with possible lessons that may be learned from the ACI story.

Chimhanda, Francisca H. and Gift Masengwe. **Towards an authentic transformation of the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe.** *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies*. Vol. 75, No. 1, (2019).

<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/hts/article/view/214701>

Abstract: This article evaluates the impact of transformation in the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe (COCZ) over the past 10 years. The study is guided by the following questions: What does it mean to be COCZ in the Zimbabwean society? What is the COCZ mission that empowers it to play a meaningful role in nation building? The critical analysis is observed from the Christian education (CE) pedagogy. This raises questions on the historical foundations, transformation tenets and future plans and guidelines towards authentic transformation. Transformation could be affected by new developments, and thus participants need to be guided accordingly. The article gives a critical analysis of the COCZ journey experiences using a dialogical approach to CE. This study presupposes that lack of CE is a limiting factor to the transformation process in the church. This study is an interdisciplinary study that combines missiology, African ecclesiology and Christian theology. The study was conducted using surveys, observations and interviews among leaders and members of the COCZ.

Sarbah, Emmanuel K., Cornelius Niemandt, and Peter White. **Migration from Historic Mission Churches to Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in Ghana.** *Verbum et Ecclesia*. Vol. 41, Issue 1. 2020.

<https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v41i1.2124>

Abstract: The advent of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches (PCCs) in Ghana since the early 20th century has significantly impacted its religious landscape. Migration of members from the Church has become a great source of worry for the leadership of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), a Historic Mission Church which is 191 years old with less than one million members. This article discusses factors for migration of members from Historic Mission Churches (HMCs) to PCCs with reference to the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG). This requires that Historic Mission Churches should train laity to become the active components of the Church. Also, baptismal candidates should be given the option to choose the type of baptism they prefer to resolve the issue of members migrating to PCCs to seek baptism or rebaptism by immersion.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: The article contributes to the interdisciplinary dialogue on mission and church growth, with emphasis on migration. It provides missiological implication and reflection on the missional vocation of the church.