

**THE HISTORY OF AIIAS AFRICAN
THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION: 2002-2007**

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The birth of AIIAS African Theological Association (AATA) was incubated on AIIAS campus, Silang Cavite, Philippines, during an evening walk between two doctoral students at AIIAS Seminary; namely, late Julius M. Muchee (a Kenyan) and Michael Onyedikachi Akpa (a Nigerian). As they walked around the campus on that evening in 2002, they discussed a wide array of issues that bordered on academics, ministry, and especially theological scholarship on the continent of Africa. By the end of that evening walk, a burning desire to foster a strong theological platform for African theologians both on the continent and in the diaspora became very strong. This formed a strong bond of friendship and collegiality between the two, who lived as next door neighbors in Apartment H in the AIIAS student housing complex.

In 2004, Muchee graduated and left AIIAS for Adventist

University of Eastern Africa, Barraton, Kenya while Akpa continued with his doctoral program. In April of that year, Muchee visited the Philippines to attend the graduation of his wife, Tabitha, who had completed her doctoral studies. A vibrant discussion between Muchee and Akpa during another evening walk strengthened their desire to establish a theological platform through which African theologians can express themselves through avid theological scholarship. Arrangements were concluded on how to initiate the establishment of such a platform either in Africa or at AIIAS. Shortly after, the news of the death of late Muchee filtered into AIIAS. This death dealt a deadly blow on the dream for the theological platform for African theologians since it now became resident in one person and it is usually difficult for one person to convince a crowd to buy into a dream.

Undeterred by the loss of a dear colleague, Akpa started all over again to sell the idea of a theological platform for Africans to his colleagues both in the Theological Seminary and the School of Graduate Studies at AIIAS, Philippines. Sometime in 2006, many African students at AIIAS during that period bought the idea of forming a theological association for African theologians at AIIAS. The initial challenge was how to run the theological association without crippling African Student Association (ASA), the Mother Association that caters for all Africans at AIIAS, irrespective of programs.

After due consultations with ASA sponsors (Drs.

Musvosvi, Higgins, Penniecook), ASA leaders and opinion leaders among the African community at AIIAS, an initial conference was called during which a committee was set up to study the feasibility and dynamics of establishing a theological association that will run parallel to ASA. Members of the committee were Michael M. Sokupa, Michael O. Akpa, Daniel K. Bediako, Phodidas Ndamyumugabe, and Patrick E. Anani. The committee did its work and reported to the house at several subsequent conferences. After clearing with ASA leadership, AIIAS African Theological Association (AATA) was born in 2007. In its inaugural meeting held on May 27, 2007, the following pioneer officers were appointed to oversee the affairs of the Association: Michael M. Sokupa (President); Simon Bwambale (Secretary/Treasurer); Daniel K. Bediako (Editor); Daniel Berchie (Intellectual Affairs Director).

Names of pioneer members of AATA that readily come to mind include Michael M. Sokupa, Michael O. Akpa, Daniel K. Bediako, Phodidas Ndamyumugabe, and Patrick E. Anani, Robert Osei-Bonsu, Mesfin Bysegman, Paluku Mwendambio, Claver Ndahayo, Daniel Berchie, Michael I. Oluikpe, Simon Bwambale, Kambale Muhasa, Kambale Muhongya, Kasereka Muthavally, and others that I run the risk of not remembering due to distance and time.

Following the formal inauguration of AATA, it went into action by organizing her maiden Theological Forum which was held in AIIAS Youth Church on August 5, 2007. Several

papers were presented by those in attendance. Shortly after the Theological Forum, Dr. Michael Onyedikachi Akpa left AIIAS, Philippines for Babcock University, Nigeria, having completed his doctoral studies. In addition to the general objectives of the Association, a prominent rationale for holding the Forum was to accumulate articles for publication in the Theological Journal that had been in view since 2002.

Thus, the seed, which was sown during an evening walk between two friends, has germinated and grown into a full tree that would bear fruits in subsequent years. The history of AATA from 2007 to date would attest to this. It is good to note at this juncture that the ripples of AATA have stirred scholars in the three Seventh-day Adventist universities in West-Central Africa Division to form Adventist Theological Association of West-Central Africa (ATAWA) on February 20, 2011 with a Journal that will soon be published. It is my prayer that God, who gave this dream, will continue to shape it until takes over the entire continent of Africa.

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