



4221

Special Release

10 June, 2019

## OBITUARY

### **PROFESSOR WILSON OLABODE AIYEPEKU (23 August, 1942 – 09 May, 2019)**

Professor A.I. Olayinka, FAS, announces with deep regret, the transition of Professor Wilson Olabode Aiyepku, a staff in the Africa Regional Centre for Information Science (ARCIS), University of Ibadan. The sad event occurred on Thursday, 09 May, 2019.

Late Professor Wilson Olabode Aiyepku was born at Iyara, the Headquarters of the present day Ijumu Local Government Area (LGA) in Kogi State on 23rd August, 1942. He was one of a family of 8 (eight) children, consisting of 3 boys and 5 girls but the only son of his mother. His father, David Aiyepku, played a pivotal role in the establishment of Christianity and education in Iyara-Ijumu and eventually became the first Baba Ijo (then called Baba Egbe) of the combined Anglican Church (CMS Church) in Iyara, a position that he occupied from 1943 until his transition on 28th November, 1968. His mother, Mrs. Phebean Osatomola Aiyepku, was a hardworking person and a doting mother. She transited on 7th July, 1970, less than 2 years after her husband passed on.

Late Professor Aiyepku attended the St. Paul's Anglican Primary School at Iyara from 1949 to 1956. He was very brilliant at school and so he passed the entrance examination into Government Provincial Secondary School in Okene in 1957 and was offered an admission which he was able to take up, thanks to the love and generosity of his elder brother, Chief Theophilus Folorunsho Aiyepku. He had many friends at school but the closest to him were Ade Obayemi and Owoniyi Ologe who were from the same Ijumu LGA like him. Incidentally, the three of them later became Professors at various times in their lives. His set in Okene was the first to take the Cambridge West African School Certificate examination in 5 years. Being a brilliant student, he came out in Grade I and so also were his other two closest friends, Owoniyi Ologe and Ade Obayemi. He proceeded along with his two closest friends to do his Cambridge Higher School Certificate (HSC) course at Okene and the trio successfully completed their course in December 1963.

Late Professor Aiyepku's spiritual development started while he was in Okene. That was where he and his two bosom friends were baptised by Rev. Tolbert of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) in Kuroko, near Okene. The three of them were also active members of the Protestant Choir and of the Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS) of Northern Nigeria. They also attended several of the Leadership Conferences organized by FCS every December for the discipleship training of its members. Those activities, no doubt, formed the foundation for his faith.

Late Professor Aiyepku was admitted into Ahmadu Bello University to read Geography and enjoyed the Northern Nigeria Government scholarships to pursue their studies to graduate with second upper division honours degree category. As part of its staff development programme, the University offered Professor Aiyepku much-coveted scholarship to study for both Master's and Ph.D. degrees in Geography at any British University. To the amazement of his friends, Professor

Aiyepeku turned down the offer and opted to pursue a career in Librarianship which not many people knew about then. His passion for book-related matters started at the (then) Northern Regional Library in Kaduna in 1962 where he subsequently secured a vacation job in 1963 and apparently decided to make a career in Librarianship after studying the then Regional Librarian for a short period. Nothing was going to make him change his mind; he knew what he wanted and he decided that he would go for it. In retrospect, he certainly made the right choice given his later achievements in the field of Library Studies/Information Science.

Two other remarkable things happened to him in Ahmadu Bello University. First, his spiritual development deepened. He continued his membership of the Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS) and also became an active member of the Chapel of Resurrection. Secondly, his path crossed that of Margaret Omotayo Kikelomo at a students' function in Ekinrin-Adde (Margaret's home town located near Iyara, Professor Olabode Aiyepeku's home town) on 25th December, 1964. Both of them were students in Zaria then - he was a student at Ahmadu Bello University, and she was a student at the Advanced Teachers College (ATC). Their courtship ended up with their marriage in an ECWA church in Zaria on 25th March, 1967. They remained happily married for over 46 years until his wife suddenly transited on 22nd October, 2013. The marriage was blessed with four very godly, successful and adorable grown-up children: Olusola, Yetunde, Olugboyega and Eyitayo and eleven grandchildren.

Late Professor Aiyepeku began the pursuit of his new academic/professional passion (Library Studies/Librarianship) in Ahmadu Bello University when he was appointed as a Graduate Assistant (Librarian Trainee) in 1967. He spent the next two years in that position before joining University of Ibadan to seek further knowledge as well as academic and professional recognition in his field of choice. He started by enrolling in the University of Ibadan's one-year Post-Graduate Diploma in Library Studies in September 1968 and was appointed Assistant Lecturer in Library Studies after completing the Diploma in 1969. He subsequently enrolled to do his doctorate degree while lecturing at the University of Ibadan and earned his doctorate degree in Library Studies/Information Science by 1973, becoming the first Nigerian to do so in the emerging field of Information Science. Ten years later after surmounting several challenges, in 1983 he eventually became a Professor of Information Science in the University of Ibadan.

He earned an international laurel in 1986 when he became a Fellow of the (British) Institute of Information Scientists, the first African to be elected a Fellow of that prestigious body.

He served the University of Ibadan in different capacities including: |Sub-Dean, Faculty of Education (August 1975-July 1977); Member, University of Ibadan Senate (October 1983 – October 2005); Head, Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies (August 1983 - July 1985 and August 1998 – October, 1990); Director, Africa Regional Centre for Information Science (ARCIS) (November 1990 – October 1996).

Late Professor Aiyepeku pioneered the field of Information Science at the University of Ibadan and Africa. Between October 1982 and October 1990, Professor Olabode Aiyepeku was the Africa Regional Centre for Information Science (ARCIS) Project Coordinator with International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) where, for eight years, he developed and got approval of the structure and programmes of ARCIS. He planned and coordinated all aspects of curriculum development and its assessment for the new Master of Information Science degree programme, organized academic staff training to Ph.D. level in Canada and the USA for the pioneer faculty of ARCIS, and piloted ARCIS programmes through the approval authorities of the University of Ibadan. These culminated in the establishment and take off of ARCIS in November 1990 with Professor Olabode Aiyepeku appointed as its pioneer Director.

As ARCIS Director from 1990-1996, Professor Olabode Aiyepetu ensured the effective take-off and consolidation of the Centre's four programmes: Master of Information Science (MInfSc) degree programme, Research, Consultancy and Retraining (workshops and seminars). He also ensured continued support for ARCIS through the International Consultative Committee on ARCIS, liaised actively with Canada's IDRC and UNESCO, the two major sources of funding for ARCIS programmes at inception and sold the Centre's relatively unknown programmes to English-speaking West African countries, to African international and intergovernmental agencies and to the fast-growing African private-sector organisations. As Director of ARCIS, he combined the roles of teaching, research, administration and professional service.

His expertise became sought after at international level as evidenced by the numerous consultancies he undertook or participated in. These included the following: Programme Advisor/Consultant, Canada's International Development Centre (IDRC), Canada, in 1980, 1986 and 1990; Consultant, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1984 and 1993; Consultant, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN-ECA), Addis Ababa, in 1988; Consultant, Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa, 1993; and Consultant, World Bank/Global Environment Facility, 1994.

Late Professor Aiyepetu retired from academia after 38 years of meritorious service (the first two at Ahmadu Bello University and the last 36 at the University of Ibadan) in 2005. He loved many things and people during his lifetime, among which are the following: **Books**, which led him to choose Information Science as a career to excel in and to eventually establish a Knowledge Management Consultancy with a subsidiary publishing outfit after his retirement in 2005; **The Word of God**, which he meditated on daily; Christian evangelism, which compelled him to write many books on and for it; **Quotations**, which made him to publish "375 Memorable Quotes & Comments for Meditation, Evangelism, Self-Meditation"; **His brother, Chief Theophilus Folorunsho Aiyepetu**, which made him to write the book, "Building Christlike Character: Christian Brand-marks of Jesus" in his honour to mark his (brother's) 80th birthday anniversary; **His friends**, to whom he always strove to add value as much as he could; **His family**, with whom he was very close especially after the devastating transition of his wife in October 2013; and **His Creator**, whom he served to the end of his life.

Late Professor Aiyepetu possessed many sterling qualities. He was God-fearing, a near-perfectionist, meticulous, analytical, persistent, principled, disciplined, hardworking, appreciative (even of little things), trustworthy, a giver rather than a taker, honest, confident, and of great faith in God. He knew his calling in life, he knew his gifts, and he knew his passion. With God's hand guiding Him he succeeded in matching his calling and gifts with his passion. Little wonder he lived a life of meaning, a life of purpose, a life of significance and, indeed, a fulfilled life until his demise on 09 May, 2019.

May his soul rest in peace. Amen.

{END}