

Elizabeth Dunstan: a tribute¹

Elizabeth Dunstan (later Elizabeth Mills) was my colleague at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. After graduating from Edinburgh University with a specialization in phonetics, she joined the staff of the University College, Ibadan (then affiliated to the University of London) as a lecturer in 1960, and when in 1962 the College became independent as the University of Ibadan, Elizabeth continued as a lecturer and rose to the rank of Senior Lecturer in 1966.

With her background, Elizabeth taught in the Sub-Department of Phonetics, which was then under the Department of English. However, with the establishment of the Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages (later Linguistics and African Languages), Elizabeth expanded her research interests to include not only the contrastive sound system of English and Nigerian languages but also phonetic and phonological analysis of an African language. The former yielded a landmark publication, *Twelve Nigerian Languages: a handbook of their sound system for teachers of English* (Longmans, 1969), which Elizabeth edited and which continues to be frequently cited, while the latter formed the subject of several articles in learned journals as well as her PhD thesis, ‘Tone and concord systems in Ngwe nominals’ (London, 1966).

Elizabeth was a delightful person to have as a colleague. She was hardworking and ready to take on responsibilities in the department. Always with a ready smile, she made friends with ease and had many of them. She was also fond of hospitality. I can’t remember how often she brought friends and colleagues together at her Amina Way bungalow for cocktails or dinner. I keep wondering whether it was at one such get-together party that she and Ian Mills, who was then Deputy Bursar at the university, met. To cut a long story short, Ian and Elizabeth got married and Elizabeth resigned from the department in 1968, an action which I blame on Ian since it amounted to robbing our department of a valuable and amiable member.

Back in London, Elizabeth continued to be in touch with Ibadan. A few of her colleagues in Ibadan, of whom I was one, frequently spent some time with the couple while visiting the UK. Not only that, Elizabeth kept us informed of our former colleagues who had retired and were then living in Britain. From the vantage point of an office at the School of Oriental and African Studies, Elizabeth was able to interact with several scholars from Africa, while working (gratis, I gather) as the Publications Chair of the International African Institute. It was in this capacity that she handled the publication of my book, *Language and the Nation*, which was published in 1991 by Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute.

On a personal note, I cannot help but recall my visits to the residence of the Mills at Belmont Hill in Lewisham (London), the two huge dogs that I was

¹Elizabeth Dunstan became Chair of the Publications Committee of the International African Institute in 1982, although she had been helping out with the Institute’s publications operation before that. She retired from the role of Chair in 2005, but then became a trustee in 2007, a role she retired from in 2011.

always scared of, reminiscences of Ibadan and updates on those still around, and news of the conferment of the knighthood on Ian for services rendered to the National Health Service, thereby making the couple Sir Ian and Lady Elizabeth Mills. Finally, the highlight of my visits was the Sunday worship at St Margaret's Church.

In the passing on of Elizabeth, her family and large circle of friends have lost a gem, our department at Ibadan has lost one of its pioneers, and I have lost a great friend. May she rest in peace.

Ayo Bamgboṣe