

# Balanças de Freitas, Pedro (1924–2015)

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## DIAMANTINO ABÍLIO SAWAMBO

Diamantino Abílio Sawambo

B.A. (Montemorelos University, Mexico), serves as the Publishing, Spirit of Prophecy and Communication director for the Southwest Angola Union Mission since 2015. He previously worked as a district pastor and assistant lecturer at Huambo Theological Seminary. He is now studying for a Master of Arts in Biblical-Theological Studies (MABTS) at the Adventist University of Africa in Kenya. Pastor Sawambo also worked as a journalist for the “Folha8” independent newspaper in Angola.

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Pedro Balancas de Freitas was an Angolan Seventh-day Adventist evangelist, educator, translator, pastor, and church administrator, who served the church in various capacities in his country.

## Early Life

Pedro Balanças de Freitas was born October 15, 1924, at Bongo Mission, in the same year that William H. Anderson opened the first Adventist mission station in the Longonjo Municipality, in Huambo Province of Angola.<sup>1</sup> He was the son of Freitas Sakapatu and Margarida Vayekela.<sup>2</sup> Pedro was to be the next in the line of the kings of the Kandumbo Kingdom, if he had not accepted the ministerial calling, according to Eliseu.<sup>3</sup> “I told them when requested to come and take the position that I was belonging to another kingdom,”<sup>4</sup> de Freitas revealed to Eliseu, a younger minister who was desiring to receive more experience from a senior minister.

Kandumbo kingdom is to the northern side of Huambo, in the Tchikala Tcholohanga Municipality, while Bongo Mission is located on the western side, in the Longonjo Municipality. According to reports, this kingdom was destroyed after the white people conquered it, and the people ran away to Kalima and to Bélem, the area surrounding the city of Huambo.<sup>5</sup> After marrying, Freitas Sakapatu decided to go to the Sandombo area, which surrounds Bongo Mission, to join one of his uncles, who was at that time working as a catechist of the Evangelical Congregational Church at Elende Mission.



Pastor Pedro Balanca de Freitas.

Photo courtesy of Diamantino Abílio Sawambo.

## His Conversion and Baptism

At the age of 12, in 1936, the young Pedro was sent to Bongo Institute, graduating in 1944.<sup>6</sup> He was baptized in 1938. His conversion may be traced back to his mother's fear of losing yet another son. His parents' first two sons died before Pedro's birth. While going to Elende Mission, preparing a couple of young couple for their marriage, Freitas Sakapatu encountered his nephew, who was sent to Lepi for work. Surprised, he questioned him about what he was doing there.

Coincidentally, William H. Anderson, the American missionary who pioneered Bongo Mission, appeared and asked the young man who he was talking to. Anderson invited Freitas Sakapatu to join him at Bongo Mission. Freitas Sakapatu postponed his response until he could speak with his wife.<sup>7</sup> Margarida Vayekela declared, "Who knows if being with this white missionary my sons will not die prematurely again as my first two? The first and the second have died, at least the coming one may not die."<sup>6</sup> The couple moved to Bongo Mission, where Pedro was born.

## Education and Marriage

After graduating from Bongo Institute,<sup>9</sup> de Freitas served the church in various capacities. Many years later, in 1979, he went to England, where he received training in the English language.

On March 8, 1945, Pedro married Rodhe Menezes, a daughter of Leornado J. Mínes and Feliciana Chicava, who were also missionary workers. They were blessed with seven children, four sons and three daughters, and many grand-children and great grand-children. Many of their children served the church. These include his daughter Zilpa de Freitas (deceased), wife of the late Pastor Teodoro Elias; his son Dr. Menezes de Freitas (deceased), the Southwest Angola Union Health Department director (2015-2020), and Pastor Coquenão Lopes de Freitas, who currently serves as district pastor in the South Mission.

After losing his wife through death, on February 17, 1987, Pastor Pedro Balanças de Freitas married Maria de Fátima Lofita, daughter of Baptista Cangumba and Inocencia Chivole, with whom he was blessed with two boys and one daughter.

## Ministry

Pastor Pedro Balanças de Freitas served the Seventh-day Adventist Church in various capacities and places. He was a teacher and evangelist in Kuale Mission, in Malange Province (1945-1952). He was ordained to the gospel ministry on March 18, 1950. Then he worked as a primary school and then a theology teacher at the Bongo Mission Institute (1952-1969). Later he became the pastor of Huambo Central SDA Church, and dean of Huambo Adventist College (1969-1970). Then he served as district pastor in Quilengues, Quipungo and Kalubembe (1971). He returned to teaching theology at Bongo Seminary, while pastoring the surrounding areas (1971-1974).

Thereafter, he pastored in Kassongue and Ambuiva (1974-1975), while concurrently serving as an associated departmental director of Sabbath School, Layman Activities, Youth and the Voice of Prophecy School (1974). Finally, he served as president of the Angola Union Mission from (1975-1991).<sup>10</sup>

Under his leadership, the number of baptized members increased from 24,182 members in 1975, to 45,306 by the end of his first term in 1980.<sup>11</sup> In his second term, from 1980 to 1985, church membership increased to 70,935.<sup>12</sup> During his last term, from 1985 to 1991, the church membership reached 113,737.<sup>3</sup>

## Contribution

The impact of Pastor Pedro Balanças de Freitas can be seen in the lives of his family, as well as in the church in general, where he left many visible marks, as an administrator, pastor, and evangelist.

His daughter Zilpa de Freitas was the first Women's Ministries director for the Adventist Church in Angola. Married to Pastor Teodoro Elias, she served in this capacity for almost one full term. His son, Pastor Coquenão Lopes de Freitas, currently serves as a district pastor in the South Mission of Angola. Pastor Coquenão also served at the union mission office as Youth Department director. Doctor Menezes de Freitas, another son, served as a medical missionary, and as the South-Western Angola Union Health Ministries director from 2015 to 2020.

Pastor Balanças de Freitas was responsible for the continuation of many mission outreach wings of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Angola, like publishing, health and education. During de Freitas' presidency, Pastor Isaac Tadeu served as Union executive secretary and chief financial officer, and later Pastor Vasco Cubenda became the Union executive secretary, while Pastor Tadeu continued as Union chief financial officer. They promoted the work during the Angolan civil war, which destroyed many of the church structures built by foreign missionaries.

Nevertheless, Eugenio Jaime, one of the printing press missionary workers, reported how Pastor Balança was passionate about the publishing work, and how even after his retirement he continued motivating them for the mission. He was also instrumental in the development of the first hymnal, translating some songs from English to Umbundu.

Pastor Pedro Balança de Freitas died July 18, 2015, while he was in the Republic of Namibia for a health checkup, and was buried in Huambo, Angola.

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## SOURCES

Eliseu, Samuel Chalita. *O Relacionamento da Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia Com A Sociedade Hodierna* Luanda, Angola, 2019. In the author's private collection.

Justino, Alexandre. *Pregoeiros da Verdade Presente: História da Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia em Angola 1924-2004* (Portugal: Relgráfica, 2007).

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## NOTES

1. Pedro Balanças de Freitas, interview by author, January 9, 1991, notes in author's private collection.
2. Ibid.
3. Samuel Chalita Eliseu, *O Relacionamento da Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia Com A Sociedade Hodierna*, (Luanda, Angola: s/p: 2019), 57-61.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid, 58.
6. Pedro Balanças de Freitas, interview by author, January 9, 1991.
7. Eliseu, 58-59.
8. Ibid.
9. Pedro Balanças de Freitas, interview by author, January 9, 1991.
10. Ibid.
11. Alexandre Justino, *Pregoeiros da Verdade Presente: História da Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia em Angola 1924-2004* ( Portugal: Relgráfica, 2007), 196-197.
12. Ibid, 197.
13. Ibid.

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