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The missionaries first encountered him by the side of his uncle, the traditional chief at Holesa, a border village near Angola. He probably actually came from Angola. In these border villages, the populations often carry a double identity, because the tribal territories do not follow national boundaries. People may identify themselves as Congolese or Angolan, depending on the circumstances. In any case, Joseph Munange never spoke about his birth or his parents, and he spent his life in Congo, where he had a family into which he was well integrated.

Because certain populations were hostile toward outside influences, the missionaries always looked for means of negotiation to allow them to do their work in peace. Often it was from the entourage of the chief that men were chosen to serve as interpreters or project managers. Munange was one of the persons designated by the village chief to lend a hand to the missionaries. They asked the chief for authorization to take him to Kalamba Mukenge to receive biblical training there for the benefit of his family and all the population. The chief agreed to this.

After his biblical training, Munange, now called Joseph, was immediately assigned as teacher-evangelist of Tshisaka. Later he would serve other villages. Joseph had a particular passion for morning prayer. Each day he woke up early to ring the bell for worship. In one village he served, they called him Joseph the Ringer.

photo—Joseph Munange

Joseph Munange dedicated himself to the evangelism of his Chokwe brothers and sisters in the territory situated between the Kasai and Kwilu rivers and shared his vision with Pastor Noel Kahuku in that region. A present-day pastor affirms that Joseph had a strong conviction of the power of God over the forces of evil. Knowing perfectly well that Chokwe society often resorts to practices involving fetishes and sorcery, he always used to say, “Christianity is able to be victorious over the spirits and the traditional spiritual forces.”

Joseph Munange was aware of his limited formal education. In the face of the demands for developing the church in a new context, he sent rising youth to study in order to ensure that there would be successors for his work in the future. A number of these individuals are leaders today.

Before his death in 2002, he sought to leave his church one great accomplishment. He mobilized the churches in the area to become self-governing. He succeeded in creating a new church district with its headquarters in Ngombe.

At his death, no one spoke about his Angolan origins. The church praised the Lord for having used this man through whom many souls found the way to eternal salvation.

Vincent Ndandula