

An Intensive Interreligious Exchange in Congo Brazzaville

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Our Congolese members in 1995. Hanna Lotterie is in the center in the white robe

Beginning in 1975, Hanna Lotterie (née Reinbold) spent 25 years as a missionary and national messiah in various African countries. This testimony is from her hope-inspiring work in the Republic of Congo in the mid-1990s.

During the years 1992 to 1996, I served as national leader of Congo Brazzaville. Besides the spiritual work in our own movement, these three years were marked by an intensive interreligious exchange with other churches and beliefs.

The Congo had been dominated by communism for several decades, and similar to other African countries was in a transition to a more democratic form of society. All those religious movements that had been closed down and forbidden during the communist reign were resurrected to new life.



Interreligious Conference organized by LICAME

Our church was legally established at that time, and I had an official missionary visa. We were members of LICAME[i], an interreligious group, embracing the various religious tendencies of the country: A West African Church from Benin who called upon the Holy Spirit through very rhythmical drum music, the Lutheran Protestant Church, affiliated to the German Lutheran Church, a prophetic local group who did healings through spirits riding in waters, an esoteric order, a local spiritual church speaking mostly in tongues, and several others.

LICAME had been originally founded to create a legal basis for smaller religious groups, so that they could reclaim their lands and buildings, confiscated under communism. But as time went on, the leaders of these groups, and I believe, partially due to our influence, started to meet and communicate on a spiritual level.

In order to pray for the nation, we held monthly interreligious worship services, taking turns, each time in another church or group. Whenever a group had a special holiday or celebration, they invited the other members of LICAME as well. These meetings were very colorful, displaying all the colors of the rainbow. Each group had their own ceremonial or worship gowns: some in only white, some in all red or blue, some with special sashes, some in normal clothing, which is also very colorful in Africa. Each orchestra or choir also had its own uniform.

On the national level, we organized conferences and discussions on important national or cultural topics, attracting a large audience; once or twice we obtained a small amount of funding from our international headquarters, which was really a big help.

Our main contribution, I believe, to this interreligious group was God's Word revealed through the Divine Principle. Also the clear logical presentation of God's Word and providence, our True Parents' vision of interreligious unity and collaboration for peace made a very important impact on all. Most of the other groups were founded through a revelation of their prophet or founders, others depended solely on the Bible or on sporadic revelations from the spiritual world. It became very clear that our movement contributed very substantially to the group and natural took a leadership position.

My most cherished memories of that time are our joint all night prayer vigils. Sitting on straw mats on the floor in one of our churches, we discussed, sang and prayed a lot. The Holy Spirit was our constant companion and a very special feeling of unity and belonging together was created over time.



Congo interfaith ministers 1995; Hanna is in the middle at the front

At one point, when the political situation of the country reached another crisis, we decided to hold a special prayer condition for the nation. We decided to pray during three nights at a holy site of one prophetic group.

We drove to a hilly area covered by deep forest, toward the hometown of one of our prophets. Due to some special circumstances, we were only four persons, the prophet, the official director of LICAME, a Congolese elder brother and myself. We woke up every morning at three o'clock and started to walk

towards the special holy place, crossing fields, rivers on very narrow bridges, mostly just a tree trunk, and climbed up the hill through the forest. At one point, we had to run up the hill, since we crossed paths with the very aggressive soldier ants. They can climb up your trousers in seconds and their bites are like fire. In order to get rid of them, one has to literally decapitate them.

On top of the hill, under a special tree, we held hands and prayed for a very long time. God and spiritual world were very near. When we returned to Brazzaville, the capital city, the prophet led us to meet the president of the national parliament. In fact, our prophet had a relationship of “prophet and king” to this man. Later on, this person attended an important international conference in Korea and received the Holy Wine.

In 1995, our long cherished dream became reality when True Parents set their foot on African soil. During their world tour, they stopped in Kinshasa, the capital city of the Democratic Republic of Congo, called Zaïre at that time. The capitals of the two Congo, Kinshasa and Brazzaville are facing each other, just separated by the Congo River. We rented a huge ferry and all of our members from Brazzaville, including three government ministers were able to meet True Parents in Kinshasa. For most of our young members and our very young second generation children, it was their first time to meet our True Parents in person.

It was such a deep and moving event, overflowing with God’s love and grace.



Brazzaville

[\[i\]](#) The work of LICAME and our involvement was documented by Hagenbucher-Sacripanti (Frank), *Le Prophète et le Militant (Congo-Brazzaville)*, *Histoires de vie, discours des genies*, L’Harmattan, Paris, 2002, p. 618-636