



SANT 355 / Master's Thesis in Anthropology of Development

Spring 2014

By Alexander Krosby

*“Work and Strengthening”:  
Ontological dualism and the ethical treatment of mentally ill  
patients in Madagascar*



## **Table of contents:**

<u>Introduction</u>	<u>p.1</u>
<b><u>Part I</u></b>	<b><u>p.7</u></b>
<u>Outline of Malagasy history</u>	<u>p.10</u>
<u>The kingdom of Madagascar</u>	<u>p.12</u>
<u>The Fifohazana</u>	<u>p.15</u>
<u>Fifohazana Ankaramalaza</u>	<u>p.21</u>
<u>Conclusion</u>	<u>p.24</u>
<b><u>Part II</u></b>	<b><u>p.25</u></b>
<u>Apology</u>	<u>p.26</u>
<u>The fieldwork undertaking: method and material</u>	<u>p.29</u>
<u>Toby Ankaramalaza</u>	<u>p.34</u>
<u>The invisible nature of mental illness</u>	<u>p.39</u>
<u>“Asa sy Fampahrezana”- Work and Strengthening</u>	<u>p.42</u>
<u>Preliminary analysis of the ritual</u>	<u>p.51</u>
<i><u>Invisible power and taboo: Malagasy conceptions of health and illness</u></i>	<i><u>p.54</u></i>
<i><u>The sacred heart: Malagasy conceptions of the person</u></i>	<i><u>p.56</u></i>
<i><u>The shepherds as “Knights of Faith”</u></i>	<i><u>p.60</u></i>
<i><u>Conclusion: Malagasy historiography as problem and solution?</u></i>	<i><u>p.64</u></i>
<i><u>Bibliography</u></i>	<i><u>p.66</u></i>
<i><u>Appendix A</u></i>	<i><u>p.72</u></i>

## Introduction

This thesis is an analysis of the christian revival movement called “Fifohazana” in Madagascar, within which I did fieldwork, on and off between the end of June 2013 till the middle of January 2014. To begin with, I will briefly list some of characteristics of the movement that would perhaps trigger some interest:

First of all, it is somewhat unique in the history of “indigenized Christianity” in Africa. A term coined by Africanist Theologian Appiah-Kubi which has since gained some currency in the scholarship on Christianity on the continent (Meyer 2004: 447; Appiah-Kubi 1981). It began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, some decades before the wave of indigenization in Africa in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Skeie 2011). As one historian of Madagascar has suggested, Christianity even resonated in the depths of Malagasy religious sentiments from the very first contact in the 1820s, when Missionaries from the London Missionary Society arrived as a part of the diplomatic relationship between Britain and the highland Malagasy king Radama I (Larson 1997). It shows that Christianity “struck deep” very early, on a continent and in a time where Christianity is still being somewhat frowned upon as a foreign and inauthentic religion, with imperialist pretensions rendering it “unfit” for authentic indigenous appropriation (Meyer 2004; Larson 1997; Keller 2005: 37-42).

Second, it is probably the most important provider of mental health care in Madagascar today, where according to one informant there are only four trained psychiatrists employed by the government for a country of 22 million inhabitants. Furthermore, their primary mode of treatment is daily exorcism ceremonies conducted by ritual specialists called “*mpiandry*” (lit. shepherd), and is used alongside treatment with psychotropic drugs in the largest treatment centers. These centers are called “*toby*”, and are sacred communities set apart from their surroundings wherein revivalists and their followers live out their sacred existence against the profanity of the outside world (Eliade 1961). An overview of mental health care in Madagascar are hard to get by, but one article by French anthropologist Louis Molet suggests that the movement was a significant national provider as early as the 1960s (1967: 20-21). This should come as no surprise, as the primacy of healing and well-being in religious rites all over the world is now well documented in anthropology, and continues to challenge the disciplinary division of “medicine” and the etic analysis of therapeutic efficacy, versus “religion” and the emic study of the sacred ( Suhr 2013: 145; Csordas 1987).

Last but not least, it is important to note that Madagascar has been thoroughly scrutinized by anthropologists, sociologists, archeologists and historians for over a century. While this has truly expanded our knowledge of the great Island, and generated theory that has later become quite influential in mainstream anthropology, notably by Maurice Bloch and Arnold Van Gennep, the topic of Christianity has barely been touched upon (but see Bloch 1986; Keller 2005; Raison-Jourde 1991). Nevertheless, recent census estimates that at least half of the population consider themselves Christian (Keller 2005: 41). This oblivion is no less flagrant regarding the *Fifohazana* whose gradual growth and influence in the Malagasy society at large has reached unprecedented heights, recently culminating in a series of heads of state who are fervent supporters, and have their own residences at *Toby Ankaramalaza* my main field site, but which forms the topic of less than a handful of texts (Jacquier-Dubourdiou 1996, 2000 & 2002; Halvorson 2010; Nielssen & Skeie 2014; Sharp 1994; Skeie 2011). Clearly, understanding the *Fifohazana*, would contribute to the understanding of what it means to be Malagasy in the singular, a topic which is frequently referred to in articles and edited books on Madagascar as “pan-malagasy themes”, referring to the apparent fundamental unity in the diversity of practices described by anthropologists all over the Island, but where Christianity and the *Fifohazana* is mostly left out (K. Middleton 1999; Keller 2005: 37-42; Southall 1986).

As I arrived in Madagascar on 26<sup>th</sup> of June, the Malagasy independence day, and as the first presidential elections after the disastrous coup in 2009 were carried out during my fieldwork, I witnessed firsthand that this concern for a pan-Malagasy identity also coincides with the Malagasy’s own, as the last three decades has seen recurrent and grave political and economic crisis (Nielssen & Skeie; Sharp 2001). Nationalism and the question of identity is not a new phenomenon in Madagascar, with roots going back to the first contact between the Merina Highland Kingdom and the colonial empires of France and Britain in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, and before that because of the Indian Ocean slave trade of which Madagascar was a significant (albeit distant) part (Randrianja & Ellis 2009). But the recent global discourse of democratization has given new impetus to these questions, while the history of foreign and intra-Malagasy conquest and slavery is looming behind (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 211).

These issues led me to concentrate a lot of energy on the extensive literature that has been produced over the last century on Malagasy culture and history, and I also read ethnographies on Madagascar while on fieldwork. I quickly realized that this revival, although vigorously denouncing other religious practices of Madagascar as “the work of the devil” and aggressively aims at converting everyone in Madagascar to their version of the Christian faith

through what they themselves call *tafika masina* (lit. ‘holy war’), held many things in common with those that they struggled to differentiate themselves from. First and foremost among these similarities is that healing and well-being is the *raison d’être* of their practices, indeed of virtually any religious practice in Madagascar, despite their (mostly church-leadership) overt rhetoric of aggressive evangelism.

But the objective of my thesis cannot be reduced to delimiting and comparing “Christian culture” as in the works of Joel Robbins (Robbins 20??YEAR). Nor is it a corrective to the lack of ethnographies of Christianity in light of the present relevance. And last but not least I am neither psychiatrist nor medical doctor who is set out to evaluate the therapeutic efficacy of “indigenous medical systems”.

To illustrate I have included a passage from my fieldnotes from one of the most intense and impressive days during fieldwork (bracketed words and passages are my own translations):

*“10.09.13 (Tuesday). Now it has been some time since I’ve written about things I have talked about, people I’ve met and interviewed, and what I’ve done and participated in. My stay with Abban’iTristan has been fruitful, and I feel I am beginning to see some of what they are seeing, or at least understand something of what they understand: “Mietsika ny devoly”, miasa ny devoly”. “Ny devoly tsy tia ny fianakaviana” ... ”mipetraka akaiky” [“twitching/occurring, is the devil”, “working, is the devil”, “the devil does not like family” ...”is sitting besides”]. I met Hery on the road, and we talked about how the devil was working against him. [...]*

*Yesterday I was at Mpandrosiriri [a hamlet just outside the village, where patients work the rice-fields] (Monday 09.09.13). And before that I did one interview in the morning with Maman’iAlizé and Alizé. We talked about the reason that she became sick, which concerned magic, and pedofilia? She has been sick since 2007, when she was 17 years old. We talked about how the illness “worked”, ny fietsika ny aretina [the way of twitching/occurring of the illness], and about the heart (foho) and pains in her body (paralysis), and about some sort of voodoo –magic (?) that this horrible man had used.*

*Later last night, I interviewed an old couple. The husband invited me to their home to interview them because his wife was ill. She was ill because of an inheritance-settlement, where land was split, and she been ill since. He told me that the illness in her head was often dependent on the weather (tuetrandro), and that approximately every six months she had an affliction which made her sleepless. He would go and buy Chlorpromazine [anti-psychotic drug] for her, as a sleeping medicine. She would often have these afflictions in June.*

*Earlier this morning I asked Mama’dElie about the connection between the weather, seasons and the sick, and she said that July was a time where many of the illnesses, or the sick patients would “mietsika” – be agitated (shake?).*

10.09.2013- Ankaramalaza- Trano Vato [Stone House]- Evening: I slept over at Abban 'iTristan's house last night. We woke up at five to go to church because none of us could hear the churchbells ringing. After church, I went by my house (Trano Vato) and then back to Abban 'iTristan, who were about to drink coffee. While we were sitting there, a Merina woman came by to talk (with me?). She had a daughter who was ill- marary saina [illness of the mind]. She asked for advice from Abban 'iTristan on how she could "lead" her -Mpitaiza or mitaiza [Caretaker or, "to nurse"]. She talked about how she ended up here at Ankaramalaza. She came here with the man who is building a house just above Abban 'iTristan- Daniel, the man I talked to after a worship last week, who was very interested/curious about Anthropology, and worked at the ministry of finance (conversion story?). He was building a house in Ankaramalaza to change his life and deepen his faith. He had met the Merina lady and advised her to come to Ankaramalaza with her daughter, and had given them money for the journey and board. She was (soon?) empty of money and was shy to ask for more, because she was living in his house. Abban 'iTristan told her to use chains to make it easier to make her daughter come to church, as her daughter often got angry and refused to go, and would bite and hit.

I went home and came back later to join Abban 'iTristan at her house to help put on the chains, and bring her daughter to church (would he have skipped it if I didn't come back?). When I returned, he and his 'cousin' was about to remove parasy [sand-flees] from the feet of Gregory [his patient, an elderly man]. There were probably about 10-20 of them in his feet, and it took a "long" time to get them all out (about 20 or 30 minutes?). I returned home to eat, and came back once again, and we were ready to go to the woman's house together with Felix [his other patient, a teenager] and his cousin. She started to talk about the illness, when Felix suddenly asked Abban 'iTristan something about the chains in his hands. Abban 'iTristan answered something in the affirmative, and said that as long as he wouldn't run away anymore, he wouldn't need to wear the chains himself (more? I didn't get it all). After a while Abban 'iTristan started to approach the daughter to make her come (when I first tried to greet her she didn't react, looked out the window, then afterwards she greeted me). While we were talking she sat by herself and mumbled, and reminded me a little of one of the patients living with Abban 'iJean in the way she was mumbling to herself. Abban 'iTristan prayed first, and asked her carefully to come. Then he told her that if she didn't want to come she would get chains put on her. When she didn't react to his admonitions he put on the chains, and then started the brawl between them to get her to walk. It looked like Abban 'iTristan became more and more hard-handed, and she more and more unwilling. Further down the road he took her arm behind her back to push her forward. Afterwards I could see the bite-marks on Abban 'iTristan's hand, and it was bleeding. More people had come to "help" underway, among others Raoly.

Just afterwards there was another lady [Florence] who didn't want to walk (the one who I have seen before, who is carried to church, lives just next to Trano Norvézian [House of the Norwegians]). I suddenly realized that since we started to talk with the Merina lady, Felix had gone to church all by himself: Felix was without chains yesterday!

*The big lady [Florence] had to be pushed and forced to go, often she collapsed or sat down, refusing to rise. Abban'iTristan and Raoly would then grab the chains by her feet and drag her forward. Then she started to scream, in pain I realized. Her eyes look docile and sad (Is her leg hurt?).*

*Abban'iTristan and Raoly and others laughed when it was over, and said something about her being strong, or that the devil within her was strong. I was in shock: Abban'iTristan had slapped her face. There is a huge ethical problem in this for those who cannot speak or express themselves."*

The questions and issues that emanate from such events seem endless. They touch upon classic Anthropological topics such as cosmology, witchcraft and the nature of evil and misfortune, ethnomedical understanding of health and illness, and not least ontological dualism and the relationship between mind and body.

In no sufficient way was I able to address each of these topics properly during fieldwork, as most days I spent in this village was filled to the brim with stories and events like those above. As I was spending more and more time with patients, that from want of better words can be called mentally or socially "disabled" or "disconnected", at least from an outsiders point of view, issues of the ethical treatment of people who are labeled "mentally ill" became increasingly salient. At first, it seemed to me that they were victims of abuse and assaults on an everyday basis, either through the ritual exorcisms (which at first I likened to verbal abuse), or the use of chains and means to restrain their movement, and the strict moral code that was imposed and sanctioned on them. The use of chains and coercion on patients with "mental" or "demonic" illnesses is also one of the few things that is known of the revival outside of church and mission circles in the west; for example a relatively recent news article from the Norwegian newspaper 'Morgenbladet' was illustrated with a double-page photo of a patients feet in chains (Vaaland 2011).

Little did I know beforehand that some of my ethnocentric and apologetic concerns for the "good" would so radically influence my fieldwork experience, and confront me with such difficult ethical questions. My field notes were suffused with my personal reflections and ethical anxieties with which I was confronted. I rather unreflectively "took sides" and demonstratively spent more time with those that were labelled "marary" (literally "ill") rather than with shepherds. In fact, ethical and moral concerns superseded all other in the two months I stayed in the village that would become my main field site, and to try to "wrist" the topic of my thesis away from these issues would conceal significant part of my fieldwork

experience, and worse it might seriously compromise any coherence between analysis and my material.

But to begin with, two main problems were crystallized early on in my fieldwork as a result of these experiences, which are central to this thesis:

First of all, why are those labeled mentally ill treated as they are?

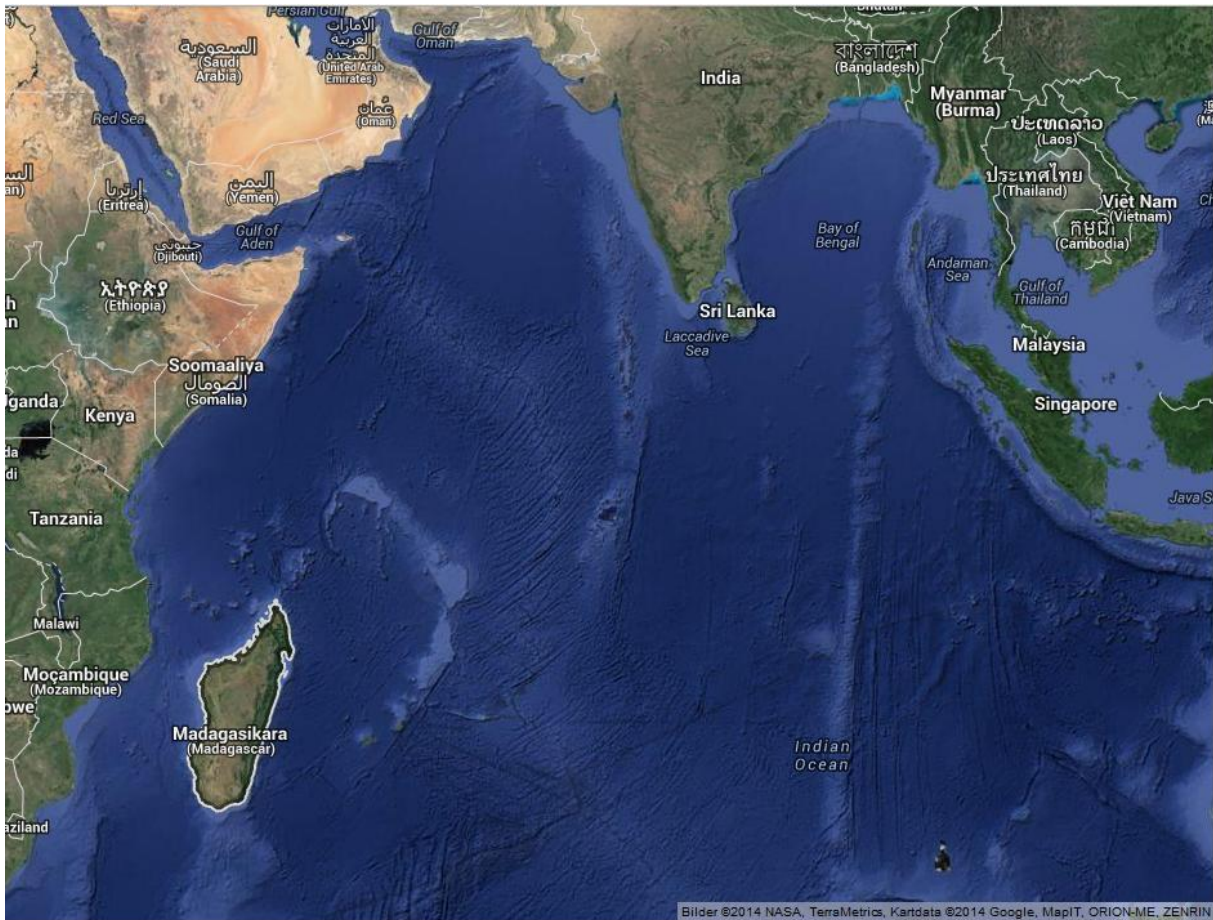
Second, how to go about to explore ethnographically, or simply describe mental illness, influenced as I am by the psychiatric discourses of my society? How to circumvent this discourse and, hopefully gain an anthropologically fruitful perspective?

The answer to these questions forms the basis for the rest of my thesis, by recourse to phenomenology, ontology and a close reading of Malagasy ethnographies.

My thesis will be divided in two main parts. The first part begin with the necessary background and context information about Malagasy history and the revival, and proceed to a presentation of my fieldwork undertakings, together with some reflections on my emotions and my position with regards to my interlocutors and how this affected my fieldwork. The second part will in the first instance attempt to describe the problem of how to ethnographically relate to “mental illness” as a given phenomena. Then I will give a detailed presentation of the main healing/exorcism ritual, and compare it with some essential elements in Malagasy cosmology, which will in large part help us understand the question of “why” the patients are treated as they are.



**Part I: Context & Background**



The island of Madascar with its 587 000 square kilometers and roughly 21 million inhabitants, lies in the south-west corner of the Indian Ocean and is the fourth largest island in the world (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 1; Institut National de la Statistique de Madagascar 2012). It is 1,600 kilometers long, and up to 570 kilometers wide, and It lies some 400 kilometers from mainland Africa, and 6,000 kilometers from Southeast Asia (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 21). Over 60 percent of the population is rural, and where rice is the staple food (J. Middleton 1997: 73). The urban population is largely concentrated in the central highlands, and medium sized town centers scattered throughout the island (J. Middleton 1997: 73).

Famous for its flora and fauna, where over 80 percent are endemic to the island, it also has a very diverse geography and climate making it a continent unto itself (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 21-22). The island is divided by a highland plateau about 1500 meters above sea level, rising sharply from the flat plains of the east coast, and dropping gradually towards the west coast (Ibid.). The highland plateau has a temperate climate not unlike southern Europe, with vast expanses of grassy hills often unsuitable for agriculture, and fertile valley bottoms. In the central and southern parts of the highlands there are huge wet-rice fields, previously marshes

that were long-ago drained for irrigation (Ibid.). This type of riziculture was an important part of the rise of the highland kingdoms in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century (Bloch 1988).

The highland plateau and the east coast plains are divided by a mountainous ridge that runs from north to south with some peaks over 3000 meters high. The Indian Ocean trade winds hit the abrupt escarpments making the strip of the eastern plains the rainiest region of all Madagascar, with over 4000mm of annual rainfall (J. Middleton 1997). The Eastcoast is popularly said to have only two seasons: The raining season, and the season of rains (Keller 2009: 20). The Islands remaining primary rainforest is located here on a thin strip from north to south, partly on the plains and partly covering the mountainous ridge (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 22). Another saying I was told on several occasions is that “the forest of the east will never exhaust”, reminiscent perhaps of its previous extent. While the west coast is hotter and drier than its eastern and highland counterpart with a more marked seasonal difference between rain and dry season, the southern part of the island is arid and desert-like where most of the vegetation consists of cactus and spiny bush (Ibid.).

The Malagasy language is part of the Austronesian language family, where over 90 percent of the vocabulary is considered of Austronesian origin with a significant “bantu” influence (Vérin & Wright 1999: 35). Nevertheless, the genetic origin of most Malagasy is on average equally divided between Africa and Southeast Asia (Dewar & Richard 2012: 503).

## *Outline of Malagasy ancient history*

To make a long and complicated story short, maybe the single most important fact about Madagascar in ancient history is that it lies in the Indian Ocean. By the middle-ages, and thanks to advanced maritime technology, favorable trade winds, and the partial hegemony of Islam, “[t]he Indian Ocean constituted the world’s most advanced integrated trading system of the time” (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 55-56). Madagascar has probably been a distant part of the Indian Ocean trade and slave networks since its inception, before 0 AD (Ellis & Randrianja 2009; Alpers 2013). Presently, archeological records show that permanent settlements did not establish until the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries (Ellis & Randrianja 2009). Waves of immigration from Southeast Asia, East Africa, and perhaps to a lesser extent the middle-east and Indian subcontinent, have since succeeded each other until the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when Portuguese eruption in the Indian Ocean collapsed many of the long-standing maritime networks that had existed for centuries (Dewar 1997: 484).

By the 17<sup>th</sup> century several centralized polities had emerged on the Island, flourishing on the Indian Ocean slave trade that was progressively connected to the Atlantic slave trade because of European Imperial expansion (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 99-121). Three of the most important polities, or maybe one should say the most enduring “ethnonyms” since they are employed to this day, were: the *Betsimisaraka* Federation on the northeast coast led by a métisse Malagasy-English, son of a pirate; the *Sakalava* dynasties on the north-west coast, with close links to Arab and Swahili Merchants; and by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps the most famous outside of Madagascar, the *Merina* Kingdom in the central highland Plateau (Randrianja & Ellis 2009:99-152). All of these have been recently well-studied in English speaking monographs by Jennifer Cole for the *Betsimisaraka*, Gillian Feeley-Harnik and Lesley Sharp for the *Sakalava*, and Maurice Bloch for the *Imerina* highlands respectively (Cole 2001; Sharp 1993; Feeley-Harnik 1991; Bloch 1986).

I used the word “ethnonym” in the preceding paragraph, a word borrowed from the historians Pier Larson study of the emergence of national consciousness in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Imerina, because it fares well with the rest of the anthropological scholarship in Madagascar concerning ethnicity and identity (Larson 1996). The idea, found throughout Madagascar is that identity and “ethnicity” is locally understood as a product of long-term investment in certain kinds of activities, or work (Astuti 1995; Bloch 1995: 64; Feeley-Harnik 1986). Although Madagascar is officially divided into 18 “tribes”, this is largely a product of the

French Colonial Administrations attempt at control of rather heterogeneous groups scattered around the island (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 155-160). Furthermore, it is important to note from the outset that politics, religion and health were, and are not separate domains of concern in Malagasy cosmology and conceptual scheme, and I will return to this important topic later in my thesis (Bloch 1986: 20). The the 19<sup>th</sup> Century kingdom of Imerina is by far the polity that has received most attention by scholars in the French and English speaking tradition, and since it was here that Christianity first took a serious hold I will give it a brief outline.

## ***“The kingdom of Madagascar”***

The kingdom of Imerina was first unified in the 1780's by the now legendary king *Andrianampoinimerina*, a posthumous name which literally means the “nobleman at the heart of Imerina”, or perhaps the “the nobleman who is loved by those of Imerina” (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 112; Berg 1988). He unified the whole population of the central part of the highland plateau, from a number of smaller kingdoms and independent endogamous kinship units, or what Bloch calls *deme* (Bloch 1986: PAGE). He is famously stated to have said in a ritual speech (*kabary*) held to his subjects that “only the seas will be the limits to my rice fields” (Berg 1988). His rule lasted from about 1780 till his death in 1809, and the project of conquering the whole island was continued by his son, King Radama I who ruled from 1810 till his death in 1828( Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 119). During this time, the pressure of the Colonial Empires of France and Britain were increasingly being felt, and Radama I sought contact with the British to better position himself in this colonial power play (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 119-121).

The British sought to expand their influence in the Indian Ocean, and abolish the slave-trade; partly because of abolitionist pressure at home, and partly because it would deprive the French colony at Réunion of much needed slave-labor, and hence weaken the French plantation economy (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 123-140). The kingdom established by his father *Andrianampoinimerina*, was heavily invested in the slave-trade and huge sums of silver piastres (originating from South America) flowed into highland Madagascar in the period in question, and most of the free population was heavily dependent on domestic slavery (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 123-140; Larson 2000: 78-79). Thus Radama I obtained indemnity of this loss of revenue in the form of arms and ammunition, but he also requested technical expertise especially in literacy, seen as the source of European power (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 123-140). Thus, in 1820 two missionaries from the London Mission Society arrived in the highlands, and quickly established a largely successful schooling system under royal decree (Larson 1997). The schoolchildren were drafted as a royal service (*fanompoana*,) from the free population of Imerina, and would subsequently be recruited in the growing state Bureaucracy and army (Bloch 1986: 12-33). By 1830 over five thousand highland Malagasy had acquired literacy, about twenty thousand copies of Christian pamphlets and portions of scripture in the Malagasy language were in circulation all over the highlands, and were highly popular according to one historian; and in May 1831 about 150 individuals had been baptized

by LMS<sup>1</sup> missionaries Jones, Griffiths and Canham (Larson 1997: 971, 990). By the end of 1831 however, the tides turned for the British missionaries. Radama I died in 1828, and the successor Queen Ranavalona I vehemently opposed the “new prayer” as Christianity was called at that time (Larson 1997). Seeing it as a threat to royal authority and fearing the imperial pretensions of France and Britain, the Merina court expelled almost all missionaries and European personnel in the highlands by 1836 (Larson 1997: 993). She reinstated, and “inflated” the rituals of the royal bath and the royal circumcision ceremony, which were previously held to secure the allegiance of the population and the sacred life giving power of the royalty, called *hasina* (Bloch 1988). Understanding this concept of *hasina* is of ultimate importance to understand Malagasy cosmology and I will return to it later.

Now, this did not mean the end of Christianity however. Between 1836 and 1861, when there were virtually no missionaries operating in the highland plateau, Christianity grew substantially among the free and non-elite population, and many faced ‘martyrdom’ when apprehended by the Merina court (Bloch 1986: 20). The main reason for this has been said to be opposition to the increasing exactions of the Merina state in terms of corvée labor, called *fanompoana* which is sometimes translated as ‘royal service’<sup>2</sup> (Campbell 1988). The death rates in the Merina army on expeditions beyond the highland plateau were said to be as high as fifty percent, and Christianity had a great success with army officers (Larson 1997: 991). While sons and husbands were away on almost constant military campaigns all over the island, the wives left behind in the households were increasingly dependent on slave labor to perform the necessary tasks in the rice fields (Larson 2000: 217-240). The slave population in Imerina in the period in question is said to have been as high as fifty percent (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 123-152). And these slaves were mostly war-captives brought back from these military campaigns (Ibid.).

Thus Christianity increasingly became a locus of opposition to what had become an Imperial state (Bloch 1986:12-33; Bloch 1988). The spread of Christianity however, was highly uneven, and there were regions at the periphery of the central highlands that were virtually untouched by it (Campbell 1992).

Thus, when Radama II ascended the throne in 1861 and abolished the rituals of the royal bath and circumcision, a popular revolt arose called *Ramananjena* which was a form of dancing

---

<sup>1</sup> London Missionary Society

<sup>2</sup> There is already an ambiguity in these two translations in the historical and anthropological literature, of ‘forced labor’ and ‘royal service’ that I will return to later

mass possession, where people held to be possessed by the deceased *Ranavalona I* demanded that the king reinstated the royal rituals (Bloch 1986: 12-33). Radama II was assassinated in a complot by court officials in 1862, and a powerful prime minister married himself to Queen Ranalavaona II (Bloch 1986: 12-33). By this time, foreigners and missionaries were again allowed to enter the kingdom, and Missionaries from the Norwegian Mission Society, London Mission Society, and French Jesuits arrived in growing numbers (Bloch 1986: 12-33). The missionary schools were again an important source of recruitment into the Merina army and bureaucracy, and by 1869 Prime Minister Rainilairivony and Queen Ranavalona II converted to Christianity. This meant that the mission churches became *state churches* (both LMS and NMS), together with all their property; and Missionaries became officially and effectively *agents of the Merina state*, responsible for providing recruits for *fanompoana* service, and even military training as part of the curriculum (Campbell 1988)!

By this time the French had reached an agreement with Britain, allowing them to annex the “kingdom of Madagascar” in exchange for free British influence in Zanzibar (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 152-155). With pressure from French plantation owners in Réunion and the east-coast of Madagascar, France went to war with the highland kingdom in 1882 and 1894 (Ibid.). By 1895 the kingdom of Madagascar was officially annexed by French colonial powers (Ibid.).

That same year another reactionary rebellion broke out called the *Menalamba*, “Red Shawls” (Campbell 1988; 1992). The *Menalamba* rebellion attacked missionary stations and schools, seen as the primary agents of Merina state oppression, and was not quelled until the arrival of the notorious General Gallieni at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Campbell 1988; 1992). What is all the more interesting however, is that the *Fifohazana* revival in question in our thesis, arose at the same time as French annexation and the *menalamba* rebellion (Skeie 2011). And I will in the following shift the focus of our history to the revival.

## **The Fifohazana**



As the official narrative goes, the movement sometimes termed the “autochthonous” Christians of Madagascar, was initiated around 1894 by a previous royal servant and astrological diviner named Rainisoalambo (Skeie 2011). Rainisoalambo had been a prestigious diviner and royal servant of a kingdom in Isandra in the southern highland-plateau, an area peripheral to the central highland kingdom but where the exactions of the Merina state were one of the most severe (Jacquier-Dubourdieu 2000; Skeie 2011). He had previously been baptized as a Christian, as a royal service (*fanompoana*) to the Merina kingship in the aftermath of the queen’s conversion in 1869. But this was perhaps a superficial act, since it did not impinge on his religious obligations in the ancestral realm (Jacquier-Dubourdieu 2000). In the years preceding his own ‘awakening’ he had been struck by ill fortune, disease, loss of wealth and his family and clientele had abandoned him. The period up to the French invasion was in fact riddled with drought, famine, epidemics as well as political and economic crisis (Cambpell 1992). On the verge of complete destitution and ill-health, he decided one night to call for the Christian God for help. A vision appeared where “being of light” revealed itself to him, and told him to throw out all his “sampy” and traditional medicines (Skeie 2011).

I will pause here for a moment to explain the “sampy”. *Sampy* and *ody* were talismans with magical protective or offensive power, used throughout Madagascar by royal elites and commoners alike (Bloch 1988, Larson 1997). The most typical ones made of cow-horns filled with sand, they were made by travelling ‘holy-men’ or ‘medicine-men’ often called *ombiasy*. Most of them originated in the southeastern part of the island within a group going by the ethnonym *Antemoro*, which is also the area where the specific revival in question in this thesis originated (Bloch 1988; Larson 1997). The most powerful of these medicine men were famous throughout the island, and were employed by royalty to secure fertility and blessing to the kingdom, imbued with *hasina* as they were, and this is referred to as the “ody/sampy complex” in the scholarly debates (Bloch 1988). They were also trained in the arts of divination, astrology, and often they also knew the art of writing magical formulas in Arabic script called *sorabé*, a legacy of the influence of Islam that which I will return to later (Bloch 1998 [1968]). The most famous *sampy* were considered as persons in their own right; some had their own residences, and they all had a more or less elaborate set of taboos that had to be respected, just like ancestors throughout the Island (Ruud 1960: 201). These taboos are called *fady*, and is another central concept in Malagasy cosmology, closely linked with the concept of *hasina* that I will return to (Cole 2001: 113, 141; Ruud 1960: 182-183).

In any case, the act of throwing away his *sampy* was a powerful statement of conversion in both Christian and Malagasy discourse. It is repeatedly stated in the bible how God admonished the Israelites to stop worship their idol-gods (BIBLE VERSES?). And this was also heavily emphasized by the first missionaries to Madagascar in the 1820's (Bloch 1988; Larson 1997). Perhaps this was less a deliberate attack on "Malagasy religion" on the part of the Missionaries as most historians and anthropologists assume, than a natural consequence of Christian doctrine that presupposes that one should place one's faith in blessing and well-being to the invisible God, and not a physical representation of it (cf Larson 1997: 989). This is perhaps a contentious statement, but I will return to the importance of invisibility and the supernatural later in my thesis. It is worthwhile to note that Christians today continue to refer to non-Christians in Madagascar as "those that worship *sampy*" (lit. *manompo sampy*)<sup>3</sup>.

Upon doing this he was cured, and went to his kin to tell them of the miracle. They believed him, and before long his following and wealth was re-established (Skeie 2011). This is the beginning of the movement which would subsequently be called the *Fifohazana Soatanana*. Rainisoalambo and his followers initially called themselves *mpianatra ny Tompo* (the students of the lord), and only later came to be known as the awakening (Skeie 2011). In fact the revival founded by *Rainisoalambo* is only one in four successive revivals that are understood together when referring to the *Fifohazana* (Skeie 2011).

The name *Fifohazana*, actually derives from the verb *mifoua*, which means to wake up. There is a subtle connotation with this name, since, according to my informants 'to wake up' is used to denote one's personal recognition of a transgression or grave fault, i.e. a feeling of guilt towards one's ancestors or family (see also Ruud 1960: 265-276). This indeed lies at the heart of the movements practices, as to 'repent', called 'mibebaka' is a necessary requirement for the purification of one's heart in ritual exorcisms and subsequent "strengthening". As such, it is an emotional and intellectual recognition of fault, and the need for change. This applies especially in situations of grave misfortune or illness called *aretina*, where the general well-being (called *fahasalamana*), is threatened (Nielssen 2012: 58-59).

According to the accounts of the Norwegian missionary Thunem, the movement spread all over the island, regardless of status, denominational and "ethnic "group-affiliations, and

---

<sup>3</sup> Note here that the word *manompo* is used in the sense of 'to worship', but that it is the verb form of the noun *fanompoana*, commonly translated as "royal service" or "corvée labor", as in the exactions put on the free population by the Merina court. It testifies to the entanglements of the concepts of the political and the religious in Malagasy cosmology that I will return to later.

quickly aroused suspicion from French colonial officers who repeatedly arrested its travelling evangelists (Thunem 1926). Rainisoalambo instituted two roles for this purpose that were instrumental for the spread of the movement. One was called *iraka* (lit. messenger) and the other was *mpiandry*. There were twelve *Iraka*, like the number of apostles in the New Testament, and were of the inner circle surrounding Rainisoalambo. These would travel all over Madagascar to preach and found congregations. *Mpiandry* were those who were left behind to continue the community that had been created by the passage of an *Iraka*. *Mpiandry* literally means “those who wait/guard upon” but is commonly translated as ‘shepherd’.

Among the principles emphasized by Rainisoalambo, but central to the movements spread and success, was its principle of ecumenism. In fact, it was more than merely crossing denominational barriers, significantly the *Iraka* transcended ethno-geographical and class boundaries as well.

Consider the following excerpt from a conversation between Norwegian Lutheran Missionary Adolf Thunem and the founder *Rainisoalambo* (my translation):

*“He told me about what impression it had made on him, that the different missionary organizations (catholic, reformed, lutheran) could not work together for the spread of Christianity. It had so disturbed him that he at times would not know which fraction he should keep himself to. – But he had become most comfortable and assured by presenting all difficult matters and questions to the judgment of Scripture as the highest court, through the word of God get our Lords decision. All Christians – native as well as foreigner – should according to his opinion be brothers; since all the different nationalities, Malagasy and others, stand alike before our Lord, stand side by side before the same bible, the same God. His life and practice was influenced by this perspective, which by some was perceived as obstinacy and a too strong assertion of national Malagasy sentiments (Thunem 1924: 125-127 PAGE?)<sup>4</sup>*

---

<sup>4</sup> The original passage in Norwegian reads: “Han kom litt inn paa hvad indtryk det hadde gjort paa ham dette at forskjellige missionsorganisationer (katolske, refomerte, lutherske) ikke kunde gaa sammen i arbeidet for kristendommens utbredelse. Det hadde blant andet virket slik paa ham at han i sin tid vanskelig visste hvilken fraksjon han skulde holde seg til. – Han var da efterhvert blit mest fortrolig med og rolig ved at indanke alle vanskelige saker og spørsmaal for Skriftens domstol som øverste instans, for gjennom Guds ord at faa Vorherres avgjørelse. Alle kristne – indfødte som utlændinger – burde efter hans mening være brødre; ti de forskjellige nationaliteter, gassere som andre, staar likt overfor Vorherre, staar side om side foran den samme bibel, den samme Gud. Hans liv og virke blev præget av dette syn, som av enkelte blev oppfattet som steilhet og for sterk understreken av det gassisk-nationale.» (Thunem 1924: 125-127)

The communities that were created by the travelling evangelists, of which today's *toby* are direct ideological descendants, were to follow seven rules which are more or less similar today:

- 1- Learn to read, so as to be able to read the holy scripture;
- 2- Learn to write and count, so as to be able to memorize bible verses;
- 3- Adopt a decent (Christian) hairstyle;
- 4- Keep houses and courtyards clean, by separating animals and cooking from the living quarters;
- 5- Work the land, and live off the fruits of their labor;
- 6- Invoke God and Jesus with prayer before any undertaking;
- 7- When someone dies, strictly limit funeral rites to singing psalms and prayer.

(Jacquier-Dubourdieu 2000: 102-103; Thunem 1926: 48-49)

These rules bear some fundamental resemblance to the general meaning of 'taboo' in Madagascar, and constitutes one of the main points of continuity between *Fifohazana* and ancestral Malagasy cosmology that I will analyse in the next part of my thesis. Note also that the noun *toby* can almost directly be translated as 'camp' in English, with the same connotations of something 'transitional' or 'liminal' in the sense of Victor Turner's use in his work on *Communitas* (Turner 1969).

By the 1920's a second revival evolved, called *Fifohazana Manolotrony* led by a woman called *Neny Ravelonjanahary*, of which there is very little information other than in Malagasy speaking literature that I have not delved into (but see Dictionary of African Christian Biography 2008). The next revival that saw the light was in 1941, and is called the *Fifohazana Ankaramalaza*, led by a woman named *Volahavana Germaine*, popularly called *Nenilava* (lit. 'long-mother'). This revival, with its origin in what was originally an insignificant hamlet called *Ankaramalaza*, lies on the south-east coast and is where I did the greater part of my fieldwork. The third and last officially recognized revival was called *Fifohazana Farihimena*, led by a theologian called *Daniel Rakotozandry*.

Now, both these two last revivals, *Ankaramalaza* and *Farihimena* saw the light in a particularly difficult time in Madagascar's history. To backtrack a little, since the colonial annexation of Madagascar the main structures of Merina government and bureaucracy was kept intact (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 155-185). And the French colonial officials also

imposed forced labour upon an increasingly frustrated population. But this time indiscriminately upon the population of the whole island, as the Merina Kingdom controlled only two-thirds at the most (Ibid.). In the eyes of many Malagasy, this constituted a direct point of continuity between the French colonial government and the Merina Kingdom (Cole 2001: 25-66). Some years into the colonial period, Christianity was again a locus of opposition, but this time against the French (Bloch 1986: 12-33). In fact, in the wake of WWI a strange alliance between protestant intellectuals in the capital, and reactionary movements was formed in opposition to French Colonial rule, demanding independence (Ibid.). This movement however, was heavily indebted to a group of pastors and intellectuals who had received education in France, and served in the French Army during world war I, and as such did not have the same relationship to the average rural populations in and around the highlands as did *Rainosoalambo* and his shepherds (ibid.). But this can in large part explain the suspicion that the *Fifohazana* aroused in the eyes of the Colonial Administration, perhaps confounding it with the more overtly nationalist Protestants from the Capital Antananarivo. Following the Allied blockade of Madagascar during world war II, as the Colonial government in Madagascar aligned themselves with the Vichy French, the island was again plunged into crisis as the exactions of the colonial government upon the whole population was increased (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 155-185). And in 1947-48 the deadliest rebellion in African colonial history erupted in Madagascar (ibid.). As with the *Menalamba* revolt, the rebels were organized in brigand bands ravaging the countryside, and attacking villages that were supposedly cooperating with the French (Cole 2001: 223-274). The French military apparatus did the same, and large parts of the rural population of Madagascar became hostage between these two camps (Ibid). As many as 200 to 300 thousand reportedly fled into the forests, and many did not come out until several years after the rebellion ended (Ibid). A reportedly 100 000 people died as a consequence of direct fighting, or indirectly because of starvation (Ibid.). The tolls were most heavily felt on the east-coast, and the local population's memory of these hardships constitutes the topic of Jennifer Cole's monograph (2001). The area on the south-east coast where I did my fieldwork was also heavily affected, and I remember a rather large memorial statue for the fallen of the 1947 uprising in the regional capital *Manakara*, only 50 kilometers from *Ankaramalaza*.

Madagascar gained its official independence from France in 1960. However, this was not effective until the beginning of the 1970's when the Communist leader *Didier Ratsiraka* severed ties with the French and instituted a policy of '*Malgachisation*', which was a cultural

policy meant to strengthen and assert Malagasy customs and language over and against those of foreign origin (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 155-185). This did not fare well with the mission churches however, having become large churches with millions of followers since their inception in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. This is about the same time when the revivalist leader *Nenilava* moved from the southeast coast to the capital Antananarivo, and became more influential in the leadership of the now independent protestant churches of *FJKM* (reformed, with origins in the LMS, London Missionary Society) and *FLM* (Lutheran tied to the NMS, Norwegian Mission Society); and it was at this time that the *Fifohazana Ankaramalaza* gained national prominence (Skeie 2011). For many of my informants, it is thanks to *Nenilava*'s revival that the *FLM* and the *FJKM* has seen such a phenomenal growth in the last decades.

To sum up this historical outline I will finish with a brief outline of the story of *Nenilava*'s revival.

## ***Fifohazana Ankaramalaza***

The following account largely follows Skeie (2011). *Nenilava* was born in 1918, in the small hamlet of *Ankaramalaza* on the southeast coast, and was the daughter of a powerful *ombiasy* who was famous in the area. She is said to have had her ‘awakening’ at the age of fourteen, one day when the local catechist Petera was treating another young woman for the affliction of an evil spirit. While she was outside and preparing food, she felt a presence behind her who commanded her to rise up and go inside to chase the evil spirit away. She felt apprehensive, and unsure of what to do, but the presence behind her insisted. Some accounts say that this presence was also a ‘being of light’, as with the story of *Rainosoalambo*. The presence commanded her to go inside, and upon doing so the afflicted girl was cured. She apparently had encounters like these many times in her adolescence, sometimes leading her to live in the forest by herself for months at a time, only living on wild fruit and honey. In her 20’s she married a widowed protestant evangelist, who had children from a previous marriage. Although *Nenilava* never had any child by this man, and had apparently taken some sort of vow of chastity in her personal communications with the divine, she adopted a number of children in her later years who subsequently became significant leadership figures in the Protestant Churches, and on a national scale (Skeie 2011).

In the period from her awakening in 1941 until she moved to the capital Antananarivo in 1973, are the stories of the most extraordinary events (Skeie 2011). *Nenilava* is said to have had direct communication with Jesus. And although illiterate Jesus taught her how to read and write, how to speak twelve languages, teach scripture and theological doctrine, and she apparently knew all of scripture by heart. She is said she died and came back seven times, when Jesus took her to see the pleasures of heaven and the fires of hell. One time while in *Ankaramalaza* Jesus made her fight a huge beast which she later identified as Satan, for three days. I remember one day how one of my friends and informant in *Ankaramalaza* identified the spot where she had actually fought, on the top of a hill next to the village clinic.

By 1973 she had moved to the capital to continue her ministry there. The same year she made travels to both Norway and USA with support from Lutheran congregations. This year marked the move from a local to a “national and even transnational movement” (Skeie 2011: 183). I believe there are few people outside of mission circles who know that this Malagasy prophetess has been awarded a medal of honor by appointment of the King and the Norwegian state; the Norwegian ambassador to Madagascar, Nicolay Fougner awarded her and seven other leaders in the *FLM*, knighthood in the Norwegian Order of St. Olav in 1967, on the 100<sup>th</sup> year celebration of the church (Tangedal 2010)! And when she was in Norway

she apparently met the king of Norway, although I have not been able to find any reference to this in the digital journal archives.

In 1983, though not without controversy in the church-leadership and mission-circles, she was *crowned* in an elaborate ceremony during the yearly gathering for the consecration of new shepherds in *Ankaramalaza*. The garments were hand-made precisely on the model of the royal outfit dictated by Jehovah to the Old Testament king *Aron*, and was made with precious stones and hand-woven silk from Madagascar (BIBLE REFERENCE). The crown was of pure silver, and with twelve twigs, like the number of apostles in the New Testament.



Nenilava died in 1998. An informant once told me that Jesus took her away because her followers were starting to worship her instead of God. By that time the *Ankaramalaza* revival had become the most influential and long-standing revivals in Madagascar, new pentecostal churches notwithstanding. I do not have any numbers that can confirm this for sure, but of the two hundred *toby* that exist all over Madagascar today, a great majority of them stem from *Fifohazana Ankaramalaza* and *Nenilava*. Her influence had reached all the way to the top of the Malagasy hierarchy, when the self-made business man and president of Madagascar from 2002 to 2009, *Marc Ravalomanana* became a sort official protégé of *Nenilava* and her revival. He introduced exorcism by shepherds into the many dairy-factories he had made his fortune with, and as part of the daily affairs in the of the Government offices in Antananarivo. His political slogan was “do not fear only believe!” (Mark 5: 36, NKV), and was according to



one of my informants given to his father when he was born, together with a prophecy about the wealth and status that would befall him. A testimony to the close connections between *Fifohazana Ankaramalaza* and ex-president *Ravalomanana* is the huge main church which he financed in the central-most and highest hill of the village. This spatial positioning is not without significance in Malagasy symbolism, as Merina kings in the 17<sup>th</sup> century frequently placed their palaces at the *centre* of their kingdoms, on a high top surveying the hamlets and rice-fields, in accordance with the political ideology of a ruler that is both the heart, ‘navel’, and root of the kingdom (Bloch 1988).

As tensions rose over his presidency in 2009, with accusations of misusing political power to increase the fortunes of his privately own businesses, the political opponent *Andry Rajoelina* also sought support from shepherds from *Fifohazana Manoloitrony*, conducting ritual exorcisms of the government offices in front of international camera teams, with accusations that *Ravalomanana* had used occult means (*sampy* talismans) to reach the apex of political power in Madagascar (Nielsen & Skeie 2014). This crisis ended in a coup where *Ravalomanana* was ousted, and *Rajoelina* put himself in place as ‘head of High Transitional Authority’ (*HAT*) (Nielsen & Skeie 2014). I was later told by some well-placed individuals in *Ankaramalaza* that this playing off of different revivals for the purpose of political opportunism was deeply embarrassing; “they broke a padlock in the name of Jesus, wearing white shepherds robes in front of the Cameras!” she exclaimed.

The elections that took place during my fieldwork in the fall of 2013, was won by the then finance minister of Madagascar *Hery Rajaonarimampianina*. He supports his own residence in *Ankaramalaza*, and I saw him on two occasions during my fieldwork there. He presided the annual consecration of new shepherds, and made a visit to *Ankaramalaza* on his electoral campaign. He is also the one that financed a rather extravagant (compared to other buildings in *Ankaramalaza*) *Nenilava Museum* face the main church, where the story of her revival and miracles are told, as well as her Old-Testament royal outfit is displayed. This was open only one day for a few hours in the week I presided the shepherds’ consecration, and as I was visiting the modern whitewashed concrete building I was not allowed to take any pictures, contributing to an aura of secrecy and exclusivity in the room.

*Nenilava* is now buried in an ornated highland-Merina style tomb behind the main church in *Ankaramalaza*.

## **Conclusion**

Birgit Meyer, in a recent review *Christianity in Africa* identifies three main research questions that have gained importance during the last three decades. Besides the tedious matter of dismantling the misleading typologies that surround Christianities in Africa which I have avoided, these are: «(a) the relationship between Christianity and “traditional religion” and the question of Africanization; (b) the relationship between Africa and “the wider world” and the question of globalization; and (c) the relationship between religion and politics and the question of religion in the public sphere.» (Meyer 2004: 448). To sum up this chapter, I believe we have touched upon all these issues and shown the prominence of the revival in Malagasy contemporary history. What remains is however to more fully explain some of the central tenets of Malagasy cosmology, especially the notion of *hasina* and taboo, as it is linked to Malagasy notions of health and well-being. In the end, this will also help us understand the complex conceptual scheme of health/religion/politics which is embedded in this notion. It has been suggested by several anthropologists and historians not only of Madagascar, that the common conceptual and disciplinary division between medicine and religion, and religion and politics do not apply in the Malagasy case. Our task will be to show how this works out in my own material, and in the literature. This will simultaneously place the *Fifohazana* more firmly in the cosmological “topography” of Madagascar, and more importantly begin to help us understand the murky ground of the ethical treatment of mentally ill patients. But a necessary corollary to this is also to tread in the murky grounds of ontology and the ontological dualism inherent in western cosmology

## **Part II: The fieldwork, analysis and conclusion**

*“The experience of mental illness is an experience of loss, deviance, and a sad, almost mystical view of the human as a sort of living dead. It is an experience of despair, of endless frustration and incomprehensibility; in sum an existentially threatening experience. Here it is dealt with extreme patience on the part of most. It is utterly connoted with the occult, dark and invisible forces of evil and witchcraft... The utter incomprehensibility of mental illness is proof of the potency of invisible, evil forces.” (Personal field notes dated 22.12.2013)*

### **Apology**

My purpose of this part of the thesis was to answer the two research questions mentioned in the introduction of: 1. why the patients were coerced into submission, and 2. How to deal ethnographically with the phenomena of mental illness.

Unfortunately, I believe I have failed to give an adequate analysis of these issues with reference to my empirical material. And to my great dismay, it will be up to the reader, if he can, to make some of the necessary connections in the case material and preliminary analyses that follow.

However, I will give some clues to how this analysis was initially conceived to be solved. This concerns mostly what comes after the two following chapter “The fieldwork undertaking” and “Toby Ankaramalaza”. In the first chapter entitled “The invisibility of Mental illness” my purpose was, with illustration from my case material, to firmly establish how one’s one ethnocentric biases in favor of “ontological dualism” was in the way of mobilizing the necessary humility of the fieldworker to acknowledge ones own lack of *seeing* and *knowing*, and acknowledge *invisibility as such*. This reflection is in large part inspired by Danish anthropologist Christian Suhr, but also my own readings of Gilles Deleuze. The point is that these issue strike at the core of the problem of the “emic” and “etic” analysis, and how the anthropologist can fail in taking his informants seriously. In this case the potential failure is to not be able to understand some crucial aspects of Malagasy cosmology adequately, especially the need for submission of the individual, in the service of the well-being of the whole community which he is part of.

The next chapter then, presents the main ritual as it is practiced in *Ankaramalaza*, called “work & strengthening”, which is a group purification/exorcism ceremony, conducted on a daily basis. This chapter should have set out to discuss further these central aspects of cosmology with special reference, to personhood and agency, and the concepts of “continuous and discontinuous” personhood as discussed in a recent article by Michael Lambek (2013). With reference to 18<sup>th</sup> century enlightenment philosophy (in many ways the source of our problem with ontological dualism) and based on his own fieldwork on trance possession in Mayotte (1981), he firmly establishes how ‘western’ ethnocentric biases have failed to consider the ethical (as in moral-philosophical) value of *discontinuous* personhood, as it is understood in Madagascar. With the former in mind, I wanted to state further that Malagasy conceptions of illness and health cannot be understood in dualistic terms (individual biology vs. group culture/community).

I would then want to proceed with a discussion of the Malagasy concept of *hasina* and *taboo*, with reference to this conception of discontinuous personhood. *Hasina* has been described in the literature as the most difficult word to translate in Malagasy, and likened to the Polynesian concept of *mana*. *Hasina* is described as that sacred, mystical essence, inherent in all things that is essential to for well-being. It is also for the preservation of *hasina* that the elaborate rituals concerning kings and ancestors, dead or alive, are performed all over the island. A common view in the literature on this concept, is a Marxist one, stemming from Maurice Bloch's article "The disconnection between rank and power as a process" (1988). His, and others view is implicitly or explicitly, is that *hasina* is an ideological tool of religious mystification, and oppression of the "masses". What they fail to consider however, which is hinted at in Jennifer Cole's monograph (2001: 141), but very clearly stated in the Missionary Ethnographer Jørgen Ruud's work, is that *hasina has no independent existence apart from human words and deeds in Malagasy cosmology; that make things sacred, or partake in the process of sanctification of objects or ancestors, in fact anything (Ruud 1960: 182-183)*. This is also very much in line with Mircea Eliade's understanding of how 'religious man' is always engaged in the process of making things sacred in the world, and the importance of sacred and profane space (Eliade 1961).

This perspective gives us a whole new look upon much of the scholarly work on Malagasy history, culture and society. And the first "victim" of this insight should be our ethnocentric biases against submission in religion. For example, a quick reinterpretation of the famous mortuary ritual *famadihana* (the turning of the bones, See Graeber 1995) and the famous *tromba* possession cult (see Nielssen 2012; Sharp 1994; Feeley-Harnik 1991) would be that it is not so much the unconditional surrender of individual's surrendering of their "agency" to the ancestors, as it is an *their conscious and active production of a sacred existence, and of the sacred life force necessary for human life*. This begs the question, who is actually surrendered to whom in this? Does this not lead us to consider that it is perhaps the "oppressive" ancestors, gods and kings that are made subject to the "masses"?

In the next chapter, I would further continue this investigation with a discussion of a concept borrowed from Kierkegaard, called "the knight of faith" (2000 [1843]), which I have began. This would take up the ethically and morally ambiguous position of those healers that "borrow" powers from the sacred to act on afflicted human beings to effect healing. Because in doing so they are, to quote Suhr "in ever present danger of heresy" and "conflating their own agency with that of God" (Suhr 2013). This problem is a highly relevant one, not only

with reference to the previous chapter, but also in discussions within the revival itself, and the position of Nenilava. It had to be emphasized many times, while on fieldwork, by shepherds who took care of newcomers who had little experience with the movement, that it *was not Nenilava that healed, but Jesus through her*. In fact, if believers come to believe that it is Nenilava that heals, it would threaten the legitimacy of the whole revival. Furthermore, the revival officially states that shepherds *are not allowed to touch their patients during the ritual exorcisms*. And educated theologians, both in the capital but also some who lived in the sacred village, frequently lamented to me how shepherds too easily took to using physical force instead of prayer. Although this could be interpreted as these theologians had been “conquered” by western enlightenment thought and theology, I believe their point was a very important, however one argues for value of submission in Malagasy cosmology and ontology. Not least because the physical coercion cause deep trauma in some individuals according to my own experiences (see the story in the appendix A).

In the end, by following the recipe above I would have achieved: 1. an exploration of the problems of ontological dualism when exploring ethnographically the phenomena of mental illness. And 2. An outline of a Malagasy cosmology of submission and how it is related to the practices of the shepherds, and critically discussed this with reference to Christianity and the welfare of the patients.

I hope that this served as a clarification, and makes the rest of this thesis a less confusing experience.

### ***The fieldwork undertaking: Method and material***



I initially came to know Madagascar through an exchange program between the Malagasy Lutheran Church and the Norwegian Peace Corps. I lived and worked for six months starting in October 2010, in *Mahajanga* on the northwest coast of Madagascar, where I travelled to nearby coastal villages as part of the Church's health, education and mission programs. I was mostly assigned to carry equipment, paint houses, or be a showcase to bolster the prestige of the local church; but I quickly acquired some proficiency in Malagasy as my co-workers were almost exclusively Malagasy. This initial experience led me to return to Madagascar for

fieldwork on June 26<sup>th</sup> 2013, none other than the Malagasy Independence Day, and return to Norway on January 15<sup>th</sup> 2014.

I spent the first month in the places that were most familiar to me, the capital Antananarivo and Mahajanga; I left to more unfamiliar territory on the southeast coast on 26<sup>th</sup> of July. I went there with a good Malagasy friend, native to the revival-capital Ankaramalaza, to participate in the *Fanokanana*, the annual consecration of new shepherds. Although I had planned to go back to the highlands or *Mahajanga* to continue my fieldwork there, I ended up staying in the southeast for two months, sporadically going to the regional capital *Manakara* whenever in need for some western goods and family contact. I went back to the capital and Mahajanga for a brief vacation in the beginning of October, and returned for another month which I spent equally in Manakara and Ankaramalaza, until the middle of November.

Beginning in November I contracted a severe amoeba infection with intestinal worms which forced me to leave for the capital once again on November 12<sup>th</sup>. This was a serious setback, and I never returned to Ankaramalaza to continue my research there, although I sporadically made some inquiries into the medical and non-christian perspectives whenever I had the strength. Already halfway in my fieldwork, I spent the rest of my time treating the amoeba infection and regaining my strength; I was in Antananarivo and Antsirabe from from mid-November till the end of December, and I returned for ten days in Mahajanga in the beginning of January.

Inspired by some central tenets of Medical Anthropology on how “the study of the experience of illness has something fundamental to teach each of us about the human condition, with its universal suffering and death” (Kleinman 1988: xiii), I decided to collect oral histories or “illness narratives”, a term taken from the abovementioned book (Giles-Vernick 2006; Kleinman 1988). I made tape recordings of informal conversations and more formal interviews. And out of 80 recordings, varying in length from four minutes to two hours, around 53 are rather formal interviews where I more or less direct the nature of the conversation by asking pre-meditated questions. The rest are informal situations that I recorded, such as church services with exorcisms, song, preaching and prayer. I have also around 700 pictures relevant to the fieldwork. However, these recordings did not prove as valuable as I initially had thought, since I could not transcribe them to delve into the intricacies of meaning. Furthermore, the interview situations were often very awkward, and overshadowed by the fact that I was a respected “*vazaha*” (lit. ‘foreigner’) who came to speak



with people situations of suffering and destitution. Although these situations were often touching, and sometimes a sentence here or there, or a question I posed would point me in a fruitful direction, what proved to be of much more importance were the situations where I was not directly, or formally, “on fieldwork”. That is, when I and my interlocutors were together without the burden of formality surrounding for example a guided tour of the premises, or interviews with a tape-recorder.

Hence while I was living in Ankaramalaza I attended worship and exorcism ceremonies daily, with few exceptions. Together with those that I witnessed before and after Ankaramalaza at other *toby* and churches in Antananarivo, Antsirabe, Manakara and Mahajanga, I have witnessed around 80 worship and exorcism ceremonies where almost all have been within the Malagasy Lutheran Church, *FLM*. Apart from *toby Ankaramalaza* I have briefly visited six other *toby*, of which two were related to a different revival than the *Ankaramalaza* branch. I also attended services with and without exorcisms in other churches.

Last but not least I actively participated in a diaconal work-training program for those who were considered “patients” that was organized each Monday, Wednesday and Friday in *Ankaramalaza*. Here I participated in the practical work of preparing and planting in the rice fields, cleaning land for gardens, and wood-cutting; as well as a communal meal and subsequent exorcism. This was for me more of a recreational activity rather than for the utility of “fieldwork”. I had the pleasure of bonding with patients that on first impression seemed wholly “inaccessible” or disconnected. This experience impressed me perhaps more deeply than I have hitherto acknowledged, and hence is not so prominent in the accounts that follow.

I undertook two “homestays” while living in Ankaramalaza. These were both shepherds and their families who had the responsibility for two and three male “patients” respectively. These “homestays” were quite short, six and ten days each, and the rest of the time I lived in a house reserved for foreigners and guests. As I became increasingly apprehensive of the high-status position I was repeatedly put into in my social life, I wanted to escape from the concrete-building reserved for *vazaha*, and attempt to get closer to the daily life of my interlocutors. However, this proved more difficult than I had imagined. In fact it was quite difficult to argue to the village leadership and others that I wanted to move out of this building for my fieldwork, and was equally difficult to manage the intimacy with the host families with regards to my relationships with other people in the village. If I became too close to one family, this would put me in more precarious position towards other families that were jealous

of the host family's relationship to, in their eyes, a powerful foreigner. All in all it would have been difficult for me to stay with host families any more than I did (if not just for writing my fieldnotes), and I guess also for real and potential host families who most certainly felt the pressure and expectations of having to take care of a foreigner. However, a couple of mundane situations in the presence of both shepherd *and* patient provided some of the most interesting insights of my fieldwork. In retrospect, it was in fact very rare, and difficult to witness "normal" or mundane social intercourse between shepherd and patient, as most patients would be "chased" away in my presence so that shepherd could have me to him or herself.

In the end, my methodological approach, perhaps inadvertently, resembles more closely a series of "situational analyses" and "events as the site of emergence", as discussed by Gluckman, Mitchell and Kaperer, rather than the detailed analysis of pre-meditated and concrete empirical material (). To put it more concretely, my presence and participation in the worship and exorcism ceremonies, the annual consecration of new shepherds, and the work-training program organized for patients, as well as the daily social intercourse filled with events like those mentioned in the introduction; constituted for me clearly delimited points of observation in time and space, from which I could observe and ask questions about a wider order of reality, perhaps more commonly termed 'cosmology' (Gluckman YEAR; Kapferer YEAR). This, together with my reading of Lesley Sharp's monograph on Sakalava spirit possession on the Northwest coast *while* I was in Ankaramalaza, constitutes the base or point of reference from which I have since tried to build my understanding and analysis (Sharp 1994). Another book that influenced my experience, but perhaps peripheral or anecdotal to this thesis, is my reading of *Don Quixote* by Cervantes (2002). I remember I consistently drew parallels between the tragic figure of Don Quixote and his "madness", alternately with me or the shepherds. And I could never quite conclude which one resembled Don Quixote most in his madness. Whether it was me, the "heroic" anthropologist who apologetically judged the treatment of patients in the name of my superior knowledge of the good, or the "brave" shepherds who managed to subdue the strong Devil in guise of the hopeless and passive Madame Florence (from the fieldnote passages in the beginning). These thoughts are of course satirical and taken to their extreme, but it is safe to say that my experiences in Ankaramalaza were filled considerable amounts of *doubt*; about myself and my moral positioning, and the moral validity of the shepherds.

The totality of my fieldwork has been conducted in the Malagasy language, with very few exceptions where I employed French (my other native tongue after Norwegian). This I did mostly because I was interested in and of the Malagasy language itself (an interest that had begun in my first visit to Madagascar), and that the efforts I made were very much appreciated by my Malagasy interlocutors and facilitated my relationships with them. Speaking in French would have given me an advantage in comprehension, but would be far outweighed by the disadvantage of using as my empirical foundation someone's utterings in a non-native tongue. Hence the fieldwork was often as much a learning process in the Malagasy language as it was an exploration of the topics formulated in my project proposal.

A self-assessment of language proficiency is of course difficult, and there are still many intricacies of the Malagasy language that escapes me. Any full transcription of the formal interviews are above my competency (and the time available to me), but for the level of my analysis I believe simplified transcripts and translations made by myself will be sufficient.

Keep in mind also that all of the persons in the narratives that follow have been anonymized.

## **Toby Ankaramalaza**

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of July I finally travelled to *Ankaramalaza* on the south-east coast of Madagascar. There I participated in one of the biggest events in the whole revival, called *Fanokanana* or *Isan-taona Ankaramalaza*. The former literally means “the-setting-apart-of”, more pragmatically translated as “the Consecration”, and the latter translates more easily as the “every-year of *Ankaramalaza*”. These semantic connotations are clearly reminiscent of Victor Turner’s idea of a “liminal” and sacred space (Turner 1969). To arrive at *Ankaramalaza*, one has to take a 3-5 hour long taxi ride, for the approximately 45 kilometers that separate it from the regional capital *Manakara*. To enter the village, one has to cross a rather wide river in a canoe, called *lakana*. There is a strong impression of a clearly delineated space, from the profane outside world, to the sacred village, when crossing the river.

The *Fanokanana* is a weeklong consecration of new shepherds upon finishing their two years of bible study and training. From July 27<sup>th</sup> to August 3<sup>rd</sup> each year, a date given to Nenilava by Jesus himself, between fifteen and thirty thousand people come to *Ankaramalaza* from Lutheran congregations all over Madagascar, to attend almost continuous worship and preaching for five days, ending with a ceremonial procession and blessing of six hundred new shepherds. Here comes the top leadership of the church from Antananarivo, *toby*-leaders and synode-presidents from all Madagascar, Malagasy theologians living in the US or France, and even the then Finance-minister of Madagascar (now president) presided the actual consecration on the last day. This is an extremely prestigious and intense event, with an inordinate amount of people for a village that normally hold a thousand fixed residents, in a rather inaccessible rural part of Madagascar.

As a testimony to the sacrality of the village, especially during *Fanokanana*, consider the following banner at the entrance of the village:



The bible verse on top of the poster reads: “I am the one the island awaits” (my translation), and the bottom reads: “this is the way, walk in it”. Note the drawing of the Island of Madagascar in the background, and Jesus seemingly praying and looking at it. Nenilava, the founding prophetess is pictured on the right side, dressed in the royal outfit of the Jewish king Aron as mentioned in the previous chapter (Exodus 28, NKV).

The rest of the year, Ankaramalaza is a small Christian enclave in an area dominated by Islam, ancestral-religion, and the local population who go by the ethnonym “antemoro”. The toby itself is a very heterogenous little village, with people from all over Madagascar, and the admixture of patients (mentally ill and otherwise) and those who are healthy. The population of Ankaramalaza is about one thousand, where around half are consecrated *mpiandry*. It is common that the majority of the shepherds have had some sort of affliction or sickness (*aretina* in Malagasy) that made them seek out the toby in the first place.

One of my informants who were part of the leadership of, emphasized to me that Ankaramalaza is neither village (*fokontany*) nor commune (*kaominina*), and has no part of the administrative subdivisions of the Malagasy Republic. Despite that it is in itself the largest

“village” in its area. According to him, Ankaramalaza is not a village, but like a large family living in a great communal house (lit. *trano-be*).

It is run by a *komity* which is a form of elected assembly, and *birao* (from the French word for office, “bureaux”) which is like an executive. Those placed in either of these are the most prominent villagers, such as teachers, principals, doctors, nurses and pastors. The village attracts people from all over the country who come to seek healing, to become a shepherd, or both. I was told that there were about sixty patients living with an appointed shepherd, although there are many more who have come with their whole family, and are not under the tuition as patients in the same manner by the *birao*. Of the sixty ‘official’ patients, a majority seemed to suffer from a sort of mental illness, called *areti 'Saina* in Malagasy.

These patients have been sent by kin, sometimes from the other side of the country. The kin then send money each month for bed and board to the shepherds who have been assigned by the *birao*. The shepherd is in turn responsible to bring the patient to church every day, administer antipsychotic drugs (mostly chlorpromazine), and general care. The drugs are bought at the village’s clinic (who receive them from the FLM’s health department), and almost every shepherd use them as sleeping medicine (*ody tory*), as well as anti-epileptic drugs are given to those with epilepsy ( called *andro-be*).

In addition, there is another treatment option to patients together with their shepherds, called *akany* (lit. nest, or place for youth/children). This institution is independent from the *komity*, managerially and economically, although officially part of the political structure of Ankaramalaza. The *Akany* have their own rice-fields about two kilometers outside Ankaramalaza, surrounding a small hamlet on a hill with a community house (*trano-be*), used for prayers and communal meals with the shepherds and patients. In addition they have another community house in Ankaramalaza which they use for special celebrations such as Christmas and new-year.

The objective of this project, as I understand it, is to educate the patients physically and mentally to be able to function in the greater community, through cooperative work in the rice-fields, cooking, gathering and cutting wood, and a number of small but essential household tasks. In addition, they teach reading and writing once a week, and sewing and needlework is taught to the women. These activities are organized every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and is open, without restriction, to all shepherds and patients as well as the more unofficial families. Between sixty and eighty people attend each time.

The day normally starts at nine or ten in the morning, and they work for two or three hours, until noon, where a bell rings for the common meal, usually large yellow peas (*voanjo-bori*) with rice, and pig-meat is added on Fridays (which usually attracts more people). After the meal and a short break, the bell rings again for the worship, and the crowd gathers in the community house, for rather standard liturgical worship, led by shepherds (no pastor), ending with an *asa-sy-fampaherezana*. The day ends around 3 Pm.

The project is partly auto-financed by their crops, as well as a swiss-NGO. This is the only purely diaconal work directed at the poorest shepherds and patients (some shepherds also former patients). The foreign financing came well after the project was initiated, over twenty years ago, by a malagasy man (who I was told was an from the highlands) who lived and worked in Ankaramalaza in the early nineties.

Within the limits of the village of Ankaramalaza, there is a fairly large clinic, several primary-schools, a bible-school, a large church financed by former president Ravalomanana, a Revival-museum paid for by the former finance minister, now president Hery Rajaonarimampianina. There is no running water and electricity in the village, but a large fuel-generator is activated during the festival and important (government) visits.

About half or more of the buildings in Ankaramalaza belong to individuals or families who only use it during the *Fanokanana*, and the rest of the year they are inhabited rent-free by local shepherds, and their families. Taking rent for housing is officially forbidden in Ankaramalaza by the *komity*. The houses that belong to the more wealthy Tananarivians are not lent to (often poor) immigrants, but remain unused apart from the *Fanokanana*. Some of these belong to current or former ministers, wealthy businessmen, and the upper class in Antananarivo.

As there is no ownership of land in Ankaramalaza, the *komity* administrate rice-fields and housing to any supplicants and according to their needs. Nevertheless, the economic conditions are quite harsh as I understand, and especially according to fluctuations in the prices of rice and the harvest cycle. My fieldwork coincided with a peak in the price of rice. The average pension sent from families to the shepherds who care for their sick kin is about 80 000 Ariary, about 200 NOK, or 30 USD, and is often the largest, if not the only, source of monetary income of the poorest shepherds. Some shepherds have rice-fields in their ancestral-villages, but their responsibilities towards their patients forbid them to leave. However, some shepherds do leave, especially if there are cloves (the price of cloves were peaking during my

fieldwork), and this might result in serious neglect of the patients, such as having them tied up in the house for longer periods of time (but more often, the responsibilities for care are then administered by the *komity* to another shepherds family).



## *The invisible nature of mental illness*

A major inspiration for this thesis is a recent Phd. thesis and accompanying ethnographic film by Danish Anthropologist Christian Suhr from the University of Aarhus (2013). Inspired by philosophers such as Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, Søren Kierkegaard and Gilles Deleuze, he tries to understand the healing process of afflicted Muslims in Denmark who participate Islamic exorcism rituals, *and* are patients of Danish psychiatry who undergo treatment by psychotropic drugs. His experiences parallel many of my own, and it seems that his encounter with the invisible forces that both torment and heal individuals were as perplexing as mine.

Of major importance for Suhr is to better be able to attend to what is invisible in this world. Suhr states that, *“Illnesses such as psychosis and possession occupy an ambiguous position in the borderland between the visible and the invisible. Such illnesses are sometimes expressed through visible signs, yet the causes of illness and the experience of suffering often lie hidden in the invisible.”* (Suhr 2013: 15)

The reason that mental illness constitutes such an invisibility is perhaps intuitive for some, but I wish to clarify it with an example below. In reading Suhr’s thesis I felt that he in some way took the process of personal acknowledgement of the invisible *as such*, for granted. In fact, to reach the point where one can acknowledge one’s own lack of *seeing* and *knowing*, requires a deep humbling. Confronted with the immediacy of other people’s suffering, through a fundamentally exotic idiom of distress and mode of treatment, too easily did I rely on my own “folk” knowledge of psychiatry to pass judgments on what was “right” and “wrong” with regards to those who were labeled mentally ill.

If anything, these insights and experiences were perhaps the most important that I took home from fieldwork. And I will in this chapter I want to dwell on this experience with the story below in mind.

### *Didier & Theo:*

*I met Mr. Didier one of the first days I came to Ankaramalaza. He works as a teacher in the middle school there, and a member of the komity ny toby, which is the political executive of the village. He has a son name Theo. Theo is also an old friend of Thierry, my friend and contact that brought me here to Ankaramalaza. They have known each other since youth.*

*Theo they say is sick. What I have seen is that he cannot really address or answer people verbally. He mumbles answers, and sometimes utter the words “I don’t know, I don’t know” (tsy haiko, tsy haiko). His gestures and movements are always reminiscent of rap-artists from music videos. They say he is sick also because he smoked too much marijuana in high school. I’ve heard this many times since I came here, and Marijuana started to sound like the ready-made answer for any young man who has any sort of deviant behavior and lives in a toby.*

*After many conversations with Didier, he told me that he was looking for more answers about the illness of his son, and that Theo had been maltreated by a shepherd the previous year. In the end of august I went with Didier to the regional capital Manakara, where there is a psychiatric institution, and a doctor that specializes in treating mental illnesses. For one week I lived with Didier and Theo, at Didier’s brother’s house, and went back and forth to the hospital, and often just walking around the city and talking. Didier understood my confusions well, seen that he also sought for more answers to the puzzle of his son’s mental illness. We met several times with Docteur Sophie. She is a generalist medical doctor, who has had some training in psychiatry, but she is not a psychiatrist. In fact, she told us, there are only four psychiatrists in Madagascar. Most of the doctors who work in institutions like this in Manakara, are regular doctors that has yearly courses in psychiatry in Antananarivo.*

*Although Docteur Sophie was the one talking most of the time, Didier was clearly impressed by the new perspectives offered by her explanations. But he was also disconcerted by the effort it would take for him to delve into this. He would have to go to Antananarivo and take expensive tests at the Institut Pasteur (famous French institute for medical analyses), and pay for expensive medicines.*

*However, Didier managed to get together the money needed for the tests in Antananarivo and it turned out that Theo had something called cysticercosis, which are cysts on the central nervous system created by parasitic worms.*

*Almost two months later, in the end of October, I was living in a hotel in Manakara, finishing up my field report. One of the maids at the hotel was from Ankaramalaza, and one day she told me she had heard a rumor that Theo had killed his mother. I couldn’t believe it. Not in any way did Theo seem to be someone aggressive. I didn’t believe it until another friend from the village called me and confirmed the news. Theo had apparently hit the head of his mother with a sort of cup, so that she fell to the ground; then he went to find an antsibe, a middle sized axe, and struck her to the head, the shoulders and arms. She died later, in the car on the*

*way to the hospital in Manakara. People in the village would tell me afterwards that this was a terrible accident, and clearly the work of the devil. I gathered that they meant that the devil had temporarily possessed him and made him do it. I hurried back to Ankaramalaza to participate in the funeral, and arrived the day after she had died. Didier was devastated.*

One of the reasons that I spent more time with Didier in the first place was our common dissatisfaction with the work of the shepherds. For Didier it was the lack of progress in his son's condition, for me it was the primacy of the "work of the devil" as an explanation for everything and my faith that surely, a good psychiatrist would do much better help these people. These assumptions were seldom made explicit in my mind, but was part of an implicit feeling of fundamental *disbelief* in my encounters with the shepherds, and the ritual exorcisms that I will present later in my thesis.

In many ways my opinions at that time can be summed up, or compared with Evans-Pritchard famous statement "*Witches, as the Azande conceive them, clearly cannot exist*" (Evans-Pritchard 1937: 18). I implicitly conceived of my task then as a would-be anthropologist, to rationalize away the idiom of "the work of the devil" into what Ingold would have called different discursive or life "worlds" (Ingold 2000: 13-60).

The logical consequence of this kind of thinking however, is that one is plunged into the dilemma of having too many "worlds" at stake. At one end, one has the physical world of the biological mechanisms of the mind as known by biologists, neurologists and psychiatrists. At the other end, we have the "culturally constructed" world of the "natives". This, in short, is the classic distinction between nature and culture, otherwise known as 'ontological dualism' (Ibid.).

In any case, after this incident I started to reconsider my opinions. The brutality and the suddenness of the murder is a powerful testimony to the invisible and the unknown with regards to mental illness, and the uncertainty and tragedy it engenders.

## **Asa sy fampaherezana – work and strengthening**

«[Work] in addition to its instrumental and other aspects, is expressive; it has meaning ... This meaning is expressed in terms of social relations, in the number and kinds of workers and the ways in which the work relates them to one another; cosmologically, through the ideas and values attached to work; and technologically, in the means and materials by which the work is carried out. To submit to work – at certain tasks, with certain kinds of tools, according to certain kinds of organization – is to accept certain basic ideas about the nature of humanity and society. (Feeley-Harnik 1986: 157, my emphasis)

In this part I will attempt a description of the most central activity of any toby in the revival movement, the *asa sy fampaherezana* ritual. *Asa* is directly translated as “work” in English, whereas the noun *fampaherezana* contains the root *hery* which means force, or power.

The ritual is an integrated part of a regular church service, which consists of a regular Lutheran liturgy, not dissimilar to those performed here in the Lutheran Church of Norway. In fact, one is in many ways struck by its resemblance to the pietism of Norwegian Lutheran liturgy, and the lack clapping or dancing, i.e. the lack of evangelical and spiritual fervor that is rumored to dominate the contemporary African revivals. The atmosphere of the worship seems to suggest discipline and respect for the sermons, prayers and the recitations from the bible performed by pastors and laymen. Nonetheless people are generally not obliged to stay put during the whole ceremony, which in any case can last for several hours, and especially children are after a while allowed to roam and play freely, although quietly.

There are some interesting exceptions. Those considered “sick”, are surveyed by the shepherds, who for the most part (or those most important) sit in front of the assembly with their back against the wall facing the (male) audience. The shepherds are attendants themselves of course, and listen to sermons, sing and pray. But at the same time they survey the sick. However, this concerns only the male patients. I quickly noticed this tendency of “surveillance” and decided to consistently sit together with the patients facing the observing shepherds, as an act of “defiance” or “solidarity” with the patients. As explained later, the women sit on the opposite side of the room, and there were no female shepherds who supervised the others by sitting in front of the female patients in the same manner.

The church service structures daily life in Ankaramalaza, and hence I will let it structure my essay also. All serious inhabitants of Ankaramalaza attend church at least once a day, seven

days a week. Reasonably enough, there are few other reasons to live in Ankaramalaza besides being an active church attendant and participate in the ecclesial life, by being a shepherd or someone who seeks healing.

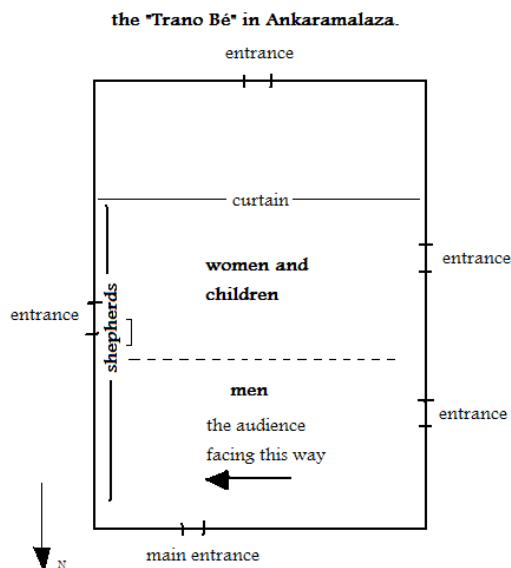
The daily church services are also a social event, and one gathers up with friends and “co-believers” to chat before service. The afternoon service starts at two o’clock, but people often go to church an hour earlier to sit and chat. The service generally ends sometime before four PM, and the ritual exorcism and strengthening is always at the end. The exorcisms are for the most part something performed in community, and not as a ‘secret’ event for the purification of a single afflicted individual without bystanders. At the same time each shepherd can take time to drive out demons of a single individual during the ceremony. But it is important to emphasize that it is a shared experience. You cannot say, or people do not say “oh! Thank you, but I don’t need exorcism today, please proceed to the next one beside me”. Everyone is being purified, because the work of the devil is indiscriminate and relentless.

This is a presentation of the regular church services in Ankaramalaza, which are conducted every day from Monday to Saturday. These everyday worships are conducted in the “trano-be”, a sort of community house without electricity. There is another, main church in Ankaramalaza, which is very well equipped with benches, a proper altar with ring, speakers and microphones among other things. This church is used on Sunday worships, and during the consecration of new shepherds.

The room is furnished with a single chair and table, indicating the spot where the pastor preaches or laymen pray and read from the bible in front of the congregation. Everyone else sits on the floor covered with raffia mats, which are usually handmade, and called “tsihy”. A regular church service in Ankaramalaza is usually composed of songs, prayers, reading from the bible, preaching, offertory, and collective proclaiming of the Lutheran articles of faith. They differ from services in the Norwegian Lutheran Church only in that everyone sings when it is time to sing, and everyone (often including children) gives money for offering. The material conditions are of course not the same, and the services often take an extraordinary long time to finish (on average between two and a half and five hours) because of the amount of people, especially when there is Holy Communion.

It is important to note the steady rise in intensity of the church service up to, and during this ritual. A Malagasy church service with standard Lutheran liturgy is a rather tedious affair, again very different from what one hears about Pentecostal and African Initiated Churches. I

was often not the only one struggling to concentrate during the often excessively long sermons by pastors, sometimes elaborating on some advanced theological topic quite far-fetched for me, and I guess also the average rural Malagasy. It was not unusual for people to fall asleep, and after a while parents would no longer bother to keep their children seated, and they would wander in and out of the building freely, only scolded when laughing too loud while playing inside. These tedious moments, were relieved by intimate prayers by laymen in a calm voice, and often captivating polyphonic song, which was a natural and persistent part of any collective singing. The tone of most of the psalms sung in Ankaramalaza always had a melancholic, sad feel to it.



(Figure 1. The “Trano Be” in Ankaramalaza)

The ritual can be divided into three parts.

The ritual begins towards the end of regular liturgy, when song number 175 in the standard ecumenical Malagasy songbook is announced by a layperson. The title of this song is “Avia, Fanahy ô!, which literally means “Come, Spirit ô!” which is followed by number 176 called “Avia Fanahy Masina ô!”, literally “Come, Holy Spirit ô!” (FFPM 2001).

The sad tone was palpable during these two psalms, and marked the beginning of a heightened intensity and ambience. At this point all the children are called back, or come back by themselves, and sit calmly with their parents.

At the moment when the audience starts to sing everyone in the assembly that is a shepherd (and is designated to conduct this day's *asa sy fampaherezana*) rise and go behind a curtain to dress themselves in a large and long white dress, which covers the arms and goes all the way down to the ankles (see Picture 1 & Fig. 1). The dress is the same for men and woman, except that woman also tie a white cloth around their heads. The dress is kept in a special bag to prevent it from becoming dirty and folded in a particular way to prevent creases. The dress is also called “*lamba masina*” which means holy cloth. The dress is supposed to be kept impeccable, and I deduced that some shepherds even perfume the cloth with soap, incense or cologne.



(Picture 1. A highland Merina woman in Antananarivo dressed in the shepherds white robe, typically holding the bible close to the chest)

Behind the curtain and while the audience is singing, the shepherds do a silent prayer before putting on the dress, standing with closed eyes facing the wall and the bag with the holy cloth hanging on a nail. When they are all dressed, they face each other in a half circle, men on one side and women on the other, and the local president of the revival “*Président ny Fifohazana*”, distributes tasks and reorders the shepherds positions accordingly. When this is done they walk out from behind the curtain in a procession, men first, in front of the congregation. The congregation is also segregated with women and children to the south and men to the north, so that when the shepherds are in position, the woman and men face the female and male audience accordingly.

When the shepherds are in line, the congregation finish the song, the first shepherd prays, and the next one begins reciting one of four specific sets of verses from the bible. These are:

*John 14:12-17: “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to my Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. If you love Me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”*

*Mark 16: 15-20: And he said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into Heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.*

*Matthew 18:18-20: “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven, Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”*

*John 20: 21-23: So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained”*





*(Shepherds from Mahajanga reading verses before the “asa”. Note that all shepherds are female.)*

One shepherd is assigned to each set of verses. After these are read, the fifth person holds what is called a “teny fampibebahana”, which means “words of repentance”. This is a speech on the topic and style dependent on the individual shepherd, but always words that should make the listener repent. This ‘call for repentance’ starts out in a calm but serious voice and rises gradually in tone and tension. It ends in a collective shout by all the shepherds, whilst walking slowly forward with the left hand holding the bible close to the chest and the right hand stretched out towards the audience saying:

*“Koa amin’ny anaran’iJesosy Kristy avy any Nazareta no andidiako ny fanahy maloto rehetra sy no fomban’ny rehetra; Mandeha satana amin’ny anaran’iJesosy! Mivoaka devoly amin’ny anaran’iJesosy!”*

*“And so, in the name of Jesus Christ from Nazareth, I command all the dirty spirits, and all their ways; Leave satan, in the name of Jesus! Go out devil, in the name of Jesus!”*

This is the second part of the ritual, called “asa”, simply translated as work. After a few steps the line of shepherds have reached the audience, and they begin hitting the air with their right arm, waving the flat palm of their right hand back and forth in front of people’s faces or over their heads, all the while shouting for the devil to go away. Shepherds only stop for a brief moment at each ‘patient’ before going on to the next. They also wave or ‘hit’ the space in between patients, sometimes even conducting it in an empty room or in open-air without people (called working the town “asan’ny Tanana”). Generally, they (and many other Malagasy, Christian or otherwise) say that the spirits inhabit the air (Sharp 1994?). And according to the style of each individual shepherd and how ‘hard’ he or she is hitting the air, one markedly feels a gust of wind following the shepherds hands. According to one informant, the white robe of the shepherds is apparently made extra wide on around the wrists, so as to create small gusts of wind with their waving arms, and this might add to an experience of something spiritual being pushed away i.e. exorcism. Ideally, each shepherd should have visited every person in the audience once. The most eager to be exorcised, often male patients, make sure they sit close to the front or the line where the shepherds take up position, and almost always on raffia mats.



*(The above picture: Shepherds working in Mahajanga)*

The style and intensity of each shepherd vary. Some seem very unenthusiastic (or unpossessed) by their actions and wave the air without any effort, mumbling some syllables that barely resemble the entire sentence (in the imperative form) of commanding the devil to go away. In the other extreme end, are a few shepherds that are so intense that it seems to border on aggressive or violent behavior. If the ‘patient’ is particularly passive and sullen, the shepherd will lift his head so as to gain eye contact, and scold the devil while shaking the index-finger to their face, like popular images of parents scolding their children. And when they are about to hit the air, these shepherds might take a step back while lifting their right hand up so as to gain momentum, hurl forward and fling their arm just inches from the onlookers face, two or three times before going on to the next. Those patients that receive such treatment are not chosen at random, as shepherds are well aware of the different ‘patients’ and how they behave. Often, those that are known to be ‘maditra’ (lit. stubborn or bad behaving) will be get a more rough exorcism by certain shepherds.



At one point during this cacophony of voices commanding the devil to go away in Jesus’ name, someone in the audience will begin to sing with others who quickly follow. I used to

interpret this as an attempt to relieve the tension and general discomfort of the shepherds ‘working’, although I could not get anyone to acknowledge this. In any case, the singing marks another shift in atmosphere and rhythm, and before long shepherds who are finished with ‘working’ will again take up position in front of the congregation. This initiates the last part of the purification-ritual called *fampaherezana*, meaning strengthening or empowerment, and more shepherds follow and prepare to give ‘strengthening’ to the onlookers. They turn their back to the audience and stand face the wall to pray for strength to pass on to the audience. When the shepherd is praying like this by himself, people rush forward, especially children and patients, and wait in line to receive blessing as soon as the shepherds turns around.



*(I am given ritual empowerment during the Fanokanana Ankaramalaza)*

When they receive *fampaherezana*, people kneel in front of the shepherd, often with closed eyes and bowing their heads down. The shepherd then slowly lowers his right hand down to the patient’s head, while bestowing blessings upon him aloud. The hand rests on the head while praying, close or directly into the patient’s ear (similar to Islamic Ruqya) for maybe a

minute or so. One shepherd might bless five to ten people or more, and the ceremony continues until everyone in the congregation has been blessed, or no one is left waiting. The congregation has been singing continuously since they began in the middle of the tense and electrifying ‘work’.

Note that the shepherds are holding their hands on the heads of the participants and patients. Touching the head is a powerful taboo among the Antemoro, but also elsewhere in Madagascar. I remember on my way to Ankaramalaza in the back of a large truck stuffed with people on their way to the festival. My “seat” (or rather standing place) was at the far back of the truck close to the drivers-cabin. On the spur of the moment I decided to climb like a monkey, on the inside of the metal and wood rooftop. As I was doing this I went over people’s heads and inadvertently flared some heads with my feet. This created a short uproar, and made my accompanying friend very embarrassed, whereupon he told me of the taboo of touching the head among the Antemoro.

Many people might leave (at least in Ankaramalaza) just after they have received blessing, although the ritual is not yet finished properly speaking. When all the blessings with ‘laying-on-of-hands’ (lit. *fametrahatanana*) are done, the congregation rises to pray the Lord’s Prayer, sing, then repeat the Lord’s Prayer again (during the everyday sermons). The worship and purification now properly finished, people slowly pour out of the communal house (*trano-be*) while chatting, and there is a general atmosphere of serenity and tranquility.

### **Preliminary analyses of the ritual**

It struck me that during the most intense phase where the shepherds were shouting and waving their hands in front of people’s faces, the audience was perfectly calm and there was no-one had sudden eruptions of possession with screams and uncontrolled behavior, like the popular images of possession and exorcism would have it. In fact only three times was I close to witness a sudden eruption of what the medical and anthropological literature refers to as trance-possession provoked by the shepherds exorcism (Lambek 1981; Bourguignon 1973). But once was from far away in a huge crowd making it impossible to confirm in aftermath, the second was a woman who started to shake in a typical fashion but stopped shortly after, and the third turned out to be a tragic misunderstanding.

This has led me to suspect that for the most part, it might be the shepherds themselves, rather than the patients and the audience, that most frequently are susceptible to trance-like

possession, but this time by the holy spirit rather than a demon. This is further compounded by the fact that psychotropics, such as the widely known anti-psychotic Chlorpromazine, is now widely distributed in Ankaramalaza and many other toby around the country (mainly those under supervision of the FLM). The use of this drug is indicated to cause drowsiness and side effects such as “insomnia, nightmares, depression, agitation, dry mouth, nasal stuffiness, apathy, pallor, convulsions and hypothermia” (Electronic Medical Compendium 2013). These side-effects might hamper the eruption of “altered states of consciousness” on the part of the patients. And this might again lead to heightened levels of social tension between shepherd and patient, because the patients level of apathy might make some shepherds “work” even harder, on the verge of brutalizing, to effect a reaction in each individual. This is not to say that possession does not occur, the literature on Madagascar, and my informants statements, abound with stories of possession by spirits and exorcism. And in fact, that this type of phenomena exist is a very important part of the revival’s own *raison d’etre*. But it is important to note according to my fieldwork experience that trance-possession is a specific category of event, according to expert-literature and the Malagasies themselves, and that according to those criterias this is not, by far, the most frequent type of affliction, nor the most important reason for going to an exorcism ceremony, among audience and patients.

It became apparent that those who were most eager to touch and shout during the purification ritual, were also the ones more prone to use coercion and violence against patients outside of the ritual, for example to make them go to church. In fact, I learnt later on that these shepherds considered it an integral part of their treatment philosophy, and as such it was not a tabooed subject (as a result of an “existential” and moral dilemma, as for example it might be in western psychiatry), but could be discussed openly with those concerned.

I believe that this has a relationship to a built-in tension the theological doctrine espoused with the four passages from the bible that are recited in the beginning of each *asa*. These are all verses that proclaim the powers that the apostles would wield in the name of the lord, after Jesus departed. They talk about miracles and wonders that the apostles would be able to perform when they are gathered “two or more” in his name. What is interesting with these verses is that they break with a certain form of theology and practice that divides God and humans into two parallel spheres. It brings God and humans together as active participants in a single (albeit mostly invisible) universe. The problem is that according to the officially espoused theology shepherds are normally prohibited to touch (*mikasika*) patients, whether

inside or outside of church. And I might remark that physical contact is not very common in regular social intercourse.

As I understand the shepherds they are fighting in a (cosmic) war against the devil and evil in general, and the audience's bodies, and any other space that we humans inhabit is the battleground. And this cosmic battle within the duality of Good vs. Evil, is also what gives this revival a unique position in Malagasy society at large. There are very few Malagasy that I know of that doubt the existence of evil spiritual forces. I have had countless haphazard conversations with street vendors, taxi drivers and passengers who, often unsolicited, talked to me about the use and dangers of witchcraft and evil powers. This is also the topic of many of the illness narratives that I have gathered. I argue that this aspect of the revival turns it into a project that is potentially less about evangelizing and proselytizing in and of itself, an image typical of Euro-American mission organization today, but an outright holy war against the (for some) extremely ambivalent world of spirits (Cf. for example David Graeber 1995). I also have the impression that much of the witchcraft that people refer to, is connected to the political and economic crisis. Politicians are often accused of using black magic, moreover poorer living conditions lead to increased social conflicts, which in turn increases use or accusations of black magic.

While staying in Ankaramalaza I also read Lesley Sharp's (1996) ethnography of spirit-possession rituals among the Sakalava of the north-west coast of Madagascar. I could see many parallels with the *Fifohazana* and their practices which I believe point to, a common spiritual understanding across all religious practice in Madagascar. For example, both shepherds and spirit mediums believe that spirits inhabit the wind or the air that surrounds us. Furthermore, good spirits smell good, while foul smell is a sign of an evil spirit, hence incense is used in the possession rituals among the Sakalava, and the shepherds' clothes are perfumed with soap or cologne. A telling example is the answer I got from one of the patients when I asked him what he thought or felt when he was exorcised: nothing he answered, only the nice smell off the shepherds' robes. This is also reflected in the common Malagasy term for God, *Andriamanitra*, which in a direct translation would be 'Fragrant Lord'. On one occasion at home with a shepherd and his patient, the patient suddenly told us that he sensed a foul smell, and the shepherd immediately interpreted this as a sure sign of demon possession and he was instructed to pray every time he had this sensation.

During the whole ceremony, the congregation sings to attract the holy spirit, which is the good spirit (in general terms) that is supposed to help the shepherds (or possess them) cast out evil. There are two songs in particular who are about inviting the presence of the holy spirit (fanahy masina), which are always sung just before the ceremony begins, and while the shepherds are changing into white robes. In the ancestor-possession ceremonies described by Sharp, the medium dresses in special clothes which belong to the particular ancestral spirit (1996). It is said that shepherds cannot ‘work’ (*asa*, as in the first part the ritual *asa sy fampaherezana*), without their white robe, which incidentally is called *lamba masina*, meaning ‘holy cloth’. The bible was by one informant called medicine (fanafody), and patients are encouraged to begin bible-study as a part of their cure. The bible is frequently said ‘to make the mind open up’ (*misoukatra ny saina*). It was very much frowned upon when someone left their bibles unattended, or were otherwise careless in handling them, and it was for most people their most prized object. I remember my pride when one day during worship, the person next to me handed me his bible to guard while he was going to the toilet. It was a rather causal act, but signaled the sacrality of the object (it is prohibited to let it lie on the ground) and expressed his trust to me. Furthermore, the area within which Ankaramalaza lies is known to have been influenced by Islamic immigrants, at least from the 15<sup>th</sup> century until European incursions into the Indian Ocean disrupted these relations. However the impact of this influence was that the Malagasy language became a written script in the Arabic alphabet, together with the sacrality that Islam imputes to the Arabic script. This meant that up until today, traditional healers will use Malagasy words magically imbued and written in the Arabic script to perform healing (Bloch 1995 [1968]). Undeniably the perception of sacred script as an agent of healing has influenced the Ankaramalaza revival’s perception of the Bible, both as a sacred object per se, and with a propositional content that can effect healing through studying it.

### **Invisible power and taboo: Malagasy conceptions of health and illness**

*“The term for illness (aretina) is used in the broadest sense to refer to almost any unwanted condition that threatens the general wellbeing. Physical illness, psychic disorders and infertility may all be called aretina. All illness is bound to have a cause. It may be caused by breaking taboos (mandika fady) or by sorcery. Spirits, the anger of ancestors, or conflicts among kin and others, may cause illness. Or one may just be “struck by the gods” (voan’ny Zanahary). Aretina is a concept of illness that has to be viewed in relation to a concept of*



*health that involves both physical and psychological dimensions, and in which the divisions between the individual and social body are vague or non-existent.” (Nielsen 2012: 58-59)*

*“The term for health, fahasalamana, may be translated as “health” as well as “wellbeing”, “happiness” and “peace”. When people occasionally consult a curer or regularly participate in tromba, they may do so in order to ensure a good harvest, to save a marriage or to protect themselves [lit. fiarovana, protection], their family, their houses and fields against sorcery. A curer will be involved in people’s day-to-day concerns, in the smaller or greater events of people’s lives. Thus, fahasalamana concerns much more than the individual health. It has to do with the social and material conditions of life, as much as the physical or psychic condition of the individual.” (Nielsen 2012: 58).*

Illness is understood as a call from Jesus to come back to him because one has strayed onto a wrong path (*diso lalana*). The consequence of the disease will then be that one returns to the toby and is delivered from the affliction, and subsequently live in community with other Christians on the right way. But, the same people could also say that the origin of the affliction is because of other people’s evil intentions and use of bad medicine. In any case, it has been suggested that victim could be used to replace the word patient, reflected for example in the word for medicine, “fanafody” which literally means “that which takes away the power of talismans” (Cambell 1992: 410).

Some patients, although labeled mentally ill, were extrovert and very sociable. Shepherds and non-patients would appreciate them and talk to them, with a certain humour maybe. Others, often those who had just arrived, were more introvert, and got from what I could observe especially before and after the sermons, little or no “normal” social contact with other people. They would not be approached, and only rarely talked to. There is maybe a hierarchy of integration and status in this society according to the sociability of the patients?

### *The sacred heart: Malagasy concepts of the person*

*“What they seek is a transformative experience that goes to the root of each person’s being and finds in that root something profoundly communal and shared.” (Turner 1969: 138)*

*“Any period of great cultural change will be a time of sensory confusion, for social revolutions are always sensory revolutions. This confusion may be experienced as an illness in the body of society or of the individual” (Feld 2005)*

A question that I’ve always kept asking myself since I began witnessing the ritual is whether or not there is some sort of aggression or tension between the shepherd and onlooker/patient during ‘asa’? Or more simply put, why not feel aggressed by the intrusive acts of the shepherd?

At some point, there must be a recognition by the ‘patient’ that he or she is not the one addressed during an exorcism, or when yelled at, shaken and ‘provoked’ (with the waving index-finger to their faces). The official idea is that it is not the individual person, but the devil that is attacked during the invasive ritual acts.

But there seems to be some incongruity in this, as some people would be seen as more or less ‘wholly’ possessed by the devil, by openly resisting or confronting the shepherds attempts at directing or order their acts and behavior. The most prominent act of deviance is refusing to go to church, and this is directly translated as the “work of the devil” and is automatically treated with acts of coercion and violence on the part of the shepherds.

Here violence (physical) and exorcism blend together, as the shepherd forces the patient to come along to church, with any means necessary, and at the same time shouting for the devil to obey in Jesus’ name. Whereas in church, coercion and exorcism remain rather distinct phenomena, and the conflation of the individual with the devil is less clear. (for example “mikapoka, de mifoua izy!”, which translates as “strike, and he/she will awaken!” )

All this cajoling and concern for the evil ‘third party’ truly responsible for the illness and obstinacy of the patients, resemble how children are taught proper behavior, hence they are ultimately about making people moral. But this process of making people moral necessitates subjection, whether or not any ‘crime’ has been committed. They must publicly show that they submit themselves to Jesus, but unavoidably also to the community. Nowhere is this process more clear and unambiguous for the whole congregation when the patient resists and

his resistance is physically broken down, and he or she is literally put in church among the others, even passivity and apathy here is broken down and made to display open resistance to the will of God and community. If the person then, next time, is walking to church by himself, even if in chains and with his or her shepherd just behind, this will be seen as a sign of great improvement. They are then in the process of being cured.

The point that I want to emphasize here is that whatever the cause and story of the illness, resistance and its defeat will become the locus of the relationship between the shepherds and the patients, whether or not there was an intended or conscious resistance in the first place, or maybe just apathy because of the use of psychotropics. Without a battle, there can be no victory, and “peace” or “truce” in this cosmic battle against the devil would amount to inertia, or slow degeneration.

Now, once the battle is made clear, it becomes perpetual, and part of everyday life, repeated so often that I wonder if it retains any emotional or “propositional” (ref. Bloch) sense for the participants any more. Maybe this new apathy or inertia reverts into a cause for a renewal of the battle, and a continuing significance? This would, in any case need more fieldwork to answer.

At last, the literal “root” of this analysis lies in Malagasy conceptions of the heart (wherein lies their individuality and identity), and the sensual and perceptual experiences of submitting to the sacred. The relevant ethnographic examples here are among others songs about “fo”, and having a “fo madio” or “fo maloto”, also part of the general discourse of Mpiandry. Concretely, I was explained on at least one occasion that the reason one goes to Asa sy fampaherezana is to cleanse one's heart which is infested by the devil. This is interesting because the heart is according to the literature the locus of the self (especially from southeast asia, this notion of self is explained in Errington). Thus to cleanse one's heart of evil through participation in exorcism is to personally submit to the sacred. This is also important for the political ethos of well-being of the whole community.

The concept of the heart in Madagascar, as in cultures all over the world, seems to be rich in symbolism and meaning. Several of my informants referred to their heart as the root or cause of their psychic illnesses, and the revival movement emphatically emphasizes the heart in both issues of conversion and repentance, and in relation to the exorcism ceremonies.

In Islam, the afflictions of the heart is a common idiom for psychic distress (Good 19??). And the heart is also consistently referred to in the bible, and in Christian art and culture through the ages (Høy??: 2003). In Austronesian languages, the heart is both a semantic root, and a noun. The semantic cluster in Austronesian languages, of which the root form *pu* (fo in Malagasy) take part, connotes individuality or self and centre or navel (Errington 19??, cited in Middleton 20??).

The heart in, in many parts of Malagasy society is also very much connoted to witchcraft and ‘bad medicine’ (*ody ratsy*). For example, several ethnographies mention the fear of “heart thieves” (*mpaka fo*) or “blood thieves” (*Mpaka ra*) (Freeman 20??; Cole 2001; Bloch 1971; Graeber 1997?)

In some way or another, their view on the heart (*foho*) is also connected to what they call ‘illness of the mind’ (*areti ’saina*), which is still unclear for me at the moment. But it seems as if the heart is the center for ones individuality, and one’s relationship to the social and spiritual world, especially among Christians and in some non-christians on the east coast.

To draw another parallel with Sharp’s ethnography, she tells us that the spirit mediums believe that the possessing spirit will ‘sit’ (*mipetraka*) in the head, and it is therefore considered taboo to touch someone’s head because it is the sacred space of spirits (1996). In comparison to this the shepherds say that the spirits reside in the heart, and a shepherd holds his hand on the head during the second part of the ritual called ‘strengthening’ or ‘the laying on of hands’ (*fampaherezana* or *fametrahatanana*). The heart is also described as a house which can be clean or dirty, and is closely related to ones moral behavior, and of course feelings. The heart is where the Devil comes to reside, and make you do evil things. And after the purification ritual they often say that one has a ‘clean heart’ (*foho madio*). Unfortunately the devil is attracted by this clean house, and will always want to return. This is one of the reasons I got for why one has ‘cleanse’ oneself so frequently (the ritual is held twice a day, and a minority of the shepherds and patients who go attend all of them, consequently ‘purify’ themselves over 700 times each year).

Several of the illness narratives were about illness in the heart, because of lovesickness, or the use of black magic to capture one’s heart (by *mpaka-fo*, meaning heart snatchers). In one interview, which for me seemed like a story of having psychosis, he narrated to me how he suffered from not ‘trusting his heart’ (*tsy mahatoky fo*). I gathered from his story that he was very anxious and afraid every time he was alone or in large crowds. For example, he suffered

greatly during the *Fanokanana* and the huge masses of people that come as ‘pilgrims’ to Ankaramalaza. In fact, the week-long consecration of shepherds that occurs each year is a huge strain on the patient-population of Ankaramalaza.

## *The shepherds as “knights of faith”*

After a few days at the festival I witnessed a spontaneous exorcism of a young man, brought to the festival by his concerned mother, and I subsequently spent the rest of the festival together with them to learn their story. Madame Lila, the mother, is a middle-aged woman from Mahajanga on the north-west coast, short and stout. She is an accountant and hence relatively well-off, and she is married with three children. The oldest son is Hajo and the reason Madame Lila chose to attend the “Fanokanana” this year. She states that her son has a mental illness (areti’saina), and suspects that her two other sons (twins) suffer from an affliction also.

Hajo is about 30 years old, and has been sick since he was only fifteen months old, when he was hospitalized for a year. In the years since Madame Lila discovered her son had an affliction, she has tried all of the psychiatric institutions available in Madagascar, including an expensive private clinic in Antananarivo. She has had him examined by numerous doctors, amongst whom a neurologist. She told me that she spends 140 000 Ariary a month for his medication proscribed by the neurologist, a considerable sum considering that average middle class wages range from 300 000 to 500 000 Ariary. Lila’s greatest fear is that no one will be there to take care of him when she will become old and pass away. She believes she is the only one that understands him and can take proper care of him, and has relentlessly been looking for a cure for ever since it was discovered that he was ill 30 years ago.

I spent the next days of the Fanokanana with them, to learn more about their situation, and their relationship to the Fifohazana. Consider the following event:

*I walked out one morning during the festival to attend a church-service at a nearby ‘annex’ or broadcasting post of the service that was taking place in the overcrowded main church. Several of these had been set up all through Ankaramalaza as it was impossible for everyone to enter the main church building at once. Hence all of the area that comprised the village was turned into a huge open-air worship, and one could hear the broadcast of the sermon everywhere one went.*

*Holy Communion was about to take place, but barely had I arrived when I noticed a crowd gathered in a circle, a little apart from those that were about to take Communion, where in the centre someone was crying or screaming in a strange voice, which at first sounded like a bird screeching. It turned out that some shepherds were struggling to hold a man down.*

*People were whispering to each other “he has smoked drugs”, or “he is possessed” as the possible causes, while his mother that was sitting and silently weeping on a bench just besides us. This struggle continued outside in front of the crowd for a while, until the shepherds that were ‘working’, carried him off the ground into the community house just besides them (the “Trano Be”), to continue their treatment. There were maybe three shepherds inside, and I got the opportunity to follow and watch from close by. When inside they laid him on the ground and exorcised him while at least two of them were holding him down. The boy was wriggling and resisting their attempts to hold him, and wristing his head away from their hands that were trying to keep it directed at the shepherd that was swiping the air in front of him and commanding the devil to go away. In one such a ‘wriggle’ with his head, someone said “look, his head went all around!” which for me was a clear reference to popular images of people possessed by the devil who can turn their heads around full circle (recall the infamous movie “The Exorcist”). As I was standing there I saw no such thing happening to the boy’s head, and I felt apprehensive of the lynching atmosphere in the crowd. Suddenly the boy cried out for his mother; the shepherds immediately let go of him, and he ran out for his mother outside.*

I was dumbfound about the radical change of atmosphere. At one moment crowd and shepherd were “working” intensely on him with the assumption that he was possessed by a dirty spirit; the next he was recognized as a fragile individual calling for his mother and released from the grip of the shepherds.

I interviewed her immediately after the incident, while the Holy Communion was still going on: A bit shaken she agreed to answer my questions, and told me that perhaps someone had hit or pushed him and that this was what had provoked the whole incident. When asked about the interpretations of the crowd and the shepherds she did not believe his reaction was due to the sudden eruption of an evil spirit; since she had been to many ‘asa sy fampaherezana’ before, she told me that she knew that a dirty spirit comes forth because of the presence of a shepherd, or when they lay their hands on them. On this occasion she believed that his was not due to a dirty spirit, but because of his illness; “there is something broken inside of him” she told me. She had met people in her church in Mahajanga who had told her to go to Ankaramalaza during the Fanokanana, and that if she only believed she would be cured; recalling the famous passage from the bible that was used as a slogan by former president Ravalomanana: “Do not be afraid, only believe!” (Mark 5:36, New King James Version). She had also read leaflets about the story of Nenilava and how people were healed by her.

Furthermore she said that she was the only one who believed he could be cured, and that her husband didn't even go to church to pray (tsy mivavaka)!

I was impressed with what seemed like extreme patience and ability to hope, for a condition that in my imagination was incurable. My impression then was that Hajo satisfied all our popular criteria for being an autistic, at least from my own hearsay experience and Leila's descriptions, although she told me she had never heard of the term: He seemed to react very little to social solicitations, and barely utter the minimum of words in response to questions (yes, no, good, bad). But he could apparently read whole cartoons and recite the stories fluently afterwards, and was also very responsive to song and dance. When I was with them, he would often 'leap' forward and reach out his right arm to greet me and shake hands, and after that clasp his knee and forehead while laughing. He would often remind me that Leila was his mother, or remind his mother that I was Alex. In any case, Hajo was different, and had a way of being and relating to the outside world that was difficult to grasp for an outsider, whether Malagasy or European.

Later that same day I was sitting together with Mme. Lila and her company from Mahajanga, that were all shepherds. She recounted to them what had happened that same morning, and was seriously challenged by her friends to recast the story of her son's illness as something not caused by the invisible "something" that was broken inside of him, but that it was really the "work of the devil" (lit. *as any devoly*) that caused both the incident and the illness in the first place. I remember she started to cry during the conversation, and that when I asked her later, on the way to church, if she now thought that it was the "work of the devil", she answered *tsy haiko*, "I don't know". Very early the next morning I sat by them during an exorcism ceremony. My initial reaction to this pressure that was put on her was that I thought that the shepherds were insensitive.

Christian Suhr borrows a concept from Kierkegaard called "knights of faith" in his analysis of a similar situation. Suhr states that:

*"As knights of faith [the healer] must take on the obligation to become seers, knowers and masters of the invisible powers inflicting their patient's pain. Not only must the healers see and know. They must also take on the task of hurting, transgressing, converting, or exterminating that within the patient which is inflicting the pain" ... "Within this very healing moment lies the ever-present danger of heresy, of conflating the agency the healer borrows from the invisible with her or his own agency" (Suhr 2013: 177-178)*



I believe that the shepherds are in many ways similar to Suhr and Kierkegaard's "knights of faith". Kierkegaard distinguished between the "Knight of Infinite Resignation, capable only of relinquishing the finite world, and the Knight of Faith, capable of grasping finitude on the strength of the absurd" (Suhr 2013: 136), and Suhr uses it to describe the oscillation between doubt and faith in the attitudes of both patient and healer.

## **Conclusion: Malagasy historiography as problem and solution**

I have attempted in this thesis to show how submission can be important for healing, and that our ethnocentric biases against religious submissive behavior in general is in the way of how we can appreciate the importance submission. For further reflection on this topic I want to turn to Malagasy historiography.

Seeing that Madagascar lies far away from Southeast Asia and comparatively very close to the African mainland, the intricacies of the colonization of Madagascar by Austronesians alongside those of African descent beginning maybe two thousand years ago has been the subject of extensive scholarly debate (see Adelaar & Himmelmann 2005; Beaujard 2003; Dahl 1951, 1977, 1991; Dewar 1997; Dewar & Richard 2012; Dewar & Wright 1993; Kottak et.al. 1986; Ottino 1986; V erin & Wright 1999). The ample evidence produced by archeological, historical and linguistic research, of continuous inflow of new cultural impulses; from all over the Indian Ocean; on different times and parts of the large island; who subsequently merged to form new cultural complexes, has been aptly termed “the world’s most beautiful enigma” (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 28).

However, this has led to a situation where according to one africanist historian, “Malagasy history has for a long time rebuffed the non-specialist. Seen from the outside, from the point of view of the generalist on Africa, Malagasy history often took on the appearance of a nebulous entity marked strongly by lack of consensus, and by a somewhat exaggerated quest for “origins”. Hence the stress on the uniqueness of Madagascar” (Fuglestad 1985: 346). This statement aptly captures my own struggles with the intricacies of Madagascar’s past, and is also taken from a review of a Francophone edited monograph that has come a long way to render Malagasy history intelligible according to the reviewer (Fuglestad 1985; Raison-Jourde 1983).

Since then, the distinguished historians Solofo Randrianja and Stephen Ellis have spent ten years creating an impressive synthesis of the complex, disparate and sometimes contradictory evidence of Madagascar’s history (Randrianja & Ellis 2009). To sum up their argument, one could say that the logic of settlement and evolution of societies in Madagascar largely follows a well established pattern found elsewhere in mainland Africa: Namely that foreigners, in malagasy called *Antalaotra* (lit. ‘people of the sea’) who were mainly Arabs and later

Europeans, arrived on the coast with superior political and technological knowledge and subdued the autochtones and/or allied themselves with royalty; but where the ‘natives to the land’ remained sacralized and ritually potent (Fuglestad 1985: 347; Raison-Jourde 1983: 8-68; Randrianja & Ellis 2009; Turner 1969: 99). This tension, between the politically superior and the sacralized but inferior, has since been identified as a key pattern of Malagasy society up until today and has evolved into a “complex dialectic” of valuing of those practices that pertain to the “ways of the ancestors” (*fomban’dRazana*) and embracing the potency of the customs and ways of the foreigners (Randrianja & Ellis 2009: 3).

Although this “complex dialectic” is still somewhat unclear to me, it resonates well with my own field experiences, and there are some points that emerge from it which are potentially important to our understanding of the revival movement. First of all, the most important thing that these *antalaotra* brought with them was “world religions”; first Islam, then Christianity. Islam, mostly from the 15<sup>th</sup> century and onwards had a wide and subtle impact on Malagasy society, reflected in for example the names of days of the week<sup>5</sup>; systems of divination, destiny and the importance of the cardinal points; the magical power of written words; and I venture to suggest also the relationship between humans and the spirit world (K. Middleton 1999: 4). All these aspects were present in my fieldwork to varying degrees, but the two latter especially.

Second, this means that the arrival of Christianity and the colonial impact needs to be understood in a much longer history of interaction with Madagascar and the “global” world, and hence these phenomena are perhaps not so “modern” in the eyes of the Malagasy (and Africans in general) as one would like to think (Raison-Jourde 1983: 15; Meyer 2004: 458-463). This point is also made by Birgit Meyer in her own scholarship Christianity in Africa, and in her latest review on the topic (Meyer 1999, 2004).

Last, and this is perhaps the most relevant to the topic of my thesis: Can this dialectical logic bring us closer to an understanding of the Malagasy conceptions of the value of submission, or what one could call an “ontology of submission”?

---

<sup>5</sup> Malagasy: Alatsinainy, Talata, Alarobia, Alakamisy, Zuma, Sabotsy, Alahady. Arabic: Al-Ithnayn, Ath-Thulaathaa, Al-Arba’aa’, Al-Khamis, Al-Jumu’ah, As-Sabt, Al-Ahad ( Source <http://www.softarabic.com/arabic-days-of-the-week/>)

## **Bibliography:**

Adelaar, Alexander & Himmelmann, Nikolaus P.

2005. *The Austronesian Languages of Southeast Asia and Madagascar*. Milton Park, Abingdon & New York: Routledge

Alpers, Edward

2013. *The Indian Ocean in World History*. New York: Oxford University Press

Astuti, Rita

1995. “‘The Vezo Are Not a Kind of People’: Identity, Difference, and “Ethnicity” among a Fishing People of Western Madagascar’, *American Ethnologist* vol. 22 n°3, p. 464-482.

Beaujard, Philippe

2003. ‘Les arrivées austronésiennes à madagascar: Vagues ou continuum?(partie I)’. *Études Océan Indien*, (35-36), 59-147.

Berg, Gerald M.

1988. ‘Sacred Acquisition : Andrianampoinimerina at Ambohimanga 1777-1790’. *The Journal of African History* vol.29 n°2, 191-211. Cambridge University Press.

Bloch, Maurice

1986. *From Blessing to Violence. History and ideology in the circumcision ritual of the Merina of Madagascar*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press

1988. ‘The disconnection between power and rank as a process: an outline of the development of kingdoms in central Madagascar’. In Maurice Bloch (ed.) *Ritual, History and Power: Selected Papers in Anthropology*. London: The Athlone Press. p. 46-88

1995. ‘People into Places: Zafimaniry Concepts of Clarity’ in Eric Hirsch and Michael O’Hanlon (eds.), *The Anthropology of Landscape. Perspectives on Space and Place*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 63-77.

1998. ‘Astrology and Writing in Madagascar’. In Maurice Bloch (ed.) *How we think they think. Anthropological Approaches to Cognition, Memory, and Literacy*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press. p. 131-151.

Campbell, Gwyn

1988. ‘Missionaries, Fanompoana, and the Menalamba Revolt in Late Nineteenth Century Madagascar’. *Journal of Southern African Studies* vol.15 n°1, p. 53-73

1992. ‘Crisis of Faith and Colonial Conquest: The impact of Famine and Disease in Late Nineteenth-Century Madagascar’. *Cahiers d’Études Africaines*, vol.32 n°127, p. 409-453

Cervantes, Miguel Saavedra

2005 [1605 & 1615]. *Den skarpsindige Lavadelsmannen Don Quijote av La Mancha*. Oslo: Aschehoug Pocket

Cole, Jennifer

2001. *Forget Colonialism? Sacrifice and the Art of Memory in Madagascar*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press

Csordas, Thomas

1987. 'Health and the Holy in African and Afro-American Spirit Possession'. *Social Science and Medecine* vol.24 n°1, p.1-11. Elsevier Science Ltd.

Dahl, Otto Christian

1951. *Malgache et Manjaan. Une comparaison linguistique*. Oslo: Egede Instituttet.

1977. *Proto-Austronesian*. Lund: Studentlitteratur

1991. *Migration from Kalimantan to Madagascar*. Oslo: Unversitetsforlaget.

Dewar, Robert E.

1997. 'Does it matter that Madagascar is an island?'. *Journal of Human Ecology* vol.25 n°3, p. 481-489

Dewar, Robert E. & Richard, Alison F.

2012. 'Madagascar: A History of Arrivals, What Happened, and Will Happen Next'. *Annual Review of Anthropology* vol.41, p. 495-517. Annual Reviews.

Dewar, Robert E. & Wright, Henry T.

1993. 'Culture History of Madagascar'. *Journal of World Prehistory* vol.7 n°4, p. 417-466

Dictionary of African Christian Biography, DACB.

2008. *Ravelonjanahary*.

<http://www.dacb.org/stories/madagascar/ravelonjanahary.html> [accessed 10/08/14]

Eliade, Mircea

1961. *The Sacred and the profane. The nature of religion*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers

Evans-Pritchard, Edward

1937. *Witchcraft, oracles, and Magic among the Azande*. Oxford: Clarendon Press

Feeley-Harnik, Gillian

1986. 'Ritual and Work in Madagascar' in Conrad Philip Kottak, J.-A. Rakotoarisoa, A. Southall, P. Vérin (eds.), *Madagascar. Society and History*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, p.157-174

1988. 'Review of *From Blessing to Violence* by Maurice Bloch'. *American Ethnologist* vol.15 n°3, p.593-595. Wiley

1991. *A Green Estate. Restoring Independence in Madagascar*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press

1997. 'Madagascar: Religious Systems'. In John Middleton (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, vol.3, p. 86-89.

Fuglestad, Finn

1985. 'Malagasy history comes of age. Review of *Les Souverains de Madagascar, l'Histoire Royale et ses Resurgences Contemporaines*'. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* vol.18 n°2, p. 346-350

Giles-Vernick, Tamara

2006. 'Chapter 4. Oral Histories as method and sources'. In Ellen Perecman and Sara R. Curran (eds.) *A handbook for Social Science Field Research: Essays & Bibliographic Sources on Research Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, p. 85-95

Gluckman, Max

1971 [1958]. *Analysis of a social situation in Modern Zululand*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Halvorson, Britt

2010. 'Translating the *Fifohazana* (Awakening): The Politics of Healing and the Colonial Mission Legacy in African Christian Missionization'. *Journal of Religion in Africa* vol.40 n°4, p. 413-441. Leiden: Brill.

Ingold, Tim

2000. *The perception of the environment. Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*. London : Routledge.

Institut National de la Statistique de Madagascar (Instat)

2012. 'Population et démographie'  
[http://www.instat.mg/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=33&Itemid=56](http://www.instat.mg/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=33&Itemid=56) [retrieved 03/08/2014]

Jacquier-Dubourdieu, Lucile

1996. 'Représentation de l'esclavage et conversion: un aspect du mouvement du réveil à Madagascar'. *Cahiers des Sciences Humaines* vol.32 n°3, p. 597-610 Paris: ORSTOM.

2000. 'Soatanana, Une Nouvelle Jerusalem en Pays Betsileo (Madagascar). Mise en espace d'un nouvel ordre politique et religieux'. *Géographie et Cultures* n°33, p. 89-112. Paris: L'Harmattan.

2002. 'De la Guérison des Corps à la Guérison de la Nation. Réveil et mouvements évangéliques à l'assaut de l'espace public'. *Politique Africaine* n°86, p. 70-85. Paris: Karthala.

Kapferer, Bruce

2005. 'Situations, Crisis, and the Anthropology of the Concrete. The contributions of Max Gluckman'. *Social Analysis*. Vol.49 n°3, p.85-133

Keller, Eva

2005. *The Road to Clarity. Seventh-Day Adventism in Madagascar*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Kierkegaard, Søren

2000 [1843]. 'Fear and Trembling, Dialectical Lyric (October 16. 1843), by Johannes De Silentio'. In Howard & Edna Hong (eds) *The Essential Kierkegaard*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Kleinman, Arthur C.

1988. *The Illness Narratives. Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition*. New York: Basic Books

Kottak, Conrad P., Jean-Aimé Rakotoarisoa, Aidan Southall, Pierre Vérin (eds.)

1986. *Madagascar. Society and History*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press

Lambek, Michael

1981. *Human Spirits. A cultural account of trance in Mayotte*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2013. 'The continuous and discontinuous person: two dimensions of ethical life'. *JRAI* vol.19 n°4, p. 837-858.

Larson, Pier

1996. 'Desperately seeking the "the Merina" (Central Madagascar): reading ethnonyms and their semantic fields in African Identity histories'. *Journal of Southern African Studies* vol.22 n°4 p. 541-560

1997. «"Capacities and Modes of Thinking": Intellectual Engagements and Subaltern Hegemony in the Early History of Malagasy Christianity». *The American Historical Review* vol.102 n°4, p. 969-1002. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Meyer, Birgit

1999. *Translating the Devil. Religion and Modernity among the Ewe of Ghana*.  
Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press

2004. 'Christianity in Africa : From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches'. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 33, p. 447-474

Middleton, John

1997. *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara Vol.3*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons

Middleton, Karen

1999. 'Introduction'. In Karen Middleton (ed.), *Ancestors, Power and History in Madagascar*. Leiden: Brill. p. 1-32

Mitchell, Clyde

1983. 'Case and situational analysis'. *Sociological Review*. N°31, p. 187-211.

Molet, Louis

1967. 'Cadres pour une ethnopsychiatrie de Madagascar'. *L'Homme* vol.7 n°2, p. 5-29.  
[http://persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/hom\\_0439-4216\\_1967\\_num\\_7\\_2\\_366882](http://persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/hom_0439-4216_1967_num_7_2_366882) [retrieved 28/07/14]

Ottino, Paul

1986. *L'Étrangère Intime. Essai d'anthropologie de la civilisation de l'ancien Madagascar*. Paris : Éditions des Archives Contemporaines

Raison-Jourde, Françoise

1983. 'Introduction'. In Françoise Raison-Jourde (ed.) *Les Souverains de Madagascar. L'Histoire royale et ses resurgences contemporaines*. Paris: Karthala, p. 8-68.

Randrianja, Solofo & Ellis, Stephen

2009. *Madagascar. A Short History*. London: Hurst & Company

Ruud, Jørgen

1960. *Taboo. A study of Malgasy Customs and Beliefs*. Oslo & London: Oslo University Press and George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

Skeie, Karina Hestad

2011. 'Mission Appropriation or Appropriating the Mission? Negotiating Local and Global Christianity in Nineteenth Century Madagascar'. In Hilde Nielssen, Inger Marie Okkehaug and Karina Hestad Skeie (eds.), *Protestant missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Unto the Ends of the World* Leiden: Brill, p. 157-186.

Nielssen, Hilde & Skeie, Karina Hestad



2014. 'Christian Revivalism and Political Imagination in Madagascar'. *Journal of Religion in Africa* vol.44, p. 189-223. Leiden: Brill

Sharp, Lesley

1993. *The Possessed and the Dispossessed. Spirits, Identity and Power in a Madagascar Migrant Town*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press

1994. 'Exorcists, Psychiatrists, And The Problems Of Possession In Northwestern Madagascar'. *Social Science & Medecine* vol.38 n°4, p. 525-542. Elsevier Science Ltd.

Suhr, Christian

2013. *Descending with Angels. The Invisible in Danish Psychiatry and Islamic Exorcism*. Unpublished PhD. Thesis, Department of Culture and Society, Aarhus University.

Tangedal, Erik

2010. 'Medaljedryss over nordmenn og gassarar'. *Madagaskarnytt* vol.8 n°1. Stavanger: Vennskapsforeningen Norge- Madagaskar. p. 16-17.  
[http://www.madagaskar.no/docs/maresaka/nr\\_1\\_10.pdf](http://www.madagaskar.no/docs/maresaka/nr_1_10.pdf) [accessed 10/08/14]

Thunem, A.

1926. *Vekkelsen paa Madagaskar*. Stavanger: Det Norske Missionslskaps forlag

Turner, Victor

1997 [1969]. *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure*. New Brunswick & London: Aldine Transaction.

Vaaland, Tor Øystein

2011. 'Gud og djevler over alt'. *Morgenbladet*, 8.-14. Juli 2011. <http://web.retriever-info.com/services/archive/displayPDF?documentId=055126201107084XXSBD2G6AVX2IFICZ19XKWM100001010F14&serviceId=2> [retrieved 28/07/2014]

Vérin, Pierre & Wright, Henry

1999. 'Madagascar and Indonesia: New Evidence from Archeology and Linguistics'. *Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association Bulletin* vol.18 p. 35-42.

### Appendix A:

*One September morning I was interviewing Abban'iJean, the local president of the exorcists in Ankaramalaza, and Abban'iDonné, the vice-president. Abban'iJean talks to me about his past as a powerful ombiasy, magician, before he was awakened. He became very sick, and went to meet this toby's founding prophetess, Nenilava, where he converted and was healed. A young girl comes in and asks Abban'iJean for help, because her brother is sick and won't come home. Abban'iJean goes into a small room behind a curtain to pray and prepare himself, while I continue to talk with Abban'iDonné. Abban'iJean comes out again with a chain in one hand, and a piece of cloth in the other, wondering which one he should bring to tie the unruly 'patient'. We walk the steep hill from his house up to the main dirt road, between the clinic on one end and the primary school on the other. We walk towards the primary school, which lies on top of a hill, and here Fabien is standing, or rather 'hanging around', next to a booth selling everything from cookies, rice, soda, soap to pre-paid phone-credit. Fabien recognizes me and says "Akori Vazaha", something like "How are you white-man?". Abban'iJean walks directly over to him and starts fiddling with his arms to tie them, without a look or a word. Fabien pushes him away and stands in the middle of the road with his hands up ready to fight, shouting something to Abban'iJean about him still being a magician. Abban'iJean, startled, also takes up his fists, and they start throwing punches at each other frantically, and Fabien adds something that looks like karate kicks. This lasted maybe for a minute, which seemed like ages for me, while watching in shock and awe. Fabien managed to hit the nose of Abban'iJean before someone coming from behind, grabbed him around his arms and chest. Then Fabien gave up. Now several people had come to help, and they laid Fabien down on the ground face down. While they were tying his arms behind his back, Abban'iJean, blood still dripping from his nose, lifted up his head and punched him twice in the face, and then examining it for damage.*

*After this Fabien, Abban'iJean, Abban'iDonné and I, walked away, Fabien showing no resistance, to his mother's house over the opposite side of the hill. I was in shock. How could Abban'iJean do this?*

*At this point in my fieldwork I started to spend more time with Fabien. He is about 20 years of age, and became sick more than a year ago, when according to his mother, a jealous classmate from high school threw sorcery on him, and one day he had some sort of hallucinations, seeing things in his textbook. Six months ago his father died, and up until then he lived with a shepherd that took good care of him, and he was getting well apparently. But*

*they could no longer afford this after his father died, and now lives with his mother who moved to the toby. I sat next to him in church, and talked to him whenever I met him in the street. He seemed to have retreated into himself, and wouldn't talk about the incident. I tried to give him attention in church, and point to the correct songs we were supposed to sing, or the bible verses read. But he struggled to concentrate. After a little less than a week they took off the knots that tied his arms to his back. All that time his upper-arms had been glued to his side, and he had gotten some kind of fungus between his arms and his body. He was allowed to participate in the work-training program for 'patients', and we usually met there, where I taught him some Norwegian and English words.*