

Fulfillment of vows pronounced on traditional sacred places source of social and political stability in Madagascar

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ABSTRACT : The main objective of this study is to better understand the phenomenon of Malagasy traditions, in particular the "vow to sacred places" and its intrinsic values among the Sojabe (Traditional Chief), notables and village assemblies and also their relations with politicians in Madagascar, in a country where ancestral traditions hold a prominent place in their social and organizational life. The study was conducted in different sacred places in the Sofia region (Mandritsara district such as Ambodihazomamy, Mahalaigny, Marosely, Ambohimahavelona-Marotandrano, Marangibato; in the Befandriana North district such as Amboditsitondrogy and in the Bealanana district: Tsiakarantagna), with 20 Sojabe, 200 notables and 300 village assemblies. The goal is to capture the respects and accomplishments of this vow, including the respect of Sojabe, was truly honored by politicians and the realization of the vow pronounced and its proportionality to the word given; and the study wants to understand the confidence of the notables and the local populations towards the Elders and finally, the research questions the continuity in the community studied to practice this tradition of a vow to the sacred place and its importance for them. To do this, the Sojabe were questioned on the major axes of this tradition, namely: the types of people who make a vow to the sacred place, the recognition of hasina among Malagasy politicians. The nature of their wish was studied and we asked the question about the correct realization of this wish and for what interest? common or personal. The confidence of notables and village assemblies in the Sojabe has been verified. Finally, the question on the continuity of this community to practice this vow ritual in the sacred place or not arose to better understand the system of current social and political regulation in this community. This study used a semi-directive questionnaire, composed of open and closed questions. The survey data was processed using the Excel Statistical Analysis tool as a statistical tool. The results of this analysis show that most of the Sojabe interviewed answered that the category of the person making a vow at the sacred place varies, sometimes ordinary people or politicians, but the Sojabe found that political figures ignore the Hasina of this ritual; moreover, they all seek to succeed in politics while promising development projects. Once his wish is realized, his interest is generally limited to their personal interest and does not conform to the promise. The reality shows that the notables and the village assemblies do not have total confidence in the Sojabe. Despite this, the communities studied have always defended themselves by saying that the practice of this tradition of "vows to sacred places" remains a source of social and political stability which Malagasy people should highlight and not take as a tool of manipulation. social and political promise the impossible.

Keywords : *Respect, vow, sacred, social, Madagascar*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the Malagasy tradition, the respect of the "vow" is sacred. This ritual is performed only in a sacred place founded by family ancestors or heroes. The request for such a vow must be notified by an Elder or the Chief of the clan, as *Raiamandrenyara-drazana* (Guardians of the ancestral tradition).

Awkward in the situation, however, politicians sometimes take advantage of the guardians of sacred values. As Rasamoelina [1] points out, *raiamandreny* have an imperative influence in the mental representations of Malagasy people. In other cases, kings of certain tribes of Madagascar have decided to take the place of clan authorities, while legitimizing their power through the use of rites and beliefs like the *Sakalava* societies concerning the worship of relics of royal ancestors as stated by Ballarin [2]; in the same way in the Merina sovereigns, kings understood that these elders held legitimacy towards the population. Lavondes [3] also said

that the political organization in the kingdom of southwestern Madagascar is built at the family level, village assemblies and finally the sovereign (or *Mpanjaka*). And the Head of lineage, *mpitoka*, means "the one who pronounces the invocations intended for the ancestors".

As for involvement and involvement in the political arena, some people wishing to stand for elections (local, regional or national) consult and seek advice from the elders, the *tangalamena*, the *mpitazonahazomanga* or *lonaka* to have the *tso-drano* (blessings) of the latter and of the village assemblies. The elders listen to their conscience and verify the consent and endorsement of the local population. Then the practice of vows can be realized. A sacred wish can only be granted in a special place. As Raison explains [4], for the Malagasy, God is far away, in fact, people do not disturb him and they prefer to find him in mountains, rocks, springs, lakes, all natural sites marked by the presence of mysterious beings, the spirits of the waters or the woods and always according to the author, the *hasina* is anchored in places.

Moreover, according to Rasamoelina [1], the authority of the elders governs the temporal order, spreads out in the relationship between mortals and their ancestors and connects the living and the creator God.

During the vow request ceremony, before the village assembly, the applicant or candidate is presented by the elder to God, to all the ancestors and to the entire village assembly. Indeed, the person speaks by pronouncing his or her vows solemnly. In the tradition, to be effective and bring happiness to the person and to all, this wish must be made and be based on *hasina* (or an intrinsic or supernatural virtue) as Raison said [4] and without *hasina* without power.

This wish must be well expressed and very precise before the village assembly. As Hernandez [5] also points out, the word spoken in a sacred place is not the word spoken in the street. Indeed, the person is attached to a kind of bilateral relationship between two individuals or between self and self, therefore, speech is an earthly affair, from man to man. In addition, the given word is a promise that one undertakes to respect and Boyer Alain underlined it in the theses of Hobbes Thomas that the promise is one of the foundations of the political organization of civilized human societies. The author even recalled that life without promise is untenable and that without it, solidarity and collaboration remain difficult between men and it also avoids a war of all against all.

However, as in several African countries underlined Aka Bédia [6], the notion of respect or not for the given word also arouses enormous controversy on the fact that it is a matter of religion, because the word is sacred. In industrialized countries, the non-respect of promises conditions the re-election of the authorities, on the other hand in developing countries, broken promises are the basis of armed rebellions and civil wars which mortgage the development of these countries. This lack of respect causes frustration among the weakest (or minorities) and these minority groups often do not have the right to speak, therefore they will resort to other means such as terrorism to identify themselves and differentiate. Moreover, in some cases, the word establishes institutional frameworks of oppression, manipulation, dirigisme, these are often the subject, voter, governed, recipient of the political discourse. Hernández [5].

In fact, Lavondes [3] has hammered home that the Malagasy civilization is a civilization of respect and has an authority that goes beyond men, then this authority is used for conciliation in order to maintain and increase the life of men on earth. Malagasy. This word requires respect.

Respect for speech is a sacred concept, speech is defined as an ability to express and communicate one's thoughts through sounds or gestures and it has the broader meaning of "speech", "statement" or even reasoning and each speech act mobilizes the ability to speak and social skills to leverage competence in a given situation, according to Bourdieu [7].

Currently, the ritual organization is intertwined with political systems and Hocart [8] wonders about the way in which, many societies of the powers of a political nature (ministers, judges, agents of the public force, etc.) exercise and get involved in the ritual organization with the main aim of promoting the life of the population.

Our article focuses on the regional populations in the Sofia region (in the northwest of Madagascar) who still practice and believe in religious values and the importance of respecting a vow pronounced at a sacred place and they still hope for its success. and the *Sojabe*, the notables, the village assembly await the realization of this wish at a good time.

The major goal of our research is to show the importance of respecting the status of a *Sojabe* in this ritual "vow to the sacred place", regardless of the promise, first of all, it is free according to the will or the effort of the person. So, this study also shows us the weight of the notables and the village assembly from the preparation of the request for this wish until the realization of this wish on the sacred place concerned and in public. Finally, this research shows us that the practice of vow remains one of the ancestral traditions inseparable for organizing and harmonizing social and organizational life in Malagasy culture. To find out about these values that stabilize social and political life among the *Sojabe*, notables and local populations were questioned by means of surveys, first on the categorizations of people who practice this vow near the sacred place, then on the values and importance offered (*hasina*) by politicians to the *Sojabe* and to the assembly of the

local population living in this region, in fact, their wishes must be compulsorily specified in public, and for the common or personal interest then on the proportionalities of the effective realization of this wish for the good or the usual trust of all so that society can live in lasting social harmony.

To deepen the counts on the observations obtained during the analysis of the survey data, a statistical analysis using Excel spreadsheet office software makes it possible to specify the results.

II. METHODS

In this study, we will observe the intrinsic values of respect for the fulfillment of the wish to the sacred place among politicians in the region of Sofia, more particularly in districts of *Mandritsara* such as *Ambodihazomamy*, *Mahalaigny*, *Marosely*, *Ambohimahavelona-Marotandrano*, *Marangibato*; North *Befandriana* district as *Amboditsitondrogy*; district of *Bealanana: Tsiakarantanagna* and district of *Antsohihy* as *Anahidrano* near the tomb of President *Tsirananana*, Father of the Independence of Madagascar.

The study was carried out at the beginning of August 2021, with 20 *Sojabe*, 200 notables as well as 300 individuals among the village assemblies in the study area.

For the purpose of the study, it is important to know what types of people make a wish at the sacred place. Questions about the *hasina*, the motives for the vow, the nature of promises, and the fulfillment of these pronounced promises if it is concretized, the interest in this vow, and the value of the continuity of the vow are treated with a subjective character. This study was made only with the native of each village mentioned, in particular with the guardians of the tradition, the notables and only the adults. A type of questionnaire, semi-directive, sometimes with an interview, was presented to them in the villages, among the *Sojabe* and the notables, at the individual himself to get their answers; during the investigation, we asked permission to record their words but we did not record or film the person or their words.

With a sample chosen as a target (*Sojabe*, notables and village assemblies), we consider our sample to be representative. This does not prevent it from having limits. Indeed, the sample may not represent exactly the composition of all the *Sojabe* or the notables and the *fokonolona* of the Sofia region.

This survey was designed both as a broad source of results, but also as a sampling frame and assumptions for more detailed studies. Thus, we chose to focus more specifically on the sub-population of such *Sojabe* or notables and select the sample to be interviewed in the survey database. We limited our study to these study areas. We will have been able to question other sacred historical places in the region such as in the district of *Analalava*, with a *DoanyAnosy* lava or in the districts of *Boriziny* and *Mampikony*. The course of this questionnaire was written in Malagasy and later translated into French.

The counting was carried out in three phases: data collection, data processing and analysis of the results. Data coding and quality control were performed using Excel spreadsheet software. This analysis already allows us to collect a certain number of observations.

III. RESULTS

The socio-professional categories of the people surveyed

The people surveyed are the *Sojabe* (traditional chief), notables and village assemblies (Tab. 1).

For *Sojabe*

3.1. What are the types of people who make vows at the traditional sacred place?

According to the *Sojabe*, 56% ordinary people and 44% politicians make a wish at the sacred place. (Fig. 1).

3.2. Does this politician return *hasina* to *Sojabe* before making a public statement?

First, the 42% of the politicians very symbolically return the *Hasina* to *Sojabe*, and then the 30% manifest symbolically, then the 21% really respect this *Hasina* against the 7% who very really return this *hasina*. (Fig. 2).

3.3. What are the wishes solicited by political personalities?

According to the *Sojabe* surveyed, 54% of politicians demand access to political power and 46% want to maintain their political power. (Fig. 3).

3.4. What is the promise he makes when his wish is fulfilled?

The *Sojabe* responded that 28% of their politicians' pledges focus on education, 24% on public safety, 18% on road construction, 16% on health promotion, 8% on creating employment, and 6% on the promotion of local culture. (Fig. 4).

3.5. Were the rituals they request conscious of promoting life and prosperity in all matters?

Then, the *Sojabe* replied that 62% of their requests respond to their personal interest against 28% for the interest of the community. (Fig. 5).

3.6. If he wins in politics, will those wishes come true? Yes or No

The 75% of their wishes are not realized against the 25% realized. (Fig. 6).

3.7. If so, is it commensurate with their word? Yes or No

The *Sojabe* believe that the 87% of their floor is not proportional against the 13%. (Fig. 7).

3.8. If not, do the notables and local populations still trust you, the *Sojabe*?

The results show us that 10% of notables and village assemblies have strong confidence in the *Sojabe*, compared to 18% who remain confident. Then the 46% of notables have an uncertain trust in these elders against the 26% who have a really uncertain trust in the *Sojabe*. (Fig. 8).

For local people:

3.9. Is the practice of “asking for vows in traditional sacred places” still a source of social and political stability in current Malagasy society?

The 95% of the local population say that making wishes in traditional sacred places is always a source of social and political stability against the 5% who say, no. (Fig. 9).

IV. FIGURES AND TABLES

Table 1. Socio-professional categories of people surveyed

Participant Category	Effective
<i>Sojabe</i>	20
Notables	200
Village assemblies	300
Total	520

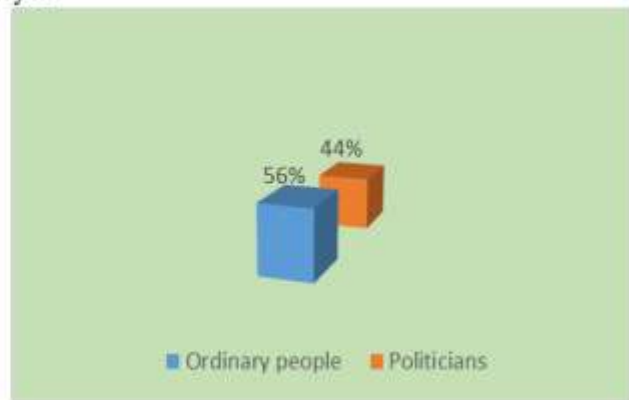


Figure 1. Types of people who make vows at the sacred place

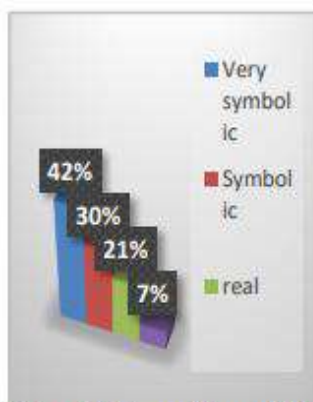


Figure 2. Recognition of Hasina

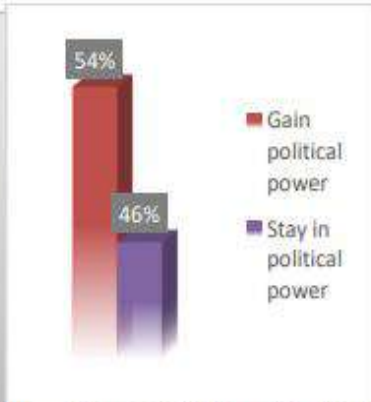


Figure 3. Wishes of politicians

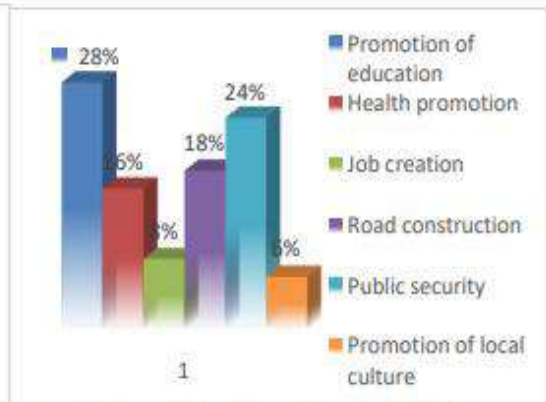


Figure 4. Promises made by politicians

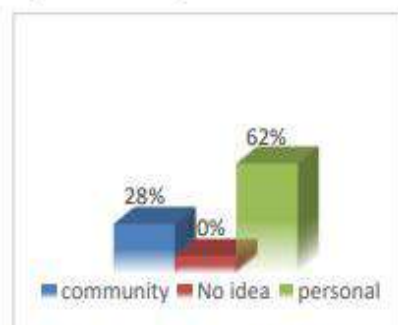


Figure 5. Interest of the vow to the sacred place



Figure 6. fulfillment of the promise

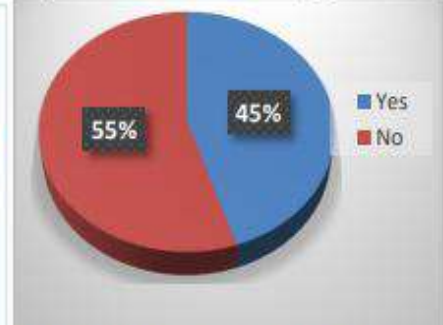


Figure 7. Proportion between promise and word

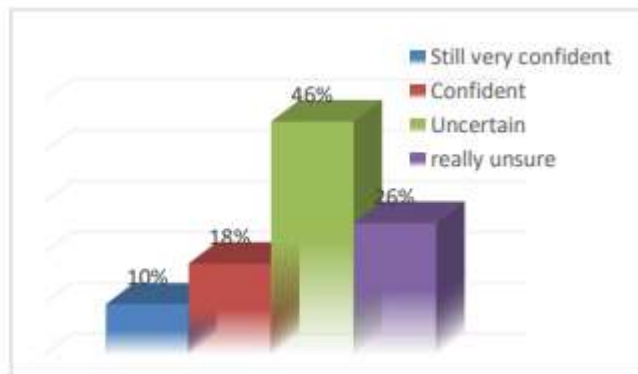
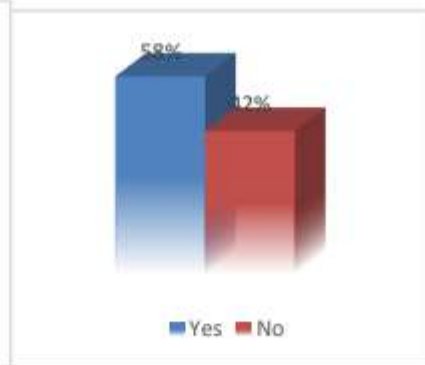
Figure 8. Trust of notables and assemblies towards *Sojabe*

Figure 9. Practicing "Vow in Sacred Place"

V. DISCUSSION

The study aims to understand the feelings of *Sojabe*, notables and village assemblies (*fokonolona*) concerning the *hasina* offered by politicians for the fulfillment of a wish at the sacred place. Thus, for the *Sojabe* interviewed, ordinary people visiting the sacred place to make a wish are like politicians. As in the case of the tomb of President Tsiranana in Anahidrano-Disctrit of Antsohihy, many candidates (presidential or regional or even municipal) have come to ask for "tso-drano" (or blessings) to be elected or re-elected. The practice of a sacred vow, for the *Sojabe* exist their *tsigny*, they recommend respecting the *hasina* of the ancestral guardian and that of the sacred place. Even though some politicians respect the overriding value of this ritual, however, most politicians still come out very symbolically returning the *hasina* to the *Sojabe*. But their priority is to gain political power or maintain their political power, so they go to the sacred place to ask for *tso-drano* (blessing). The request must be made in public and must be specific. It has been common for politicians to make several promises if their wish is fulfilled such as promoting education, public safety; then they promise to build roads and promote public health, then create jobs and develop local culture. Often, their promises are excessive and are already a political tool to influence people to vote for him.

In pre-election periods, candidates make promises to voters that they intend to implement once elected. While in most cases, these electoral promises have a socio-economic content (construction of roads, construction of schools and hospitals, drinking water supply, electrification, etc.). Promises when they are not kept by public authorities can have very varied consequences depending on the country, according to Aka Bédia [6]. The highly centralized political system in Madagascar also does not help some politicians to realize their wish. Everything is dictated by the central power.

However, in the majority of cases, the intention of politicians is fixed only for their personal interest against the interest of the community. In Madagascar, politics is currently the safest and fastest way to get rich, in fact, many politicians do not have a social project, personal conviction, as Urfer said [9]; and some do at all costs to keep control of the state apparatus.

Once elected or re-elected or come to political power, many of them have completely fulfilled their uttered promises, like *velirano* (or oath), for example food self-sufficiency in Madagascar, the industrialization of our rice growing is our priority, first of all achieving food self-sufficiency, producing 500,000 tonnes of rice per year and winning back international markets, in particular becoming the rice granary of the Indian Ocean [10].

In addition, the ritual relationships established with God and the ancestors are important; Latek [11] has clearly pointed out that a certain number of traditional Malagasy principles and values are today used to support a minority group or reinforce the domination of an oligarchy incapable of promoting sustainable development benefiting all.

Bornand et al. [12], express that language can become the means of exercising power or domination over the other and also becomes the object of strategies and manipulations and this phenomenon proliferates in political speeches and in propaganda songs, according to Charaudeau [13]; (or were even observed in inauguration and commemoration rituals according to Fasseur [14]).

Similarly, if they remember their vow, in general, their word given is not proportional to the reality made. Consequently, the subjects (notables and the *fokonolona*) find it difficult to trust and have uncertainty in the *Sojabe* and sometimes find a strange relationship because it is the *Sojabe* who agreed with their coming to the village and in particular in front of the sacred place. So many notables and *fokonolona* currently suspect the complexity between some *Sojabe* and politicians, especially in relation to elections or other privileges. And it has even become a habit, the two entities use this sacred place to succeed in the *fokonolona*.

With technology, the population is informed, moreover, the film reproduces sounds and images,

according to Néméti [15]. Moreover, even if some African countries freedom of expression remains very difficult, according to Bornand et al. [12], democracy is banished, indeed, its promise needs to be revived, as International IDEA mentioned [16]. Face the evils and relive the promise.); thanks to the acceleration of new technologies such as the internet and social networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), spaces for words are multiplying and there are archives. Their trust in the *Sojabe* is diminishing, yet the status of the *Sojabe* remains an emblematic symbol of this community, on the fact that his presence has no conflict between them, Razanatsavina [17].

Stability must be operated with respect for the word. However, unfulfilled promises by public decision-makers, of power sharing or equitable representation in governing bodies, generate many conflicts, often armed. The respect therefore above all the word and integrate actors of the civil society to follow the processes of eradication of poverty and sustainable development. social stratifications closely condition the management of public speaking [18].

Anyway, wish realized or not realized by the politicians, as the ancestral tradition dictates, dictates, the clans or the families or the village assemblies with their traditional Chief must find at all costs a way to get rid of the *fady* (taboos) and then inform God and the Ancestors and all souls to appease the strength of souls (*tsigny*) and ask for *tso-drano* (blessings) for all. Moreover, the Madagascans, in particular the population studied, continue the practice of the tradition of the vow to the sacred place and asks to respect it for the protection of their life and their village and their environments.

VI. CONCLUSION

This article highlights the importance of respecting a vow made at a sacred place among the *Sojabe*, the nobles and the village assemblies (*fokonolona*) of the region of Sofia. In Malagasy culture, the way in which a vow is practiced certainly manifests itself differently in several forms and norms, depending on a region and family or clan or village or place. Among the *Tsimihety*, in fact, a category of a person can make a wish at the sacred place. Our research shows us that the respect for the *hasina* that politicians grant to the *Sojabe* becomes very symbolic; their wishes are very political and aim only at their personal interest. In addition, they promise too many wishes and excessive. Once their wish is realized, that is to say elected or re-elected, the proportionality of the realization of this wish does not fully comply with the promise made. Faced with these situations, we have observed that trust among notables and village assemblies becomes uncertain towards the *Sojabe*. Symbolic manipulation or traditional religion is no guarantee of social and political stability. A vow pronounced at the sacred place weighs heavily on the mind and thoughts of Malagasy people to lead daily life and organization. Failure to respect this vow, for them, is a source of misfortune and immoral. On the contrary, the realization of wish unites and enhances the legitimacy of *Sojabe* towards God and the Ancestors as well as to the entire population and strengthens the social bond favoring membership and social cohesion in Malagasy society. Hence the interest for Malagasy people will have to safeguard respect for this sacred ritual in the construction of modern democratic life in today's changing society which continues to evolve generation after generation.

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