

THE FIFHAZANA AND ITS IMPACTS ON THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

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ETHYMOLOGICAL MEANING OF THE WORD "FIFHAZANA".

FIFHAZANA is a noun formed from the verb "**MIFHA**" which means "to get up", "to awaken", "to revive".

To get up and to awaken are to rise from sleeping from bed;

and to revive means to bring back to health, to strength, to consciousness.

Taking into account the religious and spiritual issues, the church prefers to make use of the word "Revival" to translate the word Fifhazana.

WHEN AND HOW FIFHAZANA CAME INTO BEING IN MADAGASCAR ?

In the early 1890's , there was a severe political crisis in Madagascar. Formerly, this country was ruled by the kings and queens, some of them you may know like the famous king Andrianampoinimerina and the queens Ranaivalona I, II and III

But at this period of time, the French power came to invade the island in order to rule over it. Besides, christian mission organizations from Britain, France and Norway under the picture of Reformed, Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches had been active in the country. However, to maintain control over the country, the last monarch, Queen Ranaivalona III and the Prime Minister Rainilaiarivony had increased taxation in many regions of the island which had brought about hardship, starvation and severe poverty to the people.

Weakened by hunger and poverty, the people, especially those living in the highlands, such as Antananarivo, Antsirabe, Fianarantsoa ..., were vulnerable to certain diseases like high fever, leprosy and malaria which arose during that period.

It was a difficult time for the people in the island. Even christian believers came into disappointment in christian faith. Many christians fell into dormant faith. They came to church just by routine without having close relationship with God.

THE PROPHET RAINISOALAMBO AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOATANANA FIFHAZANA

Who is Rainisoalambo ?

According to Radaniela, a revival movement researcher, Rainisoalambo came from a royal family. His true name was Razaimbola, which means « the younger brother of the prince named Vola ». In Malagasy language, the term « **zainy** », which constitutes the name Razaimbola, translates the English name « **junior** ». Therefore, the name Razaimbola means « **Vola's junior** ». But the question which arises is to know where the name Rainisoalambo comes from. When he married and had his first child, who was named Soalambo, people called him Rainisoalambo, which means « the father of Soalambo ». Regarding his date of birth, nobody exactly knows. But one Fifhazana researcher, called Thunem, stated that on October 15, 1894, he was about fifty years old and that on June 30, 1904, when he died, he was about sixty years old. So, it is possible to calculate the date of his birth, or more precisely, the year of his birth. These two dates affirm that Rainisoalambo was born in or around 1844.

The call of Rainisoalambo

Frequently, it was at time of trial that the Almighty God called special people to be his messengers, mostly indigenous persons to bring comfort to the people. Rainisoalambo was one of them; a man from a place called Ambakireny in Soatanana.

Rainisoalambo was deeply attached to the traditional religion of the Betsileo people, as an idol keeper, diviner and traditional healer. But being in the palace with the princes, he knew that after conversion of the queen into christianity in 1869, the official religion of the monarchy at that time was the protestantism. And becoming member of the protestant church was somehow enforced by the military at that time.

Therefore, in 1884, Rainisoalambo accepted baptism to become christian. Since he was a clever man, the London Missionary Society (LMS) trained him to become a church leader, responsible for a parish in Soatanana area, but not to be paid. But he was disappointed of not being paid and therefore, abandoned the church leadership work and returned to his previous job, that is the work of a diviner and traditional healer.

At that time, the whole region of Betsileo was afflicted with epidemics and famine. Besides, the imposition of new taxes from the monarchy administration made life difficult for many. Rainisoalambo fell sick and felt abandoned by friends. And he thought he was going to die. It was in that time of struggle and illness that Rainisoalambo received the call from God on October 15, 1894. His call was about to preach and to teach. Preaching includes deliverance and prayers for healing and exorcising while teaching includes literacy teaching...

God called Rainisoalambo for a special mission. It is to bring back Malagasy people to the belief in Jesus Christ, in deep spiritual transformation in the community through teaching and preaching.

Impact of the spiritual revival led by Rainisoalambo to the life of people and to the social development of Soatanana communities.

a) Impact through Indigenization of christian practices.

Europeans brought christianity to Madagascar according to european culture which did not march to Malagasy culture. And as a result, it was difficult for the Malagasy to grasp their teaching on the gospel. Thus, several Malagasy followed christianity in its external forms as civilization. They did not really understand what the message of the gospel was. Therefore, Rainisoalambo, a great traditionally healer, and a leader of the first Fifohazana in Madagascar, was able to contribute significantly to the indigenization of christianity in the context of Madagascar.

b) Impact through transformation in worship.

In this section, Rainisoalambo has introduced in the worship service the ministry of healing, the use of free prayer in the so called « Fotoa-malalaka (free time). How the « free prayer » came about ? Formerly, the missionaries had introduced memorized and written prayers. Rainisoalambo introduced free prayer in a time called « fotoa-malalaka » that is free time. This was a time when free prayer coming directly from the heart, testimony, admonition and teaching were given in worship service.

There was also the use of the indigenous song called « Zafindraony ». This is a traditional song form that existed before the arrival of christianity in Madagascar. It was in common use in secular songs. Rainisoalambo and his iraka (apostles) took some of the hymn texts to be

turned into zafindraony tunes and sung during Fifohazana service in church. It was also sung when the revivalists were going to the fields for cooperative labor.

Rainisoalambo has also brought about liturgical texts which have to be read before the « Asa sy Fampaherezana » (healing service), as a scriptural foundation. They are : **John 14 :12-17 ; Mark 16 :15-20 ; Matthew 18 : 18-20 and John 20 : 21-23**. These texts are still used in Soatanàna and throughout the other different revival movement centers such as Ankaramalaza, Manolotrony and Farihimena.

c) Impact through transformation in Community Life.

Rainisoalambo has also brought about transformation in community life. As a result of various epidemics and poverty, people's life in Madagascar was miserable. Thus, the life of the whole community was indigenized through his work. Three aspects of this indigenization have to be highlighted :

- **The life within the toby revival movement center).** The life target of the people living in the Toby (revival center) is to live up to the standard of the gospel, especially to love each other, according to John 13 :34-35

What is a Toby ?

Rainisoalambo founded a place in which dysfunctional people are looked after, where healing ministry is permanent in its practice, and where the pastoral approach to life and health is realized. This place was called a « Toby » or a camp. It's a place set apart where healing is the preoccupation of all inhabitants and the aim is to help dysfunctional people to resume to normal life.

- **The clothing worn by the movement members.** Wearing white cloth is the clothing style of people living in the toby encouraged by Rainisoalambo. The white colour is a sign of purity and cleanliness. Therefore, God's people must witness in life that purity.

- **The cooperative labor.** This is a type of work where people in the same community come together to help one person and the following day, they do the same thing to the second person, and so on and so forth

The following seven commitments have been upheld by the followers of Rainisoalambo and still maintained until now :

1. Learning to read in order to read the Bible.
2. Learning to count and calculate (to read numbers) in order to look for verses in the Bible.
3. Women must correctly comb their hair and men must cut theirs in order to present a good image of christians.
4. Regularly cleaning the house so that it may be worthy of being a house of prayer.
5. Growing vegetables and rice and planting fruit trees in order to produce food. There must always be enough food at home.
6. Starting any task or activity with prayer in order to receive God's blessings.
7. When there is a death among christians, wrapping the dead in a clean sheet/cloth. The dead should be buried where he or she died.

**THE PROPHET NENILAVA AND
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANKARAMALAZA FIFOHAZANA**

Who is Volahavana Germaine, known as Nenilava ?

Volahavana Germaine, known in her nickname Nenilava, was born around 1918 in a small village within the administration area of Manakara. She died in 1998 at the age of 80. Her

tall physical stature - She was over 1.90 m – which was rare for a Malagasy woman, made her the better-known name of Nenilava, which is literally "tall mother" in Malagasy. She was a daughter of an idol keeper man. Right from her younger age, she was reported as not to believe in the magic power of her father's idol.

The call of Volahavana Germaine, known as Nenilava.

The Revival Movement of Ankaramalaza started from 1941 by Volahavana Germaine, known, as Nenilava. She received the call of God, addressed to her at the age of twelve. She was an extraordinary evangelist and a powerful prophet.

Despite the many visions that Nenilava received from Jesus, the period 1941 – 1953 was marked by conflict between church authorities and mission agencies who had not recognized Nenilava's ministry and the growing number of Christians who saw in her God's powerful works and her closeness to God. This was a difficult time for her, but it ended with official recognition of her ministry by church and mission authorities, allowing her to continue her work.

Nenilava's ministry

She carried out several aspects of ministry such as preaching, healing, exorcising and laying on of hands, spiritual counseling. Her ministry was marked by powerful preaching and healing, and as a result, she became a well known prophet on the island by believers and nonbelievers through her strong and visible relationship with God.

A great number of people were impacted by her during her life. Since then, many of them have been commissioned into the "shepherd" ministry within the church.

For a period of around thirty years, from 1941 to 1973, Nenilava had a ministry of itinerant evangelism. She visited almost all the regions of Madagascar announcing the word of God.

Three components became standard in these ministry trips :

1. **Proclaiming the gospel** : To Nenilava preaching the word of God was the first thing she had to do before doing any other things. Through her preaching, many people came to faith

2. **Exorcising** : After having preached the gospel, Nenilava continued her ministry of exorcising which appears in two aspects : the casting out demons and the laying on of hands. It is believed by the Fifohazana that to different degrees, each person is under the influence of evil spirits. The expulsion of demons in the name of Jesus signifies that God triumphs over Satan. The word in Malagasy for the casting out of demons is « **asa** », which is translated as « **work** » in English.

Then people would receive the laying on of hands. In the laying on of hands upon somebody, Nenilava said that the person is strengthened and reinforced in his or her faith. In that case, the act must be done in faith in Jesus Christ, who is the One who acts.

Note that there is also a laying on of hands upon the sick, those suffering from various illness. The word in Malagasy for Laying on of hands is "**Fampaherezana** », which is translated as « **strengthening** » in English.

Extension of the revival centers.

Due the impact of the evangelistic activities carried out by Nenilava all over the country Madagascar, the revival has been received by people from different places in the island and even abroad. And that has led them to create new centers in certain places.

Logement 237-238 center in 67 ha

The year 1973, her dwelling place in the city of 67 ha, known as the « logement 237 – 238 » became a center of spiritual revival.

Ambohibao center

In February 1973, Nenilava was led by the Spirit of Jesus Christ to build another new revival center in the area of Ambohibao, at the place where it is now.

Fort-Dauphin center

In 1979, Nenilava visited Fort-Dauphin and led by God to build a new revival center there.

Pouru Saint Rémy center, France

In July 1980, Nenilava left for France and stayed there for three months in a town named Pouru Saint Rémy. It was reported that Jesus appeared to her and said that He has chosen that place where a revival center had to be built.

Her decoration with the crown and the priestly vestments of Aaron.

This decoration was a honour that Jesus showed to Nenilava as a token of her total submission to Him. The event came to understand that by this sign, God was demonstrating not only to his church but also to the world that Nenilava was a prophet whom He had chosen. Being a humble woman, she did not want to be distinguished in such a special honour. But since it was Jesus' commandment, she accepted. Nenilava never wanted to be called a prophetess. She only wanted to be called an Evangelist, a servant of God for His service to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ everywhere in the world that He led her.

Impact of the spiritual revival led by Nenilava to the people

- A great number of people were impacted by her during her life.
- Many people have been commissioned into the shepherd ministry within the church.
- Many people, including pastors, catechists and other church leaders came to her for advice and counseling.
- There are some people who can pray and read the Bible..

Major revival movement centers in Madagascar

In total, there are four major toby or revival movement centers in the country : ,

- . Soatanàna center (1897), led by Rainisoalambo.
- . Manolotrony center (1927), led by Ravaozanahary (female),
- . Ankaramalaza center (1941), led by Volahavana Germaine (Nenilava),
- . Farihimena center (1946), led by Pastor Rakozandry.

UNIQUENESS OF THE FIFHAZANA IN MADAGASCAR

a) Common for the four revival centers.

- Fifohazana was locally founded in Madagascar according to Malagasy culture and led by indigenous people.
- Fifohazana emphasizes on the preaching of the gospel, evangelism, hospitality, and care for the poor, sick, as well as community development.

- Throughout its history, the Fifohazana sought to work alongside and more often inside the mission-founded-churches on the island.
- Fifohazana organization does not depend on foreign assistance and governance.
- Fifohazana accepts and submits its activity programs under the leadership and the arrangement of the church leadership.
- The persons who want to become « mpiandry » or shepherds must undergo a training of two years led by pastors.
- The persons newly trained shepherds must be consecrated at the « toby » or revival movement center before fully engaged in the ministry of the shepherds.
- Reading of the scriptural foundation texts before the « asa sy fampaherezana » (exorcism and healing service).
- Laying on of hands on the sick, the demoniacs after exorcism. Laying on of hands can also be done to christians seeking prayers for particular reasons.
- There is an annual meeting in each revival center for the commemoration of its foundation date

b) Practices which differ the four revival movement centers.

- In Soatanana revival center and the centers attached to it, during the « asa sy fampaherezana » time, only one shepherd casts out demons. The rest of the shepherds use laying on of hands.
- In Ankaramalaza center and in the other revival centers attached to it, casting of demons and the laying on of hands are the duty of all shepherds present at the « asa sy fampaherezana ».
- In Soatanana and Farihimena and in the centers attached to it, the covering of heads is for men but not for women.
- Unlike in Ankaramalaza and in the centers attached to it, covering of heads is for women but not for men.

In Soatanana center, the cooperative labor or communal work is practiced, but this is not in the other centers

Unity among the four revival centers

When a shepherd from one center is invited to the « asa sy fampaherezana » organized by another center, all the shepherds regardless of their centers of origine must follow the practice of the host center.

IMPACT OF THE FIFOHAZANA ON THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

The main goal of the Fifohazana is to bring people to believe in Jesus Christ, by totally giving their life to Him. The Apostles and the shepherds were there as God's fellow workers, to invite them to be in reconciliation with God through the preaching of the Gospel or the good news about Jesus Christ, as the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 : 20 « We implore you on Christ's behalf : be reconciled to God ». People in Madagascar here, especially these days, are in need of prayer and the word of God to strengthen their faith and to heal them from their sickness. They also need to be delivered from evil spirits since they worship idols. It is in such a situation that the casting of demons known as "Asa sy Fampaherezana", comes in. Some people, mostly backslid christians, like to be visited at home for a special prayer. These people start coming to church, as a result of such evangelistic activities of the Fifohazana.

1) Fifohazana led by Rainisoalambo.

Since human being is made up with spirit and body, Rainisoalambo Fifohazana continues to deal with the daily needs of the people in the communities. They understand that the work of the Fifohazana is not only for the spiritual things but also for the living of the body which is a gift from God. Even Jesus, in his time on earth, took care of the need of people who followed him in the desert land. Jesus gave food to eat for a large number of people. For Rainisoalambo, he was encouraging people in the community to produce enough food for their respective family. Up to now, Soatanana Fifohazana, where Rainisoalambo came from, is still practising what we call the cooperative labor. This is type of communal work where people help each other in labor. What happened was that at one day, all the people in the community gave hands together in labor to one family. The other day, the same number of people came to help in labor the other person, and so on and so forth.

Rainisoalambo's first followers were a group of twelve men whom he referred as « iraka » apostles. The main tasks of the Apostles were to develop guidelines for community life. As a result of the work of the iraka, the revival movement was growing fast. New converts to christianity appeared in several areas of Madagascar.

Apart from that, literacy program has been taken all over the region of Fianarantsoa, to teach people how to write and to read.

By so doing, they show the love of God which attracts people to follow Jesus Christ.

2) Fifohazana led by Nenilava

As a result of the evangelistic activities of the Fifohazana led by Nenilava, many social projects on health and education have been undertaken by the revival centers around the country. so as to help poor people. There are also other projects on agriculture, drinking water and health clinic. These development projects function on one side, as the hands of the church helping people in the communities ; and on the other, as income projects in financial autonomy for the centers which run the projects.

As to education, le Fifohazana centers participate in building schools with different levels such as kindergarten, primary and secondary schools. Additionally, the Malagasy government comes also in the social development activities to build hospitals and schools in order to satisfy the needs of the people in the village.

Unlike most of the charismatic churches which deny taking medicines when getting sick, but rely only on the power of prayers, the Fifohazana led by Nenilava see that God heals sick people in different ways, according to his own will. Sometimes, he heals people just by uttering a powerful word of healing, and they get healed. We can see it in the gospel of Luke chapter 18, verses 35 – 43, when he healed the blind man. In another occasion, Jesus met another blind man on his way to Jericho. He put some mud on his eyes, and told him to wash the eyes in Shiloam river, and the man got healed and could see.

This is the reason why the Nenilava Fifohazana, though it treats sick people through the power of prayers, which successfully works, likes to cooperate closely with hospitals and dispensaries around the country Madagascar in the treatment of ill people. The Nenilava Fifohazana even has made a big step that cooperation, in building cooperation with some psychiatrists in the treatment of people with mental illness.

By so doing, it doesn't mean that the Fifohazana doesn't have faith in Jesus Christ, yes, it has faith in Jesus Christ, but it doesn't want to limit God's way of doing things. Being the Sovereign God, he is free to do whatever he likes. Our duty as believers is to accept what he said and trust in him. And that is faith.

Having seen God's mighty works in the Nenilava Fifohazana, people come to church to worship God, and the church keeps growing all the time.