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THE MEANING OF “HOLINESS” IN EXODUS CHAPTERS 3 AND 29:
A MALAGASY PERSPECTIVE

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Dedictory

In memory of
My beloved Grand-parents:
BOTOZAFY Jean Marie
And
Mariane

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

According to the title, this thesis is about an investigation of the meaning of holiness in Exodus chapters 3 and 29, integrating a Malagasy perspective. The biblical studies of “holiness” meaning are mostly focused on understanding of ancient Semitic contexts. In this present thesis I would like to bring the Malagasy understanding of “holiness” concept. For that purpose, I did fieldwork in Madagascar. I further go into detail of my interviews on the third chapter. However, I would like to start by two impressive cases I have noticed from some of my informants. Afterwards, I briefly present the research problem, the methodology and sources, the theory which is about African biblical hermeneutics, and then the scope and limitation.

First of all, these following cases can highlight to what extent “holiness” concept are dealt in Malagasy culture and society. The cases are from Malagasy Christian context.

1.1 Cases of the “holy Bible” and the “holy garment”

During my conversation with one small group of Christians, I observed that some of them were extremely interested in “holiness”.

I started our conversation by telling them my motivation for dealing with holiness perspective in Malagasy context. One reason is my remark of the “holy Bible” care. Some Christians think and believe that the Bible, as “holy book”, has a power to heal from illness and to protect from nightmare simply by putting it under a pillow while sleeping. Almost all of the participants of the group agreed with my observation. Some moved their head showing that they agree with one woman who has confirmed the following: “I have already put Bible under my pillow when I got sick because I think, as being the word of God and being a holy book, this book has a particular power.”¹

From their testimony it is obviously proved that some Christians think the Bible has a “supernatural power” as it is stated to be “holy book”. They added that many still keep in mind

¹ Field report Malagasy version p.11: “efa niondana Baiboly aho rehefa narary satria noheveriko fa amin’ny maha Tenin’Andriamanitra sy amin’ny maha boky “masina” azy dia misy hery manokana ilay boky.”

such a thought and belief. Even if they disagreed with this act of putting Bible under a pillow at the moment we talked, I noticed that they still have in mind this “power” of the Bible. One of the participants said, and the others agreed with him, that:

The Bible is holy. However, it is not the book which is powerful, but the word of God that it contains. Thus this word of God should not be separated from us because it is like a sword or a weapon by which we fight against the devil, the enemy.²

They compare the Bible as a weapon to fight against the devil enemy. They mean by devil enemy all evil spirits. The weapon name they often use is a “sword.” As we see in the quotation above, they said that the Bible, as a word of God, is like a “sword” to conquer the devil. That is to say, the Bible is a sharp or powerful weapon. Hence, according to the former quote, they suggested that it should not be separated from us. They mean, it should always be brought wherever we go, when we leave home. This thought still shows their belief in the power of the “holy book”, as they said that “it should not be separated from us”.

Thereafter, we came to the “holy garment” discussion.³ It concerns especially those who are called “Shepherd” in the Malagasy Revival movement.⁴ One of my informants said that, “the holy status is caused by consecration”.⁵ And one woman added:

The holy garment is not like other clothes. It is the special dress to put on by an ordained or consecrated one during Church service. Thus, it has more importance than ordinary clothes. And it should be sewed, washed, or ironed by ordained or consecrated person. And the person should pray before he or she takes care of it, if not it might be damaged because the devil, the enemy, is not happy of wearing

² Field report Malagasy version p.14: “masina ny Baiboly. Fa tsy ilay boky no mahery fa ny Tenin’Andriamanitra ao anatin’ny. Koa tsy tokony hisarahana izany Tenin’Andriamanitra izany fa io no toy ny sabatra na fitaovam-piadiana hoenti-miady amin’ny devoly fahavalo.”

³ During consecration or sanctification, Shepherds wear white garment called “holy garment.”

⁴ People called “Shepherd”, or “Mpiandry” in Malagasy, is a person consecrated (voatokana/fanokanana) or sanctified (nohamasinina/fanamasinana) to lead prayer, preaching, exorcism and blessing during a revival movement service in the Protestant Churches. In the Malagasy Lutheran Church, Shepherd is consecrated after two years of studying and training at the Church and by some Church’s leaders and Shepherd elders sometimes.

⁵ Field report Malagasy version p.14: “ny mahamasina dia noho ny fanamasinana ...”

the “holy garment”. Also it should not be kept with other ordinary clothes, but it should have its particular place.⁶

However, even if they have this strong concern of the “holy garment”, they argued that the “holy garment” does not have power. But the power that believers have is only from God. The garment is thought to be “holy” because many think that the white garment they wear during the sanctification is consecrated with the bearer as well. I have already met one Shepherd who did not do exorcism because he did not bring his “holy garment”.

These two cases are merely samples to start with the investigation of the understanding of “holiness” concept in Malagasy context. However, there are a lot of different Malagasy circumstances related to this concept. There are “holy people”, “holy ground or place”, “holy water”, and so on as presented in chapter three. But, now I pass to the research problem.

1.2 Research Problem

What does “holiness” mean?

“Being holy” is mostly defined as “apartness or being set apart”, “being consecrated”, or “being sanctified” (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:527). However, “holiness” concept in Malagasy context seems to have a very special meaning more than this western understanding.

From the previous cases I have noticed that “holiness” is an extraordinary concept in Malagasy thought. For instance, the “holy book”, or the Bible, according to the belief of some Christians, can “heal.” Or, it can “protect” from evil spirit too. Also, the “holy garment” should be “set apart” from other clothes. Or, it should not be sewed by non-ordained person.

Why are there such concerns about “holiness” in Malagasy context? There is surely a behind perspective that pushes them to such a thinking or belief. From Malagasy point of view, “holiness” looks like having “power” meaning. That is “power” to act, like to “heal” or to “protect.” And it should be preserved or respected carefully. Yet, it is a working hypothesis that will be furthest talked about in the following chapters to search whether it is true or not. And

⁶ Field report Malagasy version p.14-15: “ny akanjo masina dia tsy mitovy amin’ny akanjo rehetra. Izany no fanamiana hitafian’ny voatokana rehefa manao ny asan’Andriamanitra. Ka mavesa-danja izany noho ny akanjo tsotra. Ary tokony olona efa voatokana no manjaitra, na manasa sy mipasoka azy. Ary ilay mikarakara tokony mivavaka alohan’ny fotoana hikarakarana ilay akanjo, raha tsy izany dia mety ho simba satria tsy sitraky ny devoly fahavalo ny hitafiana io akanjo masina io. Ary tsy tokony hatambatra miaraka amin’ny akanjo hafa izy, fa tokony homena toerana manokana.

I hope we will find some light about this in the second part of chapter two, where I present the Malagasy concept of “holiness”, and in chapter three which is a descriptive presentation of my interviews.

It is not only the Malagasy context my motivation to investigate “holiness” concept. But, I was also fascinated by the narrative of Exodus 3, especially the verse 5. It is a part of the story of God and Moses first conversation. First, the story says that Moses saw a bush on fire but did not burn up (verse 2). Second, Moses heard a voice from the bush on fire calling him by his name (verse 4). And the voice ordered him not to come closer and to take off his sandals because it is a “holy ground” (verse 5). Finally, after the voice revealed that He is the God of his father, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses hid his face because of fear to see God (verse 6).

This story states an extraordinary event. An event, that is not like a normal one. It starts with the extraordinary bush on fire, that did not burn up and from which a voice came from, before telling that this place is a “holy ground”. Why did God ask Moses not to come closer and to take off his sandals by confirming that the place is a “holy ground”? What is the reason that made this ground “holy”? Is the “holiness” of this ground related to God? Why was Moses afraid to look at God? Is his fear related to the declaration of the “holiness” of the ground?

Also “holiness” in the Old Testament seems to have other extra meaning than “apartness”. It is impressive that “whatever touches the altar shall become holy” according to the Exodus 29:37. I am convinced to investigate the meaning of “holiness” particularly in these two chapters of Exodus because they contain more similar cases to the Malagasy context. This similarity will be clarified in chapters 3 and 4.

All my different question formulas, such what, how, why or whatever, have only one purpose. All I want to investigate in this present thesis is to find an answer to the one and basic following question. WHAT DOES “HOLINESS” MEAN IN EXODUS CHAPTERS 3 AND 29? My aim is to look for the meaning of “holiness” concept, and offer a Malagasy perspective.

“Holiness” may have many different meanings depending to various contexts in every society in the world. And interpreters may find several definitions of “holiness” from different tools and domains they work with. In the next heading I present my choice of tools to fulfill my attempt to find the meaning of “holiness”.

1.3 Methodology and Sources

As I say previously, I would like to find an answer for my research question. That is “what does ‘holiness’ mean?”

“Holiness” concept can be a very large field of study. And it can be investigated within different disciplines. This term sounds like a vocabulary of the Systematic Theology. But I am not going to investigate the term “holiness” through that discipline. Systematic Theology is a discipline which leads with “the science of knowing God” (Ferguson 1988, 671). However, this is not such a study of, for instance, talking about holiness of God. But this is a Biblical Study. What I am going to work through is the Old Testament discipline. I am going to investigate some Old Testament verses to attempt achieving my objective to find the meaning of “holiness.”

Biblical interpretation, on the one hand, is of course one complex method. The result depends on the background of the interpreter. Thus it sometimes creates confusion of ideas. On the other hand, biblical interpretation is one of the efficiency methods. It helps to understand the text more deeply into the context of the reader. More precisely, the method I tend to embrace is biblical hermeneutics. A simple exegetical study only gives knowledge linguistically and structurally. But the biblical hermeneutics approach offers a field of interpretation, understanding, and appropriation of biblical texts (Ferguson 1988, 293). Ferguson affirms that:

Hermeneutics raises prior and more fundamental questions about the very nature of language, meaning, communication and understanding. The subject thus involves an examination of the whole interpretative process. This raises issues in the philosophy of language, theories of meaning, literary theory, and semiotics (theory of signs), as well as, in biblical hermeneutics, those which also arise in biblical studies and in Christian Theology. (Ferguson 1988, 293)

I attempt to find the meaning of “holiness” by interpreting Exodus 3 and 29. For that, I will use two tools of investigation. The first tool is a traditional interpretation of the Old Testament text itself. Some contexts from Old Testament texts can provide different meanings of the “holiness” concept. As a biblical study, I will focus on biblical texts analysis. An etymologic study or a study of Hebrew original word of “holiness” will be dealt. And various traditional interpretations are probably efficacious to acquire different point of views. Contextual study will surely give an important overview to understand “holiness” from Old Testament. Studying the original term of “holiness” and its meaning within a context may likely help to define this term.

Analysis and interpretation of the original Hebrew words related to “holiness” concept is helpful on finding its meaning and on understanding it from a several different angles.

Comparison to different context is so important, too, to improve the knowledge about one concept. That is, I think, investigation from different angle can offer abundant opinions. I mean, one context can shed light to another context. Thus, I will use a Malagasy perspective as my second tool. Most of theological interpretations are led by western interpreters within their western angle point of view. But in this thesis I want to incorporate Malagasy view as one of African angles. I will present and use both Malagasy Traditional and Malagasy Christian overview. It is a bit difficult to understand the interpretation of the Malagasy Christian without knowing Malagasy Traditional meaning of “holiness”.

Data collection is from both empirical and literature sources. Prime sources are Hebrew and other Bible version, and also Hebrew lexicon. Secondary literature is also necessary. Old Testament scholars provide a very important different analysis, interpretations and commentaries of the Old Testament texts. I will also acquire some ideas about Malagasy context from literature. In addition to this literature source, concerning Malagasy perspective, I will use some relevant data from researches I have done during my fieldwork.

1.4 Theory: African Biblical Hermeneutics

I say before that this present study is an investigation of some Old Testament texts integrating Malagasy perspective. It is about the African biblical hermeneutics approach.

African biblical hermeneutics is a quite new approach but not lesser are interested to it nowadays (Holter 2008, 35-36). This approach is interesting for it gives the opportunity to African context to interpret the Old Testament from African point of view. Understanding of Old Testament text can be differentiated by different contexts and experiences. The way that western scholars and African scholars, or Malagasy interpreters, understand the text about holiness may be the same or not. And that is the importance of this approach, to enrich the view from a same text. And it helps the other scholar to understand African, Malagasy behavior in the world of religion as well. For instance, why some Malagasy Christians believe that only putting the Bible, the holy book, under a pillow helps for healing.

With this hermeneutics approach our view is enlarged from the tradition to the modern, from text to the readers experience or contexts. Robert K. Aboagye-Mensah says in his foreword

of the *Africa Bible Commentary* that, “In interpreting the biblical text, the authors have also been able to bring together Christian spirituality and the depth of their understanding of African culture and religion” (Adeyemo 2006, vii). And also, Anthony Thiselton says:

Hermeneutics entails critical reflection on the basis, nature and goals of reading, interpreting and understanding communicative acts and processes. This characteristically concerns the understanding of the texts, especially biblical or literary texts ... However, it also includes reflection on the nature of understanding human actions...In biblical studies it applies traditionally to the interpretation of texts, but also the interweaving of language and life both within the horizon of the text and within the horizons of traditions and the modern reader. (Barton 2008, 95)

Interpreting the text by utilizing the local perspective is sometimes helpful to understand how local population perceives the text. I share the idea of Øyvind Dahl when he says that:

“It is interesting that the categories of church and baptism introduced by Christian faith become integrated in the traditional thinking about the *hasina*. The church is constantly in discourse with new concepts and people integrate the new in the old. (Dahl 1993, 36)

As I say previously, it is an investigation of the Old Testament text using Malagasy perspective. More clearly, it is an attempt to investigate the meaning of “holiness” from Old Testament text of holiness, sharing Old Testament traditional perspectives. And then the Malagasy perspective of holiness will be integrated to draw the comparison of both domains.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

I can say that this subject of “holiness” is quite a huge biblical subject. It can be seen in many books of the Old Testament according to Müller’s list of the distribution of the numerous occurrences of the Hebrew root of “holiness”, קדש [qdš], in the Old Testament (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:527). And most of the Old Testament fields, like Yahwist source (J), Elohist source (E), Deuteronomist source (D), Priestly source (P), Chronicler’s History, the Great and Minor Prophets, the Canticle and Wisdom, and moreover talk about “holiness” (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:529-542). Then, facing this large field of “holiness” in the Old Testament, even if I

have restricted my work to my previous research question, I need to limit the text too. On top of that, the length of this thesis is limited as well.

Basically, I will interpret the “holiness” concept in Exodus 3:5 which talks about a “holy ground”. But one verse only is not enough to find what “holiness” means. And also verse 5 cannot be separated from its surrounding contextual verses. Hence, the analysis will start from the first verse of Exodus 3 until verse 5.

The Exodus 29 also is important to investigate the meaning of “holiness.” This chapter is about Priest consecration narrative and it contains considerable focus of “holiness.” Not all verses of Exodus 29 will be dealt. But only verses 1-6, 21, 27-37 and 43-45 are some of my interest texts. Verses 1-6 are about consecrated priests, and verse 21 about anointing the priests and their garments. And verses 27-37 are about holy offering and altar. And finally, verses 43-45 are about consecrated place of meeting and altar. These last verses state an explanation of why those people, the instrument, the place and the altar are holy and should be holy. I hope the analysis of these texts will highlight the meaning of “holiness” in the Old Testament.

The reason why I chose these previous texts is, I think, they talk about contexts that are quite similar to Malagasy contexts of holiness. And I intend to write something relevant to Malagasy context because some Malagasy people might have their own point of view from their Malagasy angle when they read about holiness in the Bible. Therefore, I will present the Malagasy concept of holiness in chapters 2 and 3. These presentations are for the purpose to know what holiness means in Malagasy context and to understand how Malagasy people would interpret the biblical holiness concept.

The whole thesis is divided into five chapters as following:

Chapter one is the present general introduction which starts with cases concerning holiness from my Malagasy Christians informant group. It continues with the research question in the second part, the methodology in the third part, the theory of African biblical hermeneutics in the fourth part, and the scope and limitation the fifth last part.

Chapter two is a background presentation. A short overview of the whole chapter is followed by an Old Testament concept of holiness that is a general focus of holiness background in the Old Testament. The second part highlights the Malagasy concept of holiness presenting different holy themes.

Chapter three is a descriptive presentation of interviews in which I present my interviews showing my informants' opinion concerning holiness. Information that is relevant to this thesis alone will be shared in both Malagasy original version and English translation.

Chapter four is about the text analysis. It leads with the interpretation of the texts noted above. It starts with a brief definition of "holiness" from Old Testament scholar and from the Hebrew root קדש. Thereafter, studies of Exodus 3 and 29 will be given. And every interpretation of Exodus 3 and 29 will be each closed by Malagasy interpreters' perspective.

Chapter five is the general conclusion. Answers of the research question "what does holiness mean?" will be given in this chapter. And I would like to end up this thesis by sharing my personal opinion.

Chapter Two

BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

In the general introduction, I have said that I want to investigate “what does ‘holiness’ mean?” The investigation is based on interpretation of Exodus 3 and 29. For that, traditional Old Testament interpretations and Malagasy interpreters’ perspectives are the tools I use to dig up my research. Accordingly, overviews concerning Old Testament and Malagasy concept of holiness are important before starting the textual interpretation. Thus, this present chapter deals with those matters. The first part is about the conceptual holiness of the Old Testament such as “holiness in the Old Testament”, “Holy Deity”, “Holy Places”, “Holy Things” and “Holy People.” A parallel structural presentation of Malagasy concept of holiness will be in the second part. It presents the followings: “Masina, Hasina, Fady, Tsiny”, “Deity, Ancestor, King”, “Holy Places”, “Holy Things” and “Holy People.”

2.2 Old Testament Concept of “Holiness”

In the Old Testament, there are many different contexts which concern about this object of “holiness”. The Old Testament concept of “holiness” can be inferred from them. I hereby present some of these contexts from some biblical verses and from some scholars’ statements. But before starting, it is significant to mention here that “holy” and “sacred” are synonymous. I will further deal about it in the etymologic part in the fourth chapter. In addition, “holiness” is generally a term used in a religious context.

2.2.1 Holiness in the Old Testament

קדש (qdš) and its derivatives are the only recognized Hebrew words from which the term “holiness” and its derivatives in the Old Testament are translated. For instance, the noun קְדוּשָׁה (qōdeš) means “holiness”, and the adjective קָדוֹשׁ (qādôš) “holy” (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:528). I do not go into detail about the etymology matter of this term in this present part. However, the focus is to present the meaning or definition

of “holiness”. Many scholars contribute to find the meaning of קדש and its derivatives in order to define “holiness” concept in the Old Testament.

Some arguments are from the thorough study of other Semitic words that is thought to be related to the Hebrew קדש. Here are some perspectives. First, “cleanliness”, “purification” or “purity”, and “consecration” are ideas that appear from Akkadian words (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:523-524). Then, emphasis on relation, consecration, to deity is strongly expressed by Ugaritic words. It is said that, “The term *qdš* is used to describe the gods themselves as well as everything associated more intimately with them, belonging to them in nature, or consecrated and thus associated with them by human beings” (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:524). Similar to this Ugaritic stress, the West Semitic idea of קדש derivatives is consecration or sanctification to the deity (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:525-526). Apparently, all Semitic languages have their common point. It is argued that the context of all the קדש derivatives is religious (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:526-527).

In addition to these previous ideas, S. Morenz and J. K. Hoffmeier share the argument of “set apart” meaning (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:526-527). That is, קדש means to “set apart”. It seems related to the following explanation. According to M. Eliade, קדש derivatives, holiness or sacredness is “the opposite of the profane and the secular life” (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:522). Moreover, K. Goldammer reports the understanding of people that, “the ‘holy’ is something totally different from themselves and implies a *qualitative* distinction between the divine on the one hand, and human and the world on the other (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:522). Also, G. van der Leeuw relates the “holy” to the terms “sacred” and “numinous” (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:522).

A simple overview can be inferred from these opinions. One designated to be קדוש or holy is simply exceptional or unique. It is divine or dedicated to the deity. One is cleansed, purified to be consecrated to the deity. And it is numinous or supernatural, different from ordinary.

In the Old Testament domain, generally, Yahweh is the basis of holiness. God is said to be the only subject in niphal who “shows himself to be holy” (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:527). And there is no one קדוש or holy like him (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:532). Therefore, the reason of being holy or to make holy is Yahweh. Places where he dwells and anyone as well as anything related to them are holy (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:533).

2.2.2 Holy Deity

When we talk about deity in the Old Testament, we directly have in mind, first, Yahweh. Yahweh, the Lord God who revealed himself to the people. He revealed himself, for instance, to Moses (Exo. 3). By his revelation He shows who He is.

From this narrative of Exodus 3, Brevard S. Childs states the following:

Here is a visible sign of God’s power which breaks through the limits of human experience. Every one knows that bushes burn and are soon consumed. But here is one which burns and is not consumed. It is a great wonder reflecting the holiness of God which no man dare transgress. (Childs 1974, 74)

In his statement Childs relates the beyond human experience, like the non-consumed bush, to “holiness”, as he says “holiness of God.” For him, this phenomenon, which surpasses the human’s knowledge, invokes the “holiness of God”. Also, Walter Brueggemann focuses on YHWH’s holiness when he comes to the Exodus 3:5. He says:

YHWH’s self-commitment concerns YHWH’s holiness that derivatively causes the ground on which YHWH stands to be holy (v. 5). The utterance of the term *holy* at the outset makes a primal claim for YHWH. YHWH is not, as the other gods of Moses’ environment, useful or available for every human intention. YHWH is for YHWH’s self and YHWH’s purposes, and is on that account unapproachable as an ominous presence. Moses is put on notice that this is no user-friendly God. (Brueggemann 2008, 24)

For Brueggemann, YHWH is holy. His power for being unapproachable is an evidence of his holiness. And the holiness condition of anything in contact with YHWH witnesses YHWH’s holiness. Brueggemann mentions that “YHWH’s inapproachability and the danger of being in YHWH’s presence set Israel on a long, rigorous, critical reflection about holiness”

(Brueggemann 2008, 34). And YHWH is unique among the ancient Near Eastern religion (Brueggemann 2008, 34). Approaching YHWH is “dangerous and requires care” (Brueggemann 2008, 89).

God is frequently called the “Holy One” in the Old Testament (2Ki. 19:22; Psa. 16:10; Isa. 5:19; etc.). Isaiah 6:3 mentions God is Almighty, He is Sovereign, and that He is “Holy”. Walther Zimmerli notices that, it is “quite unique” in Hosea 11:8-9 that the love of Yahweh is “incorporated into Yahweh’s designation of himself as the ‘Holy One’” (Zimmerli 1993, 190).

The views of those scholars show that Yahweh is Holy. And his holiness, for them, point out Yahweh’s power, Yahweh’s uniqueness. That can be compared with 1Samuel 6:20 where the writer asks “Who can stand in the presence of the Lord...?” as He is a holy God. In some biblical verses, for instance in Exodus 29:43, the holiness of Yahweh is told to be ever present. And there is no one holy like Him (1Sam. 2:2).

2.2.3 Holy Places

Various places are told to be holy in the Old Testament. In general, they are related to Yahweh.

Walter Eichrodt says that:

The religion of Old Testament shares with every other the belief that the deity reveals himself at particular places and that, therefore, worship is not to be offered at any spot which may happen to be convenient, but only at these sites in particular ... Hence, in the time of Israel’s wanderings, apart from the Ark of God or the sacred Tent, it is only on Sinai, the Mount of God, or at the sacred spring of Kadesh that men can draw near to God. (Eichrodt 1961, 102)

Eichrodt argues that the sacred place is a special “meeting-place” between Yahweh and people, like the sacred Tent as a “meeting-place between Yahweh and Moses” (Eichrodt 1961, 103-104). In addition, Childs also says that the appearance of deity is often at a holy place (Childs 1974, 65). From Eichrodt a holy place is a place where people meet God. This idea is basically from biblical verses. Some Old Testament texts confirm that Yahweh dwells in the Holy Place, in the most Holy Place in the Temple (1K. 8:8, 10; 7:50; 8:6). The heaven also is told a holy dwelling place of God (2Ch. 30:27). Moreover, Eichrodt affirms that a holy place is not only place where Yahweh dwells, but also where He manifests himself as in the Mount of Sinai when he appears to Moses (Eichrodt 1961, 103). He adds that God is considered present “in the midst of his people” and “enthroned at the holy place” (Eichrodt 1961, 111).

Temple is holy because God consecrates it and he puts his name there (cf. 1Ki. 8:64). The area in the tabernacle, where the ark is placed, is called the most holy. It is called so because, as most of us know, the ark is thought to be the presence of Yahweh. Also, according to Brueggemann “the mountain is holy because the God who comes there is holy” (Brueggemann 2008, 44). And he adds that, “entry into such a presence requires preparation and qualification” (Brueggemann 2008, 44).

Approaching close to the most holy may cause death (cf. Num. 4:19-20). Brueggemann says that approaching the holy mountain is filled with “danger and risk” (Brueggemann 2008, 44). Hence, coming near the holy place requires a lot of preparations. For example, Israelites were asked by the Lord to be consecrated and be clean before the Lord will come down on the holy mountain (Exo. 19:10-25).

2.2.4 Holy Things

There are many different holy or sacred things in the Old Testament texts.

The ark or ark of covenant is sacred (2Ch. 35:3). The ground in Exodus 3:1-6 narrative is holy as Yahweh told Moses. Priests and their garments are “consecrated” (Exo. 29:21). There is consecrated bread in the temple (1Sam. 21:4). Because the altar becomes the most holy after consecration, then anything in contact with it, the cultic utensils, and any sacrificial material are “consecrated”(Ex. 29:37; 30:29; Lev. 6:11,20). Indeed, holy things are numerous. The Leviticus 27 enumerates some, like offering, man, animal, field, tithe, and so on. The text says that they are holy when they are given or devoted to the Lord (cf. vv. 9, 28).

Eichrodt says that, “The Ark... together with the regalia of the rod of God and the sacred lot, bear witness to the invisibility of the divine Lord...” (Eichrodt 1961, 103). This statement supports the idea that things are holy because of the Lord, that they have relation to Yahweh. They represent or remind the Holy One to the people.

One important point to mention is that, “it is prohibited to desecrate and to profane the holy gifts” (Botterweck, “קֹדֶשׁ”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:533).

2.2.5 Holy People

Most of the time in the Old Testament, “holy people” refers the people of Israel. It clear in the Deuteronomy 7:6 that they are holy people to the Lord their God. In this text the holiness of the people is related to the selection God. That is to say, people are not holy from themselves, but

because “The Lord God has chosen them”. Some texts tell about laws or rules that holy people should respect, because of their holiness. For example, the Exodus 22:31 says about the forbidden meat of an animal torn by wild beasts because they are holy people of God.

Brueggemann asserts that, “The Priestly material in the Old Testament constitutes an important part of the whole of the corpus of the Torah and is preoccupied with the formation of the holy people (Leviticus 19:2)” (Brueggemann 2008, 388). The Lord commends the Israelites to be holy because He is holy. Concerning this verse, Walther Zimmerli also argues that, “Yahweh, who comes to his people, wishes to have his nature reflected in theirs... ‘You shall be holy, because I, Yahweh your God, am holy” (Zimmerli 1993, 142). And Zimmerli affirms that this commandment is “unmistakable” (Zimmerli 1993, 142). That is, holy people should keep their holiness because God is jealous of His holiness; He wants them to be holy as well. As Brueggemann says, coming closer to Yahweh is dangerous and needs care, thus Israelites should be aware of that (Brueggemann 2008, 89). They should consecrate and wash themselves to be holy and clean (Brueggemann 2008, 45).

Therefore, Priests come to their task. They are also holy or consecrated. It is stated that:

They are to be anointed and consecrated in order to perform priestly service... The priests thus stand in a special relationship with Yahweh and as such belong to the divine sphere itself, a situation imposing on them the obligation to maintain cultic purity and enjoining the congregation to accord them special respect. (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:533)

As they are those who can enter the holy place, their duty is to ensure cleaning of “all that is holy” (cf. 2Ch. 23:6; 1Ch. 23:28). One writer affirms that: “What is holy and what is profane are to be strictly distinguished, with the latter not allowed to come into contact with the former, though certain precautionary measures do allow it to be employed in one’s dealings with the holy” (Botterweck, “קדש”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12:534).

Talking about the whole contexts of holiness in the Old Testament can be an infinite object. But I think these previously cited are some basic points. In the Old Testament Yahweh is the Holy One. And He is the principal cause or meaning of every holiness concept. Anything and anyone called holy is because of relation to Yahweh. What about holiness concept in Malagasy environment?

2.3 Malagasy Concept of “Holiness”

Similar to the Old Testament which has numerous holiness contexts, so do the Malagasy society. I first start with some Malagasy terms that have connection to Malagasy word of “holiness”. The four concepts “masina”, “hasina”, “fady” and “tsiny” have interconnection in Malagasy belief and culture. Without knowing one may cause confusion of understanding other. Personally, before I have started my researches, I do not exactly understand the first, the second and the forth terms even if I am Malagasy. It is the case of the holy book, the Bible, (see introduction) which draws my attention to study more about it. Why some believe that, simply putting it under one’s head, the “holy book” can heal from illness? What is Malagasy perspective concerning “holiness”? This present part focuses that subject.

2.3.1 Masina, Hasina, Fady, Tsiny

- Masina:

First of all, I come to the term “masina” by presenting definitions from some literatures.

Richardson translates, rather than defines, the term “masina”. He says that “masina” means “holy, consecrated, sanctified” (Dahl 1993, 36).

It has the same translation in French version: “sacré” or “saint” (Rakotomalala 2000, 495). Also, this term “masina” may indicate the “royals and princes spirits” (Rakotomalala 2000, 495).

Razafintsalama explains that “masina” is the opposite of “profane” (Razafintsalama 2004, 44). Thereafter, he defines that “profane” is not “masina” or has less “hasina.” (Razafintsalama 2004, 44).

The term “masina” has some derivative words. “Fanasinana” is one of its derivative word which means “sanctification”, or “worship” (Rakotomalala 2000, 494). Razafintsalama argues that the purpose of doing “Fanasinana” is for having blessing” (Razafintsalama 2004, 46). That is to say, performing sanctification rites is to get blessing back from the spirit of the sanctified one.

I want to quote here, in particular, one definition given by Razafintsalama. He states that:

The term masina means: possessing power that blesses, but power higher than human’s or ordinary creature’s power. Moreover, the power of things or of persons who have hasina is automatically efficient when all required rituals are performed. That is called magical forces or magic. Therefore either God, or

charms, or divination...or vazimba, even Ancestors, are forced to give blessings when rituals are fulfilled... (Razafintsalama 2004, 46) ⁷

From this statement, it is evident that “masina” has a power perspective. That is power which can provide blessings. Besides, it can be inferred from Razafintsalama definition that “masina” requires care by performing rituals.

- **Hasina**

“Hasina” in the Malagasy community is one of the most important concepts for human being and every creation. Sandra Evers says “all that lives needs hasina” (Evers 2002, 141). According to Bloch, “the notion of *hasina* is the ‘kernel of Malagasy thought’” (Evers 2002, 142). This concept is not easy to understand. Many Malagasy people have difficulty to explain it, and think that it has no relation to the concept “masina”. However, it is said that, “it derives from its adjectival form *masina* meaning ‘holy’” (Evers 2002, 141).

Before focusing on the definition of “hasina”, I remind that Razafintsalama relates it to “masina” on the previous page. Profane is not “masina” or has less “hasina” (Razafintsalama 2004, 44). That also means, less “hasina” provokes or implicate not being “masina.” “Hasina” is defined as an “effective virtue which distinguishes an object, a place, a person...from their counterparts” (Rakotomalala 2000, 494).⁸ For Southall “hasina” is “sacred ritual potency” (Evers 2002, 141). Also, Richardson understands that, “*Hasina*, in the traditional Malagasy world view, is the intrinsic or supernatural virtue which renders a thing good and efficacious” (Dahl 1993, 36). In addition, “It is the sacred power of the whole creation: the human being, the animals, the plants, the stones, the sky and especially medicines, ‘the mystical force of primacy’, says Bloch (Dahl 1993, 36). That is, every creation has ones “hasina” according to Malagasy thought. Though lower in social class, like slaves, all human beings have “hasina” (Dahl 1993, 36). And, Ratrema asserts that, it “has to be respected”, that “it gives dignity and honour to all men, and to the whole creation” (Dahl 1993, 36).

⁷ Original source: “Ny teny hoe masina dia midika hoe: manan-kery mahasoana, saingy hery mihoatra izay ananan’ny olombelona na ny zava-boary andavanandro. Ankoatr’izany ny herin’ny zavatra na olo-manan-kasina dia mandaitra ho azy, rahefa tontosa ny fombafomba rehetra takiana. Io no antsoina hoe forces magiques na magie. Koa na Andriamanitra, na ny sampy na ny sikidy...na ny vazimba sy ny Razana aza, dia voatery hanome fitahiana na fahasoavana rahefatontosa ny fomba...”

⁸ Original source: “*hasina* vertu efficace qui distingue un objet, un lieu, une personne...de ses homologues.” Sometimes it also indicates an offering, or a name plant as well.

However, even if every creation possesses “hasina”, there is a hierarchical degree. One might have more “hasina” than other. For instance, the traditional healer (ombiasy), the king, the queen and the nobles have much “hasina” (Dahl 1993, 36). Even among other creatures, plants, stones, or animals there is different degree of “hasina” possession. The status of being “masina”, or holy, proves that some are considered to have more “hasina” than others. To the next subheadings, we will see that some places, or some things are holy while others are not.

Most of Malagasy people think and say that if, for example, charms are not effective; it is because of decline or lack of their “hasina.” Richardson explains that “it may indicate the efficacy of a remedy” (Dahl 1993, 36). One important point to know is that “hasina” is not constant. It may decrease, even disappear. Øyvind Dahl mentions that:

...the hasina of the ancestors is lost if they do not accomplish their assignments in dealing with the living. In the same way, charms may lose their *hasina* if they do not accomplish what people expect from them. The *razana* (ancestors) contribute to the *hasina*. (Dahl 1993, 37)

Yet, “hasina” may increase if it is respected. Most of Malagasy people are aware to follow all instructions to keep it. Some of instructions to keep up the “hasina” are called “fady”.

- **Fady**

“Fady” is the Malagasy vocabulary of prohibition or taboo. Øyvind Dahl explains that, “*Fady* gives rules for what cannot be touched, approached or eaten” (Dahl 1993, 79). And he added that:

Some *fady* refer to people. Certain people are not to be approached or touched, or mentioned by name, because they have so much *hasina* (inherent power). Some *fady* refer to places, quite often places with tombs... (Dahl 1993, 79)

The “fady” is established to protect the “hasina”. Razafintsalama states two reasons of “fady”. According to him, one is “fady”, prohibited or taboo, because, on the one hand, “it is believed to possess bad fate that could cause fatal outcome” (Razafintsalama 2004, 32).⁹ On the other hand, one is “fady” because “it is believed it has “hasina” that requires a particular care or

⁹ Original source: “satria inoana ho ratsy, mandoza ny zavatra na olona halavirina.”

respect” (Razafintsalama 2004, 33).¹⁰ He mentions one Malagasy custom. One should excuse, saying “aza fady”, when he or she passes in front of parents, “Ray aman-dReny” because they are “masina”, or “holy” (Razafintsalama 2004, 33).¹¹

The “fady” must be respected or followed. Otherwise, neglect of the “fady” is very risky. However, there is one way to remove the “fady”, which is “joro” performance led by a traditional healer (Dahl 1993, 80).¹² One who dares to commit such circumstance might be punished by “tsiny” (Dahl 1993, 79).

- **Tsiny**

“Tsiny” is the aftermath of a carelessness of the “fady”.

Øyvind Dahl defines it as an “unknown power” that causes “disastrous effects” due to a negligence of the “fady” (Dahl 1993, 80). And Andriamanjato clearly asserts that:

The *tsiny* is on one hand an imperfection of the acting person, and on the other hand the consequence of this imperfection, the more or less supernatural force that acts to sanction this imperfection... (Dahl 1993, 74)

Because of the belief of this “supernatural force” which punishes wrong doers, many Malagasy people are aware to respect the “fady”. And the fear of these “supernatural force” involves the establishment of many “fady” (cf. Dahl 1993, 74).

In sum, “masina”, “hasina”, “fady” and “tsiny” are interrelated. From the fear of being sanctioned by “tsiny”, the “fady” is followed. The respect of “fady” in turn helps Malagasy to preserve the “hasina”. And then, while “hasina” is maintained the holiness of those who has more “hasina” will lasts. And Malagasy wants to keep holiness as long as possible because it has the power to bless. That proves the Malagasy care of everyone or everything believed as “masina” or “holy”.

¹⁰ Original source: “satria inoana fa ho manan-kasina ka mitaky fitandremana manokana.”

¹¹ Original source: “Masina ohatra ny Ray aman-dReny, ka tsy maintsy anaovana ‘aza fady’ raha lalovana, na itenenana.” “Masina” is translated “sacré” (p.44), “holy”. “Ray aman-dReny” means “Father and Mother”. Direct translation of “aza fady” is “do not be *fady* or prohibited”; the idea is to ask for permission before passing.

¹² “Joro”, explained by writer, is an invocation and eventually sacrifice. Sacrifice of a cow or calf and performance of rites and prayers to the ancestors.

2.3.2 Deity, Ancestor and King

Deity, ancestor and king can be said the first three pillars of Malagasy conceptual belief and custom. Therefore, holiness concept is highly founded on them. It can be seen from the following circumstances.

Presence of deity, ancestor and king causes holiness. In the following part, we will see that, traditionally, every Malagasy family set apart a holy place inside their home. Deity and ancestor are supposed to dwell in that holy place. Lars Vig says that the “god of the family” is placed there (Vig 2001, 66). What he means by “god of the family” is the godly symbolic charms. Razafintsalama explains that because of deity and ancestor believed present there that the place is called “Zorofirarazana” (Razafintsalama 2004, 53).¹³ It is evident that the family calls the gods and ancestors or prays in that place. For instance, Malagasy family calls gods and ancestors there for recovering or for blessings (Ruud 2002, 151).

Traditionally, Malagasy has a strong belief on ancestor. The statements of John Mack mentioned by Øyvind Dahl shows the value of the ancestors in Malagasy belief. He says: “if the historical processes by which Malagasy culture has been assembled are various, constant reference to the ancestors is none the less a basic and pervasive theme” (Dahl 1993, 36). And Øyvind Dahl relates the ancestors to the notion of sacred power: ‘*hasina*’ (Dahl 1993, 36). He asserts that, “The *razana* (ancestors) contribute to the *hasina*” (Dahl 1993, 37). That is, the ancestor also causes holiness. Moreover, Sandra Evers affirms that *hasina*, the sacred power, resides with the ancestors (Evers 2002, 143). And also, ancestors are called sacred. And Malagasy believe that ancestors punish those who have done wrong thing like theft (Ruud 2002, 158).

After the deity and ancestor, the king is very significant in Malagasy society as well as in their culture. The king has an important place not only during his living life, but especially when he passed away. And they are also a source of holiness in Malagasy culture and belief. For instance, most of sanctuaries or cultic sites are related to the name of the king, like Andrianampoinimerina, Andriamisara (Rakotomalala 2000, 145). Rakotomalala says that Andrianampoinimerina is the principal chief for the sacred sites. Nevertheless, every sanctuary related to other royal name has also their sacredness or holiness. There are twelve famous

¹³ In Malagasy society the “Zorofirarazana” is well-known as a place that has the most “*hasina*” and that it is considered “holy place.”

mountains called “holy mountains” set apart by the king in Imerina (Vig 2001, 116). And the sacred or royal place is expected to emit the *hasina* (Rakotomalala 2000, 146). The king also can give *hasina* by a ritual of the royal bath (Evers 2002, 144). As believed to possess high *hasina* or to be holy, the king is thought to be able to give *hasina*. The evidence that shows this high *hasina* of the kings is that they are strongly respected either alive or *beyond life*. An extreme example is the human sacrifices practiced a very long time ago at the burial kings (Ruud 2002, 159). And also prayers are dedicated to them. That is, because they are thought to be holy, Malagasy invoke their name during a blessing ritual or other (see chapter 3). Even, the person designed to be sacrificed does not complain to be laid at the bottom of the coffin and to come with the king in the land beyond because he or she consider the king as his or her *god* (Ruud 2002, 160). The king is like a master of the nature (cf. Rakotomalala 2000, 104).

2.3.3 Holy Places

There are different kinds of *holy* places in Malagasy culture. Almost all of them are related to the deity, to the ancestor, and to the king.

The royal city is considered *holy*. For instance, the royal city in Ambohimanga, Tananarive, is trusted *holy* and it is venerated with the famous king Ralambo who lived there when alive (Rakotomalala 2000, 106). And there are twelve famous mountains called “holy mountains” because they are set apart by Andrianampoinimerina, the one considered as the chief king of all kings in Imerina, Tananarive (Vig 2001, 116). The holiness of the royal place has impact to its surroundings. For example, the ground there is believed holy and even some collect soil from there as it is called *holy soil* (Rakotomalala 2000, 103). The same, water or spring there is considered holy as well, that is why it is used for purification (Rakotomalala 2000, 103). These holy mountains surely have value to the Malagasy culture. Sometimes, Malagasy traditionalists swear by the holiness of these mountains (Vig 2001, 116).

The high places are thought to be *holy*. That is because mountains are believed close to God (Vig 2001, 116). The previous mountains are considered *holy* not only because of they are royal places but also because they are high. There are other facts that prove this belief of holiness of the high places or holy mountains. Some people pick grass or leaves on the holy mountains and use them as charms. For the most of the time, charms are placed in a high level either at home or outside hanged on a *holy tree* (Vig 2001, 116). Also, some bring their charms in the

high places or the holy mountains in order to make them *holy* (Vig 2001, 116; cf. Rakotomalala 2000, 141).

Places of worship are holy too. These are some different places of worship:

the stone altar out in the forest where the great sacrifice take place... the wooden pillar in the middle of the town ... which is used especially at the circumcision feast, but where also a daily sacrifice proceeds,... the holy corner in the hut, the north-east corner ... the ferry, where travelers drop a coin in the river ... the family grave where offerings are made to the departed. (Ruud 2002, 156)

Almost everywhere, various places of worship can be seen on the mountain, at the forest, at a family tomb, on the river, on the road, at home.

2.3.4 Holy Things

Holy things in the Malagasy culture are not easy to list. There are too much holy things. But these followings are important to know.

The sacred stone is one of the very common for Malagasy belief. It is used for the cultic ritual of purification, consecration, sanctification, and covenant (Rakotomalala 2000, 143). There are stone altars also. The following tradition narrative of the origin of the stone altars may help to understand how and why they are so important. It is a summary from Ruud (Ruud 2002, 148-149). A great rich man asks his children to build it where, after his death, they can put food he had mentioned because his spirit will still live with them. And the old man, when died, and the ancestors will “keep them safe”. The man mentions as well “the taboos” or the prohibitions. Every word of the man will not be forgotten and will be respected by all his descendants. The stone that they put by order of the man is a stone called “man’s stone”. And there is a flat one as a “sacrificial table” in front and to the East called “woman-stone”.

Ruud asserts that:

In religious sense the altar is called “the offering place”, popularly expressed “where one gives thanks”. This place is just as sacred, and dangerous to set foot upon, as the grave – and nobody ventures to approach it save with offerings ... The stone is selected by the medicine-man ... found down in the becks and river rapids. (Ruud 2002, 148-149)

A sacrificial ritual is required before picking the stone from its original place to the indicated place by the elder. For example, an ox sacrifice is made and its blood is poured on the stone (Ruud 2002, 148-149). Stone are thought to be *masina* (“holy”) because of the event or circumstance or phenomenon that happened to or surrounded the stone. For instance, there is one stone on the river side of Ambatombilahy, between Masinandrana and Antsirabe that was emerged by the river when one prince died (Vig 2001, 102). Hence, habitants of that place believed that these two phenomena were related. Then, they made a cow sacrifice on the stone when it was about to be emerged again, because they think that this phenomenon is a sign of misfortune or bad luck (Vig 2001, 102). They also think that the stone is “holy” because it remains on its place even if the river moves a lot (Vig 2001, 102). The holy stone is a place to perform covenant or vow. One of them is the stone of Ambatombilahy (Vig 2001, 102). For instance, when people ask for blessing or for any wishes else, like to bear or give birth to a child for a barren women, in front of the holy stone, they vow to bring offering to the stone, like oil of some value (Vig 2001, 104). Also, plants growing around this holy stone are believed to be a very powerful charm (Vig 2001, 102).

Some trees or woods are thought to be holy as well. They are different kinds of holy tree depending on the culture of the region. They are easily acknowledged by some decoration or some clothes hanged on them or something put around them on the ground. And people pray there, they ask for blessing or give thanks by bring an offering (Vig 2001, 106; 108). They are thought to have power. Even, there is a ritual to make them holy in order to increase their power (Razafintsalama 2004, 47). It is not only trees that can be classified holy, but there are also woods that is intentionally built at a specific place. The wood is sanctified by a blood of an ox, oil, and some rice. And the wood becomes an altar where people put offerings and where different kind of ritual are performed (Vig 2001, 102).

Water is attributed *holy* as well (Razafintsalama 2004, 33). Vig describes some evidences to prove the belief of Malagasy of the water’s holiness. First, he says that Malagasy think water is holy because it makes the ground to be productive and it satisfies those who are thirsty (Vig 2001, 108). And Malagasy are very afraid if there is someone who defiles the holiness or does not respect the taboos of the water. If that happens, they quickly remedy the problem for fear of a fatal consequence caused by the water (Vig 2001, 108). As the water is thought to be holy, grass boarding it is sometimes used to make different charms (Vig 2001, 108).

In fact, things are thought to be holy when they are special, not like other ordinary things, to which people are interested. Or sometimes strange phenomena cause the holiness of things for Malagasy.

2.3.5 Holy People

We have seen before that the king is considered a source of holiness for the Malagasy culture. Thus, the holiness of the king is indisputable. It is not only the king who is considered holy, but there are also other categories of people considered holy.

Parents or elders are *holy* for Malagasy culture. Razafintsalama explains that because parents are *holy* then “excuses” *must* be addressed when someone passes in front of them (Razafintsalama 2004, 32-33). The word to express excuses in Malagasy is “aza fady”, which literally means “do not taboo” or “do not prohibit” (cf. Razafintsalama 2004, 32-33). This means it is taboo to pass in front of parents or elders. Hence, the person must ask for permission not only to respect them, but especially, the behind belief is, to avoid any bad consequence from the taboo. Also, Malagasy are afraid to offend parents and elders because their word or speech is believed to be holy or powerful (Razafintsalama 2004, 32-33).

The mpisikidy and ombiasy are considered holy persons too. The mpisikidy or mind-readers have inherited skills of things on the earth and divination from the *14 prophets* (Vig 2001, 118).¹⁴ Since they are charms and fetishes makers, they have to consecrate these things to be holy, or to be powerful (Vig 2001, 118). They are priest as well. They are the prime responsible to lead the sacrificial task (Vig 2001, 118). And those who keep the most powerful charm called hazomanga are the high priest (Vig 2001, 118). The ombiasy or traditional medicine healers are quite similar to the mpisikidy, mind-readers or priests. These holy persons have taboos or laws to keep their holiness. For instance, they cannot eat meat at or from a funeral ceremony (Vig 2001, 120). Also, they have special dress and they keep it carefully for they need to put it when performing a holy sacrifice (Vig 2001, 120). They use tools thought to be holy. They refer their divination tools to the Bible as Lars Vig quotes (Vig 2001, 122). Ombiasy and mpisikidy are especially considered holy when their craft are successful. And Malagasy believe to their power. For instance, Vig writes one narrative about the powerful craft that successfully

¹⁴ Lars Vig states that there were 14 prophets, 7 prophets of the sky who examined things there, similar to astrologers, and 7 prophets of the earth who have their skills with things on the earth.

defeats the enemies of its owner (Vig 2001, 126). And Malagasy people believe that charms and fetishes from ombiasy and mpisikidy can protect or heal them from illness (Vig 2001, 124).

Mpitaiza or *take carer* is also thought to be holy. *Mpitaiza* is a person who performs care and healing task like a “doctor of a family” (Rakotomalala 2000, 496). Some are thought as a gift from the creator because of their special story and skills (Rakotomalala 2000, 219). Like Marie, an informant of Rakotomalala, is called a “special child and consecrated” (Rakotomalala 2000, 219). That is because her mother was pregnant of her after a prayer to the Zanahary (the creator) at the traditional sanctuary *doany* (Rakotomalala 2000, 219). Marie says that the spirit in contact of her is “zava-masina” or “holy thing (Rakotomalala 2000, 219). She means by “zava-masina” a “holy or powerful and good spirit.” And the *Mpitaiza* believes that it is this “zava-masina” which is the power of her or his work of healing and protecting (Rakotomalala 2000, 219-220). And some *Mpitaiza* mix their “holy Malagasy traditional tools” to “a Christian holy object”, like “holy picture” or “picture of saints”, holy Bible, Virgin Mary statue, “white garment” (Rakotomalala 2000, 224). They use water, dust, leaves that are supposed to be holy, since they are taken from holy places (Rakotomalala 2000, 225). The *Mpitaiza* are possibly aware of holiness and that they have taboo to protect it. Because they believe that if their work is not efficiency, that is the taboo was not respected (Rakotomalala 2000, 262).

2.4 Conclusion

According to קדש and its derivatives, “holiness” in the Old Testament means “apartness”, “consecration”, “unique or dedicated to deity.” And from its other Semitic derivative words, it means “cleanliness” and “purification” or “purity. “Holiness” is an attribute of YHWH (Yahweh). He is the “Holy One.” And anyone, anything, or anywhere related to YHWH are stated “holy.”

However, Malagasy holiness concept stresses on power perspective. it is told that “masina”, or “holy”, possesses a supernatural “power” that blesses. It is related to the “hasina” or the “sacred poser of the whole creation.” And “holiness” is protected by “fady”, or “taboos” and “tsiny”, or “fate”. “Deity”, “Ancestor” and “King” are the sources of “Holiness.” And relationship to these threefold sources cause “holiness” status. Since the Malagasy society and culture are full of holiness concept, they obviously believe holiness is powerful. They think that holy things can bless, can protect from tsiny or fatality, can punish, and even can kill if they are

not respected. The next chapter will present the empirical evidence of this literary Malagasy holiness concept.

Chapter Three

DESCRIPTIVE PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEWS

Seeing that “holiness” is one of strong concepts in Malagasy community, I am willing to investigate what it means to Malagasy people. According to cases presented in the first chapter I am curious to know how Malagasy Christians understand “holiness” meaning when they read the Bible. They may have been influenced by Malagasy traditional belief or thought. That is, they possibly still have the Malagasy understanding in their mind. Thus, interviewing both Traditionalists and Christians is important.

3.1 Introduction

Six months is not enough to lead study in all places of Madagascar the Malagasy island. Then I have decided to start my investigation in one city called Mahajanga. It is located in the northwest of the island. “Holiness” concept can be investigated in any region of Madagascar, from one place to another. But I prefer Mahajanga, the city where I live and work, and whose community I am quite familiar with.

Trustful information is precious for studies. Therefore choice of person to interview should be done carefully. Most of my informants are people I know before. Some are known by my friend and colleague. And all of them are adults. There are two men Traditionalists habitants of Mangatsa. Mangatsa is one of the famous “sacred” places in Mahajanga. There are two trees wrapped with red and white clothes. The lake is very clear and clean. There are lots of and fishes inside the lake which cannot be taken. Coins in the water witness the offering from visitors. While I was there, there were couple coming to ask for blessings.

In this writing I name the two Traditionalists men Rangahibe and Zanatany. They are natives of this sacred placed. And the elder or Rangahibe is the leader of ritual in that place. Information from them is very important as it is about a pure Malagasy traditional belief and culture.

And one informant is a former Traditionalist. He was an “ombiasy” or traditional healer. He recently gets involved in Christian faith. Information from him is interesting for it is like an evidence of what I have heard from Rangahibe and Zanatany.

And then I had conversation with one group of twelve Christian men and women. All of them are Shepherds and Shepherd trainees, except the recent former Traditionalist man.¹⁵ They witnessed the way how some Malagasy Christians understand holiness concept.

The purpose of the interview is to know how Malagasy understand “holiness” from the Old Testament texts. We have read texts from Eksodosy 3:5; 19:6; 26:33-34; 29:29-37; 31:31; Levitikosy 20:7-8,26; and others. After reading these texts, I have asked them my interview questions. The bases of my questions are their understanding of the meaning of “holiness” from the texts, the reason of “holiness” status, and whether this concept should be respected or not. Sometimes we deal with comparison between Christians and Traditionalists understanding of “holiness”, and how each group behaves toward holiness. No doubt that understanding of one concept often depends on local context. Even though I did not read Bible texts with the Traditionalists, conversation with them is so valuable.¹⁶ Information from them greatly highlights the meaning of “holiness” for Malagasy belief.

3.2 Material

Generally, Traditionalists and Christians have quite the same perspectives. It has been a bit difficult to discuss about the Old Testament texts with the recent former traditionalist. He often compares his understanding from Malagasy belief. For instance, when I asked his view of something according to the texts we have read, he shortly refers to the texts. And then he jumps/compared them to his traditional Malagasy perspectives. I asked him about what the reason of being holy is. He answered that “The holiness condition is from God the Holy who sanctifies.”¹⁷ And then he added “In Malagasy belief and custom... it is from the king, from king’s instruction that makes holiness being and that one place or thing is set apart to be holy.”¹⁸ After saying that it is God who makes holy, he directly adds the Malagasy concept of holiness. He did such a way of comparing the biblical texts to Malagasy context in order to clarify his

¹⁵ See footnote 4 in chapter one for Shepherd explanation, p. 7.

¹⁶ Fervent Sakalava Traditionalists strongly hate Bible. The way to read, even to bring Bible only may displease them. Sakalava are people from some area in the west, northwest, and some region in the north of Madagascar are Sakalava.

¹⁷ Field report Malagasy version p.11. “Ny mahamasina dia noho Andriamanitra Ilay Masina manamasina.”

¹⁸ Field report Malagasy version p.11. “Amin’ny finoana sy fomba Malagasy... araka ny fanazavany, dia avy amin’ny mpanjaka, noho ny tenin’ny mpanjaka, no mahamasina ary hanokanana ho masina ny toerana na zavatra iray.”

understanding of them. Nevertheless I am pleased of his way to express his opinion. That is what I need, to know Malagasy understanding of holiness. In addition, his way of perceiving the biblical texts can be an evidence of Malagasy Christian, either recent or old, influence by Malagasy tradition.

The following expression of one woman of the Christian group confirms this influence of Malagasy tradition to some Malagasy Christians. While we discuss about respect of the holiness of God by keeping the Church cleaned, she mentions:

In Malagasy belief and custom ... people do not dare, for example, to dirty the consecrated place, which is said as “holy”, because it (disobedience) may cause tragedy or fatal circumstance according their belief ... when [I] had followed traditional belief [I] was very afraid of disobeying rites and taboos, that might dirty the holiness. Then, when [I] become Christian, [I] am often shocked ... seeing talkative people in the Church, or people walking all over the Church because it means non-respect to God...¹⁹

This woman refers to Malagasy tradition to express her emotion concerning her experience at the Church. Such a fact shows the influence of Malagasy tradition on Malagasy Christian. This influence may be extended to other circumstance, like the thought of “powerful” holy Bible. I will present this power perspective later.

Before presenting the meaning of “holiness” according to my informants, I would like first to deal with their understanding of its source. What I mean by source is the reason from which “holiness” status raises up. Malagasy understanding of “holiness” depends on this “holiness” source. Why is one pointed to be holy?

3.2.1 Source of Holiness

Traditionally, Malagasy supposes and beliefs that “holiness” status is founded on one superior. The source might be a king, a spirit, an ancestor, or a divinity. When I asked why the place of Mangatsa is holy, Zanatany replies directly that because it is related to one king of the northwest region. He says:

¹⁹ Field report Malagasy version, p.13. “Raha any amin’ny finoana sy fomba Malagasy ... dia tsy sahin’ny olona, ohatra, ny handoto ny toerana voatokana, izay lazaina ho “masina”, satria hampidi-doza aminy izany araka ny finoany. ...fony izy nanompo tany amin’ny fomban-drazana dia tena natahorany mafy izany tsy hanaja ny fomba sy ny fady izany, izay fomba mety handoto ny “masina”. Ary matetika tafintohina izy ... rehefa tonga kristiana ka nahita ny olona sasany mitabataba, mivezivezy am-piangonana satria midika ny tsy fanajana an’Andriamanitra ...”

This place has a long story since the time of King long ago, according to what our parents say. When the king Andriamandisoarivo, after a journey from Menabe, arrived to Mahajanga, his cattle were in this place, and this big tamarind (...) which we see there (...) is the place where he walked for pleasure.²⁰

The area of the lake was supposed to be a place where one of the King's cattle was lost. Since that time the lac has been considered important, not like other place. Zanatany explains the event as following:

At that time there was no lake yet at this place, only muddy ...one day one ox of the King disappears at this area ... the disappeared ox is thought to sink into this area, because the ox was never found. At the moment of the search in the mud water came out, and the water was very clean. Then the king named the lake "Mangatsa" ... and some eels appear to the lake.²¹

And it was the King who started to send people to ask for blessing at that place according to what Zanatany says, "the proof that showed this place is "holy" is that, when people came to the king to tell his wish the king asked him to go to this place to ask for blessing and to vow."²² The former Traditionalist man confirms that "holiness" status is rooted in king. He says:

In Malagasy belief and tradition ... it is from the king, due to what the king said, that causes holiness and to set place or thing to be holy. When the king turned his back (passed away) his spirit dwelled in or possessed living person. Then he still orders different laws, taboos, to keep holiness. And even items the king has used, like plate, dress and so on are set to be holy.²³

²⁰ Fieldreport Malagasy version p.6. "Manana ny tantarany lavabe nanomboka tamin'ny andron'ny Mpanjaka taloha tany ity toerana ity, araka ny tantara nampitain'ireo Raiamandrenibenay. Rehefa avy tany Menabe ny Mpanjaka Andriamandisoarivo ka tonga teto Mahajanga dia tamin'ity toerana ity no nisy ny ombiny, ary iry vodi-madirobe (...) tazantsika iry (...) no toerana fitsangatsanganany".

²¹ Fieldreport Malagasy version p.6. "Tsy mbola nisy rano ity toerana ity tamin'izay, fa onaona ...indray andro nisy tsy hita ny ombin'ny Mpanjaka rehefa nandeha tamin'ity toerana ity. ... noheverina tamin'izay fa nilentika tao ilay omby tsy hita, satria dia tena tsy hita mihitsy ilay omby. Tamin'ny fotoana nikarokarohana ilay onaona anefa dia nisy rano niboiboika teo, ary tena madio ilay rano. Ka izay no nanaovan'ny Mpanjaka ity toerana ity hoe "Mangatsa" ... dia nisy amalona tao amin'ilay rano."

²² Fieldreport Malagasy version p.6. "Ny tena nahitana fa "masina" ity toerana ity dia izao, rehefa nisy olona nanatona ny mpanjaka nilaza ny faniriany dia nasain'ny Mpanjaka nandeha tamin'ity toerana ity nangata-pitahiana sy nanao voady."

²³ Fieldreport Malagasy version p.11. "Amin'ny finoana sy fomba Malagasy... dia avy amin'ny mpanjaka, noho ny tenin'ny mpanjaka, no mahamasina ary hanokanana ho masina ny toerana na zavatra iray. Rehefa miamboho (modimandry) ny Mpanjaka dia mihanjaka amin'olona velona ny fanahiny. Koa mbola manafatra ny didy isankarazany, ny fady, hiarovana ny fahamasinana izy. Ary na ireo fitaovana nampiasain'ilay mpanjaka aza, toy ny vilia, akanjo sy ny sisa dia atokana ho masina."

Holiness is thought to be caused by powerful spirit as well. For Malagasy belief a powerful spirit can dwell in matter. Zanatany says:

This place, this lake is holy because there is power or powerful spirit within it that makes it to be powerful, to be able to bless or to kill also. It is different from other places, or other lakes, but there is a power that surpasses human's thinking in this place.²⁴

What Zanatany mentions here can be related to the statement of the former Traditionalist man. For Malagasy belief the spirit does not die, only the body. Thus it can dwell anywhere, into living person, or trees, or animals and so on. Therefore this spirit dwelling in Mangatsa place could be a spirit of a king. The former Traditionalist man states that, "There are some ombiasy [traditional healer], when they pass away, their spirit do not die and still bless, heal...so, people who believe in them keep worshipping and sanctifying them."²⁵

Some places are set apart to call deity, the king's spirit, and Ancestors. Such places are dedicated to be holy. During ritual of asking for blessings performance deity, king and ancestor are called at the consecrated place. Rangahibe, the one man of Mangatsa, explains that the ritual of blessing starts by invoking "Ndragnahary", "Andriamisara" and all "Razambe" who bless.²⁶

Covenant and wishes' ritual may also cause holiness. It is obvious because Malagasy Traditionalists always invoke deity name and ancestors when they make solemn agreement, wishes' ritual and other rites. Sometimes some simple places or things were not considered holy before. What I mean by "simple" is not related to any king. But when covenant and wishes' ritual were performed in these simple places or within these simple things, and that wishes come true, they become "holy" places or "holy" things. The former Traditionalist man explains that:

²⁴ Field report Malagasy version p.6. "Ny mahamasina ilay toerana, ilay rano, dia misy hery na fanahy mahery aminy eo ka mahatonga azy ho mahery, afaka mitahy na mamono koa aza. Tsy mitovy amin'ny toerana rehetra, na ny rano rehetra izany izy, fa misy hery ambonin'ny fieritreretantsika olombelona aminy ao."

²⁵ Field report Malagasy version p.12. "Misy koa ireo ombiasy sasany rehefa maty, ny fanahiny tsy maty ary mbola mitahy, manasitrana ... ka dia mbola tompoin'olona sy hamasinin'ny olona manompo azy."

²⁶ Field report Malagasy version p.9.

"Ndragnahary" is a northwest dialect of "Zanahary", "who creates" or simply Creator. "Andriamisara" was a very famous and great king of Sakalava tribe. Some say also that he was not a king but a great traditional healer, "Ombiasy", or "Moasy" in the northwest dialect.

A free translation of "Razambe" is great Ancestors.

Elder performs a covenant and makes a wish by using stone or hazomanga, and the wish is realized. From that time the stone or the tree becomes holy, it can be lake or river, or eel, or fish in the lake or river.²⁷

It is not all wishes that are realized. The realization is casual. But he means “in case of” the wish or ask for blessings is realized, the stones, or the “hazomanga”, or whatever the elder have used become “holy”.

Holiness status is rooted in God. All my Christian informants have the same argument about the origin of “holiness”. After reading the Old Testament texts, the former Traditionalist man categorically argues that, “being holy is due to God who makes holy.”²⁸ All participants of the Christian group say the same. They say that:

The holiness of a human, of a place or of a matter is from God. The ground where Moses stood is holy because of the presence of God who called him there (Exo 3:5). Similarly to that, the altar and the Church are holy because God is present there. And it is clearly said for many times that it is God who makes holy (Exo 31:13 Lev 20:8,26; 21:8; 22:9,16).²⁹

They add:

All consecrated persons, like Pastor, Shepherd, Catechist, Deacon are holy because they are sanctified by/in/through the name of God...All Christians are holy as well because they are baptized by/in/through the name of God.”³⁰

For them, everything related to God is holy. They continue to argue that:

It is God who makes holy. All equipment used in the Church, like Holy Communion supplies, and all clothes and holy garment are holy because they are

²⁷ Field report Malagasy version p.12. “Misy koa ohatra, hoy izy, ny vato na ny hazomanga (hazo) izay nanaovan’ny Raiamandreny taloha fanozonana na fangatahana dia nivaly. Hatreo dia atao hoe “masina ilay vato, na ilay hazo, mety ho rano, na amalona, na trondro anatin’ily rano izany.”

“Hazomanga” here is a cut wood, tall with sharpened peak.

²⁸ Field report Malagasy version p.11. “ny mahamasina dia noho Andriamanitra Ilay Masina manamasina.”

²⁹ Field report Malagasy version p.14. “Avy amin’Andriamanitra no mahamasina ny olona, ny toerana na zavatra. Ny mahamasina ny toerana nitsanganan’i Mosesy dia noho ny fanatrehan’Andriamanitra izay niantso azy teo (Eks 3:5). Tahaka izany no mahamasina ny alitara, ny Fiangonana satria manatrika eo Andriamanitra. Ary voalaza matetika mazava tsara fa Andriamanitra no manamasina (Eks 31:13 Lev 20:8,26; 21:8; 22:9,16).”

³⁰Field report Malagasy version p.14. “Ireny olom-boahosotra ireny, toy ny Pastora, ny Mpiandry, ny Katekista, ny Diakona, dia masina satria nohamasinina tamin’ny anaran’Andriamanitra. ... Masina aby koa ny Kristiana rehetra satria vita Batisa amin’ny anaran’Andriamanitra.”

consecrated to be used during Church worship and used for service to God, and that they are sanctified by the name of God. As a Word of God the Bible is holy.³¹

3.2.2 Meanings

According to my informants “holiness” does not exist automatically. Holiness is caused by relation to superior or supernatural being. But what do they have in mind when talking of “holiness”? How do they define or understand this “holiness” concept? The following is a presentation of the different meaning of holiness they describe.

“Holiness” is uniqueness. Zanatany expresses that the sacred lake in Mangatsa is “different” from others, that there is supernatural power (see page 35). He repeatedly shows that this place is a special one. For instance, he emphasizes that even creatures in the lake are not like others. I did not expect how he describes them when he spoke to me and my husband as following:

You are really good persons in the society where you live. I do not know you, but these big eels do not appear for any reason and they do not come closer to whomever. By them we recognize people who come here if they are good persons or doubtful persons. Sometimes there are people who want to see them but they do not appear. And there was a time they did not eat the meat brought by some visitors to feed them. The meat was just rotten and taken out of the lake. However they truly like food or meat given by some visitors. Thus we directly know that the person is not good when the eels do not eat things they bring...I have supervised you during our conversation and watch over these eels. All of them willingly appear. That is why I say you are good persons, you do not offend people in your society.³²

³¹ Field report Malagasy version p.15. “Andriamanitra no manamasina. Ireny fitaovana hampiasaina ampianganana ireny, toy ny fitaovam-pandraisana, sy ireny lamba sy akanjo masina ireny dia masina satria natokana ampiasaina amin’ny fotoam-pivavahana sy hanaovana ny asan’Andriamanitra ary koa nohamasinina tamin’ny anaran’Andriamanitra. Ny Baiboly dia boky masina satria amin’ny maha Tenin’Andriamanitra azy.”

³² Field report Malagasy version p.8. “Tena olona tsara amin’ny fiarahamonina misy anareo ianareo. Izaho tsy mahalala anareo, fa ireo amalona lehibe ireo tsy mba mivoavoaka ho azy ary tsy manatonatona olona foana izany. Ireo no ahafantaranay hoe tsara ny olona tonga aminay eto na hafahafa. Fa indraindray misy olona maniry hijery an’ireo dia tena tsy mety mivoaka izy ireo. Ary efa nisy fotoana tsy nihinanana’izy ireo ny hena naterin’olona sasany teo namahanana azy ireo. Lò fotsiny teo ka nesorina avy tao anaty rano ilay hena. Nefa misy tena mampazoto azy ireo mihitsy ny sakafo na hena halatsakan’olona sasany ao. Ka tonga dia fantatray hoe hafahafa ilay olona raha vao tsy hohanin’ireo amalona ireo ny zavatra entiny...Nandinika anareo hatrany izaho nandritra ny nifampiresahantsika teo izay, ary nijery izay ho fisehoan’ireto amalona ireto. Tena mazoto be aby izy rehetra nivoaka. Koa izay no nilazako fa olona tsara, tsy manao ratsy olona ianareo amin’ny fiarahamonina misy anareo any.”

These eels in the sacred lake are not like others. For Traditionalists, being in the “holy” lake they are also holy. They are thought to be able to give a sign of good person or not. And they are highly protected. It is forbidden to fish in the Lake.³³

“Holiness” is cleanliness. This “cleanliness” meaning is very new to me. After our reading, one woman member of the Christian group says:

If God ordered Moses to take off his sandals on the ground told holy (Exo 3:5) it means that this place is clean that should not be dirtied. The fact of bringing sandals is like to make dirty.”³⁴

“Holiness” is anointment. This exactly is the term used by one participant of the Christian group. He gets this idea from Exodus 29:1,21 telling about priest consecration and anointment of Aaron and his vestments and his sons and his sons’ vestments as well. The participant says that, “The anointed, like priest, or dress also is holy (Exo 29:1,21).”³⁵

“Holiness” is apartness, consecration. The Christian group argues that “Whatever is set apart for God is holy, like the nation or the Son of Israel (Exo 19:6), the ‘most holy’ place or the Temple (Exo 26:33-34), the altar (Exo 29:36-37).”³⁶ They confirm that everything set apart for worshiping God like clothes of the altar and dresses of those who are anointed are holy.³⁷ Also they emphasize that the “holy garment” is very valuable because it is specified for a service to God.³⁸

“Holiness” is power. This last meaning is the most remarkable. In general, “holiness” concept for Malagasy people provides well-being, good thing. Or, “holiness” concept is related to the good not to the bad. “That is the image of the holy place in the east or northeast according to the explanation given by the former Traditionalist man. He argues:

³³ Field report Malagasy version p.7.

³⁴ Field report Malagasy version p.14. “Matoa nasain’Andriamanitra nanala ny kapany i Mosesy teo amin’ily tany nolazainy fa masina (Eks 3:5) dia midika izany fa madio ilay toerana ka tsy tokony holotoina. Toy ny mandoto ny fitondrana kapa.”

³⁵ Field report Malagasy version p.14. “Ny voahosotra, toy ny mpisorona ohatra, na ny lamba koa, dia masina (Exo 29:1,21).”

³⁶ Field report Malagasy version p.14. “Ary izay voatokana ho an’Andriamanitra dia masina, toy ny firenena na ny Zanak’Israely (Eks 19:6), ny toerana “masina indrindra” na ny Tempoly (Eks 26:33-34), ny alitara (Eks 29:36-37).”

³⁷ Field report Malagasy version p.15.

³⁸ Field report Malagasy version p.16.

The place dedicated to set holy thing, charms for blessing is northeast or east area in the room. The sunshine which is good is from the east, but the south and the west are places where to throw the bad.³⁹

He means the sunshine is a symbol of the good. Thus the east and northeast are places for receiving the good. And this place is set to be holy. Mostly, “holiness” concept is related to blessings. On the other hand, it punishes the disobedient. Blessing and punishment are the strong and clear evidences of the power perspective of “holiness”.

The “holy” can bless. So, ask for blessing, wishes, vows are dedicated to the holy. For instance, some people ask for blessing in the sacred lake of Mangatsa. And different kinds of offerings present in the lake and in its surrounding prove the positive answer for them/those who ask. There are some coins at the bottom of the lake. Two of the trees surrounding the lake are wrapped with white or/and red clothes. Zanatany explains:

When one person arrives to express his or her wishes, he or she says that if his/her wishes are fulfilled he/she will bring ox there, or some bring money, and dress the tree at the side of the lake because the lake cannot be dressed.⁴⁰

Prayer, request or wishes are realized. For Traditionalists, this event means that there is a power, supernatural being dwelling there. Zanatany affirms about why Mangatsa lake: “This place, this lake is holy because there is a power or spirit that makes it powerful, being able to bless or to kill as well.”⁴¹ He does not hesitate to say “yes” when I ask him whether “holiness” means “power”.⁴² And he adds, “For example this lake is holy because it answers prayer or wishes.”⁴³ The arrival of many and different visitors marks the particularity of this Mangatsa lake. Rangahibe says “Even if foreigners, European, Indian and others come to pray here. And most of them got what they want. Some of the Europeans call this place ‘secret lake of

³⁹ Field report Malagasy version p.12. “...ny faritra natokana ho fametrahana ny zava-masina, ny ody mitahy ho eny amin’ny faritra Avaratra Atsinanana na Atsinanana ao amin’ny efitrano. Avy any Atsinanana no fiposahan’ny masoandro izay tsara, fa ny Atsimo sy Andrefana no fanariana ny ratsy.”

⁴⁰ Field report Malagasy version p.6. “Raha tonga eo ilay olona mangataka izay zavatra iriny, dia milaza izy fa raha tanteraka ny fangatahana hataony dia hamono omby eo izy, na misy ny sasany mitondra vola, ary mampitafy lamba ny hazo teo amoron’ny rano satria ilay rano moa tsy hay tafian-damba.”

⁴¹ Field report Malagasy version p.7. “Ny mahamasina ilay toerana, ilay rano, dia misy hery na fanahy mahery aminy eo ka mahatonga azy ho mahery, afaka mitahy na mamono koa aza.”

⁴² Field report Malagasy version p.7.

⁴³ Field report Malagasy version p.7. “Toy ny rano eto ity izao, ny maha masina azy dia noho izy mamaly ny fangatahana.”

Mangatsa' because of the amazing thing they have experienced here."⁴⁴ And he continues to argue that this place is "holy" because it is "powerful", that taboos of this place must be respected.⁴⁵

Participants of the Christian group, too, confirm this power perspective of "holiness". And they support their idea biblically. They assert that, "The holy has power to enable to transfer holiness to whatever or whoever touches it (Exo 29:37)."⁴⁶ For them, God is the source of this power. They argue that, "Even if the garment is holy, faith should not be built upon it...it is not the garment which has power for doing the service, but God only."⁴⁷ They mean that due to God's power that holy matter has power. For example, they say that "Holy Scripture has power because it is the word of God. [And] The work of God, which is characterized as 'holy work', is powerful because it is God, the Mighty One, who fulfills the work."⁴⁸

3.2.3 Rules for holiness respect or "taboos"

"Holiness" should be respected. I have written before that "punishment" is one of the power perspective evidences. In both traditional and Christian contexts, "holiness" is always accompanied by laws or rules to respect.

I have already said that there are two trees wrapped with clothes at the side of the Mangatsa Lake. Each one is fence off. At the same moment I went to Mangatsa, there were two persons, man and woman, who asked for blessings there. Rangahibe, the leader of the ritual, led them into the two fences. I heard Rangahibe invoking Ndragnahary, Andriamisara and lots of names, probably kings' and ancestors' name. After the prayer of Rangahibe, the two persons fed the eels and other fishes of the lake. Two pairs of sandals were left outside the fence. They surely belong to the visitors. I noticed that Rangahibe and Zanatany, also other Mangatsa habitants I met do not wear sandals. Visitors are allowed to wear their shoes inside the two fences.

⁴⁴ Field report Malagasy version p.9. "Hatramin'ny tsy Malagasy, ny vazaha, karana, karazan'olona maro efa nangataka teo. Ary nahazo izay nangatahany ny ankamaroan'izy ireo. Misy tamin'ireo vazaha sasany hoy izy no nanao ity toerana ity hoe: 'lac secret Mangatsa', satria dia misy zavatra mahagaga azy tsapany teo."

⁴⁵ Field report Malagasy version p.9.

⁴⁶ Field report Malagasy version p.14. "Misy hery ny masina ka afaka mampita fahamasinana amin'izay mikasika azy (Eks 29:37)."

⁴⁷ Field report Malagasy version p.16. "...na masina aza ny akanjo masina dia tsy hambolena na hanorenana finoana. hoe, tsy ny akanjo no hinoana ho manan-kery amin'ny asa atao, fa Andriamanitra irery ihany."

⁴⁸ Field report Malagasy version, p.17. "Ny Soratra Masina dia mahery satria Tenin'Andriamanitra. Ny asan'Andriamanitra izay atao hoe: "asa masina" dia mahery satria Andriamanitra ilay mahery no miasa."

Rangahibe and Zanatany describe all rules, taboos of Mangatsa. Taking off of shoes, when entering the holy place fenced off, is one of them. Zanatany explains that it is respect of the holiness of that place that shoes should not be brought inside the fences.⁴⁹ It is inside these fences that rites or ceremonies are led. Here is one definition of African concept of *taboos*:

word comes from Polynesian word *tapu*. It refers to any act that is prohibited because it will have negative supernatural consequences for an individual or community. These consequences follow because the act offends the ancestors or gods, or because it opens a door for evil spiritual forces.... A taboo is thus much stronger than a mere prohibition...taboos...reveal much about a people's beliefs about the divine and about life. (Adeyemo 2006, 159)

3.3 Conclusion

From all my informants' insight I come to conclude with the following ideas.

“Holiness” is originated from supernatural being either from Christians' view or from Traditionalists' view. For the Christians, “holiness” status is from God. However, for the Traditionalists, “holiness” status is from the presence of kings' and/or ancestors' spirits. That is, for Malagasy perspective, God's presence, or kings' and ancestors' spirit presence causes “holiness”. And relationship with deity and with superior spirit as well is the reason of “holiness” status.

For Malagasy perspective, “holiness” means “uniqueness”, “cleanliness”, “apartness”, “consecration” and “power”. Person, thing, place and whatever is told “holy”, that is, they are unique. They have specific being or condition. Also, because of their “holiness”, they are thought to be clean and should be kept clean at any time. Hence, they should set apart. They should have their specific place. They should not be mixed or put together with profane things. And whoever or whatever is anointed, consecrated, they become “holy”. And the higher idea is the Malagasy thinking of “powerful” perspective. Whoever and whatever is told to be “holy”, they are thought to have power to bless or to punish. Malagasy belief of blessing and punishment from “holy” is the obvious evidence of the power of holiness.

⁴⁹ Field report Malagasy version, p.8.

Chapter Four

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

Everyone has one's way of understanding. We can notice that by the different opinion of commentators from one same concept. In this chapter I will discuss Old Testament concept of "holiness" – as they are expressed in Exodus 3 and 29 – in dialogue with traditional exegetical investigations of these texts and my Malagasy informants.

Methodologically, scholarly and popular interpretations of biblical texts have traditionally not mixed. In recent years, however, scholars have increasingly paid attention to interpretative perspectives of "ordinary readers" (de Wit 2012). An illustrative example is offered by Madipoane Masenya, who lets traditional exegetes and an ordinary South African woman interact on Job 3 (Masenya 2012).

4.2 Definitions of קדש, "Holy"

Study of the Hebrew root word is an important tool to acquire any meaning of "holiness." All קדש synonyms I present here are based on *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Brown 2001). קדש is well-known as the original Hebrew of "holy".

Originally קדש is defined as "separation", "withdrawal" (Brown 2001, "קדש", 871). In Biblical Hebrew it means "holy", "sanctuary" (Brown 2001, "קדש", 871). From the Assyria derivative words, *kadāšu* or *kadištu*, קדש means "cleanse", "consecrated to Ištar" (Brown 2001, "קדש", 871). The noun קִדְּשׁ is defined as "apartness, sacredness, holiness", first, of God, second, of places set apart as sacred by God's presence like in Exodus 3:5 (Brown 2001, "קִדְּשׁ", 871-872). And the verb קָדַשׁ means be set apart, consecrated, hallowed by blood (which means by anointing) as in Exodus 29:21, or by contact with sacred things as in Ex 29:37 (Brown 2001, "קָדַשׁ", 872-873). It means tabooed from profane use (Brown 2001, "קָדַשׁ", 872-873). The noun מִקְדָּשׁ indicates "sacred place, sanctuary" (Brown 2001, "מִקְדָּשׁ", 874). And the adjective קְדוֹשׁ means sacred, holy that indicates separateness from human infirmity, for instance place of God (Brown 2001, "קְדוֹשׁ", 872).

There is another Hebrew word that has the same synonym in some part. The verb נָזַר means “dedicate, consecrate, separate” in religious and ceremonial sense (Brown 2001, “נָזַר”, 634). The noun נִזְר has two synonyms, and one of them is “consecration” (Brown 2001, “נִזְר”, 634). And the name נָזִיר means “one consecrated, devoted” (Brown 2001, “נָזִיר”, 634). But, any derivation of Hebrew root נִזַּר is translated “holy” or “holiness.” That is to say, קִדְּשׁ is the only Hebrew root recognized as Hebrew origin of “holy” or “holiness.”

In spite of all these synonyms of קִדְּשׁ derivation, “holiness” is not an easy concept to understand at all. Propp says that, “Words such as English ‘holy’ and Hebrew qādōš really do not have any meaning, apart from that with which speakers and writers invest them” (Propp 2006, 682). Besides, Propp contributes to “holiness” definition or explanation. For Propp, “holiness” is merely of God. He says:

Qōdeš “Holiness” I take to be Yahweh’s *prerogative*, that which properly belongs to him and sets him above his Creation. (This fits the evidence better than the once popular theory that qdš means ‘to set apart’) ... the Holiness of God is “innate”...as if ...his own essence or life... (Propp 2006, 683)

He clearly affirm that the adequate translation of קִדְּשׁ, apart from “Holiness”, is “Godliness” (Propp 2006, 683). And an idea of “power” can be inferred from the explanation of Propp. I can conclude from Propp that because “Holiness” is Yahweh’s attribute, it indicates “Powerful concept.” That “Holiness” is “incompatible” with human and any matter, a special ritual, as seen in biblical worship, is necessary to bring the human and divine into safe contact (Propp 2006, 686). Propp asserts:

If Yahweh had tried to inhabit the Tabernacle when it was first erected, his Holiness would have destroyed it. Instead, the weeklong purification-sanctification of the clergy and the shrine (Exodus 29) prepares the Tabernacle to go on line with minimal risk of a meltdown. (Propp 2006, 690)

After purification-sanctification, “Holiness” can be transmitted because the clean allows it to enter, while the unclean rejects it (Propp 2006, 685). By this demand of purification-sanctification a “power” perspective of “holiness” is visible. In addition, the existence of fear while facing “holiness” shows this “power” perspective as well. Propp mentions the argument of Tuzin saying that, “at least half of Holiness is fear – fear during a confrontation with a predator,

fear upon viewing a corpse, fear upon exposure to the low and powerful sounds generated by storms and tremblors” (Propp 2006, 683).

4.3 Exodus 3

4.3.1 Historical and Literary Contexts

Only from its title, we can imagine what the book of Exodus talks about. The Latin origin word is “Liber Exodi”, and the Greek is “exodus” which means “departure” (Clement 1972, 1) or simply means “going out” (Freedman, “Exodus, book of,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 2:700). In *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* it is explained that the Greek “exodus” is abbreviated from “exodus aigyptou” meaning “The Departure from Egypt” (Freedman, “Exodus, book of,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 2:690). Thus the book of Exodus is generally about the narrative of the Departure from Egypt.

The book of Exodus is a narrative book. When we read the book of Exodus we clearly see that it paints the long journey of the Israelites. Indeed, it paints more. According to Durham, the book of Exodus is a book which contains all of the following: history, tradition, instruction, sociology, folk-wisdom, story, and more else (Durham 1987, xx). It is because almost all different circumstances of the events happening during the journey of the Israelites are described in the book of Exodus. For instance, concerning the half part of the book, it is said:

...Exodus 1-19 takes the reader from a point after the death of Joseph through a period in which the Hebrew family grew into a group of clans. Then follows the stirring narrative of Egyptian oppression, the origin of Moses, Israel’s future leader, and then the contest with the pharaoh of Egypt, culminating in the Hebrews leaving Egypt through the shifting water bed of the Reed sea (where their pursuers were swamped), and on into Sinai. (Freedman, “Exodus, the,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 2:700)

The narrative starts from the story of Israel’s proliferation in Egypt, from a family to a group of clans. And, it continues to their suffering by Egyptian oppression. I can say that this suffering is the cause of the Exodus, or the Departure. God was moved by Israel’s suffering and decided to act for their departure from Egypt to a marvelous land (cf. Exodus 3:7, 8). The book of Exodus is one of a long narrative of Israel story. Clements says that, “Exodus is a part of the continuous story of the origins of Israel” (Clements 1972, 2). It is a narrative of the descendants of Jacob fleeing to Egypt and escaping from slavery in Egypt (Clements 1972, 6). Throughout

the Exodus narrative we see the tradition of Israel, of their way of living in a society, of their religion, and so on, as Clements says that, “This narrative has been used to provide a framework for a wide-ranging collection of material... of a moral, legal and religious nature (Clements 1972, 6). Among all of Israel’s stories, the event of their oppression in Egypt, which shows the greatness of God’s act for their departure from there, is important to know.

Historically, the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt. There are different opinions about this Israel’s slavery. On the one hand, some scholars doubt about it while some support it. For Bright it is a bit doubtful. He says that, “there can really be little doubt that ancestors of Israel had been slaves in Egypt and had escaped in some marvelous way” (Freedman, “Exodus, the,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 2:701). However, Clements tries to give evidence of the story about this Israel’s slavery in Egypt. There are many circumstances which prove this event. One argument, that Clements presents, is the existence of slave class of *Apiru*, or *Habiru* (Hebrews) in Babylonian text (Clements 1972, 7). In addition, for B. W. Anderson Egyptian oppression and Hebrew exodus are genuine. He affirms that,

it is clear that the biblical narratives reflect the sober realities of the political situation. But these realities were interpreted through the eyes of Israelite faith... Only the Hebrews who stood in the circle of Moses experienced the depth of historical meaning that led to the remembering ... of these historical traditions. (Freedman, “Exodus, the,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 2:701)

From the beginning till the end, the book of Exodus tells us the story of Israel in each step. Besides, the book of Exodus is more than narrative. The book of Exodus is strongly argued to be a theological book too. While presenting the book of Exodus as a whole, Durham asserts that:

The primary burden of the Book of Exodus, however, is theological... It is a book of faith, about faith, and directed primarily to those with faith. Those who read the Book of Exodus without faith, thus they will inevitably profit from their reading, will not understand its message. For this reason, among others, the Book of Exodus must be read as a whole. ...the Book of Exodus must be considered as a whole piece of theological literature... (Durham 1987, xx)

Also, Clements argues the most value of the book of Exodus

From being a national history it has become a sacred history, and throughout its length it points the reader not simply to what happened, but to the greatness of God ... History and faith are inseparably woven together in the book...it represent the continuing faith of many generations of Israelites who persevered in reflecting upon the question: “What does it mean for us to be the people of God?” The book of Exodus is not therefore simply a history book, but a truly religious work, arising out of the faith of those who had first seen the hand of God at work in their past, and intended to evoke a similar faith in the minds of the readers. (Clements 1972, 8; 9)

The departure narrative is the basis of Israel’s faith. It strengthens and reminds them their faith in God. The most important events, according to Clements, are the appearance of God on Mount Sinai, the covenant between God and the Hebrews, the law codes connected to the covenant given to Israel, the instructions “for the pattern and forms of worship which Israel is to adopt in consequence of its covenant relationship to God”, the Ark or chest “as a permanent witness to God’s presence”, and the Tabernacle or tent to keep the Ark (Clements 1972, 1).

4.3.2 Brief Overview of Exodus 3

Hyatt says that, “Chapter 3 is one of the most significant chapters in all of Exodus, for here Moses receives his commission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, and God reveals his name Yahweh for the first time” (Hyatt 1971, 70). The revelation of God and the call of Moses are the basics themes in the Exodus 3. Most of the titles given by scholars for the pericope that includes chapter 3 are around these God’s revelation and/or God’s call for Moses. “The revelation of God to Moses” is the title that Clements gives to the verses of Exodus 2:23-3:12 (Clements 1972, 17). Durham gives the title “Theophany and Call” for verses of Exodus 3:1-12 (Durham 1987, 25-34). In *Africa Bible Commentary*, Exodus 3:1-10 is titled “God’s call” (Adeyemo 2006, 90).

It is obvious in Exodus 3 that God reveals Himself and calls Moses. But why and how does He need to reveal Himself and call Moses? The last three verses of Exodus 2 is not only an ending of this chapter, but also a kind of introduction for the next chapter, Exodus 3. They connect the narrative from chapter 2 to chapter 3 (Clements 1972, 19). These verses, Exodus 2:23-25 prepare readers to the reason for God’s revelation and His call for Moses. That is because of His compassion for Israel suffering by slavery in Egypt (Exodus 3:7; 2:23-25). And that God plans to rescue Israel from this slavery (Clements 1972, 19; Exodus 3:8-10). Then He starts to act for Israel’s liberation first by calling Moses (Exodus 3:4). According to Clements, God decides to reveal Himself to Moses “for His plan to rescue the Israelites” (Clements 1972,

19). Then, God calls Moses. He draws Moses attention. And He talks to him. Also God already instructs him about who He is.

The event happened at the moment when Moses was looking after and driving the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro. He arrives to “the mountain of God”, to Horeb. And then, he is attracted by a non-common event. He sees a bush on fire but not consumed. It is said that there is “an angel of the Lord” in the bush. He cannot resist not watching this unusual appearance nearly. Therefore, he hears a voice calling him by his name. It is written that it is God who calls Moses. And then God tells him not coming closer and taking off his sandals as the he is standing on a “holy ground.” While God reveals to Moses that He is the God of his ancestors, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he hides his face. He is “afraid to look at God.” God tells Moses about His plan to rescue Israel, His people. And that God chooses him and sends him to lead Israel out from Egypt, the house of slavery. When Moses doubts to accomplish such a huge commission, God assures him that He will be with him. And God reveals His name YHWH to Moses. And He affirms to Moses that the elders of Israel will listen to him. And that God, the God of the Hebrews, will show His might to force the king of Egypt to let Israel go out of there.

The story in the following chapters of the book of Exodus shows that God was really with Moses. Durham says that, “The revelation to Moses in chapters 3 and 4 establishes Yahweh’s Presence with Moses” (Durham 1987, xxi). In Exodus 3:6 God identifies Himself to Moses that He is the God of his father. That is to say, He is his God as well. And in Exodus 3:12 God confirms that He is his God, that He is with him. According to Durham, and other scholars as well, this presence of God is important. Durham highlights this perspective in his work *Word Biblical Commentary, Exodus*. He sees in the book of Exodus that, the presence of God is “the essential and indispensable basis of Israel’s very existence as Yahweh’s people” (Durham 1987, xxii). And even the Pharaoh of Egypt on his sovereignty is “convinced of the power of Yahweh” (Durham 1987, xxii).

Exodus 3 contains many important subjects like God’s revelation and God’s call, especially, the revelation and explanation of the Tetragrammaton, or YHWH name. But I will only focus “holiness” meaning as the topic of the present writing. Some scholars emphasize on the idea of God’s presence when they explain the “holiness” of the “holy ground” in Exodus 3:5.

4.3.3 Holiness in Exodus 3:5

Translation of Exodus 3:5 from Hebrew Biblical text:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים קְרַב הָלֵם שְׁלֹנְעֵלֶיךָ מֵעַל רַגְלֶיךָ כִּי הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה

you where place the because your feet from your sandals pull off here come near Do not he said And]

עוֹמֵד עָלָיו אֲדַמְתֵּי-קֹדֶשׁ הוּא:

[it holy ground it on standing

5. And he said, do not come near here, pull off your sandals from your feet, because the place where you are standing is a holy ground.

Holy ground אֲדַמְתֵּי-קֹדֶשׁ. The Hebrew word קֹדֶשׁ is a noun masculine singular absolute. But in relation with the noun before, אֲדַמְתֵּי, feminine singular construct, קֹדֶשׁ plays the role of an adjective. Thus אֲדַמְתֵּי-קֹדֶשׁ can be translated either “a ground of holiness”, as קֹדֶשׁ is a noun, or “a holy ground”, as קֹדֶשׁ is an adjective in relation with the construct noun אֲדַמְתֵּי. If we refer to the explanation of the Hebrew word קֹדֶשׁ, אֲדַמְתֵּי-קֹדֶשׁ means “ground of apartness”, “ground set apart”, “ground of sacredness”, “sacred ground”, “ground of holiness” (cf. Brown 2001, “קֹדֶשׁ”, 871). According to the second definition of קֹדֶשׁ (2.), אֲדַמְתֵּי-קֹדֶשׁ is a “ground set apart as sacred by God’s presence” (cf. Brown 2001, “קֹדֶשׁ”, 871).

Insight of “holiness” meaning might be drawn throughout the context of Exodus 3 narrative about the revelation of God and God’s call for Moses. Most of the Old Testament commentators do not give a direct meaning of the word “holy” in the group of words “holy ground”. Instead, they explain why or how the ground in verse 5 is told “holy.” Anyway, some try to give a synonym or definition of “holy.” And the surrounding verses can highlight the meaning of “holiness” as well.

In Exodus 3:1 it is said that Moses “came to Horeb.” Concerning the mount Horeb, Clements writes that, “since Christian times it has been identified with the Jebel Musa (Mountain of Moses)...which was undoubtedly a very ancient holy place” (Clements 1972, 19). And Propp adds that the mount is said “Deity’s mountain” (Propp 1999, 183). It is clear from Hebrew text (Masoretic Text) אֶל-הַר הָאֱלֹהִים חֲרֵבָה which means “to the mountain of Elohim, Horebah. That is to say, God is thought to be present on this mountain, Horeb. Clements asserts that, “in ancient times...god was thought to dwell upon the mountain, whose peak reached into heaven”

(Clements 1972, 20). Thus, the way of thinking that God is present on the mount Horeb is not surprising. Hyatt describes some different hypotheses of some scholars. He says that,

the place on which you are standing is holy ground is frequently taken to indicate that this was already a sacred place when Moses came upon it; some scholars believe that Sinai had been a sanctuary of the Midianite deity Yahweh. Another interpretation is that this place came to be considered as holy as a result of Moses' experience here; legend which developed after the appearance to Moses told of it as if it were an ancient holy place. (Hyatt 1971, 72)

Whatever is said, the presence of God is the center of the scholars' idea here. For Durham, the center of the book of Exodus is "the theology of Yahweh present with and in the midst of his people Israel" (Durham 1987, xxi). In the book of Exodus, this presence of Yahweh appears first in chapter 3. Many scholars base their interpretation of "holiness" meaning on this "presence of God." For instance, in the book *Africa Bible Commentary* it is explained that, "Because God is present, the ground where Moses is standing is declared to be holy", and that the way of not coming closer and taking off sandals is a "sign of humility and worship" (Adeyemo 2006, 90). Also, Clements says that, "the place is holy ground because of God's presence there" (Clements 1972, 20). The next interpretation is still related to this idea of "God's presence.

It is declared in verse 2 that *the angel of the Lord* (מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה messenger of Yahweh) appeared to Moses. Most of the Old Testament scholars think of the same idea concerning this subject. For example, Clements says that, "it is actually the Lord himself who appears, and the title has been introduced to avoid the suggestion of a direct physical appearance of the deity...God discloses himself indirectly, through the person of a messenger" (Clements 1972, 20; cf. Hyatt 1971, 71). Also, one African scholar argues that this *angel of the Lord* is God himself to reveal Himself to humans (Adeyemo 2006, 90). Declarations in verse 2 and verse 4 are quite confusing. In verse 2, it is said that, it is the angel of the Lord who appeared to Moses from the burning not burnt bush. However, in verse 4, it is God who called Moses within the bush. Facing this ambiguity, Propp confirms that it is God Himself who is within the bush (Propp 1999, 198). Durham, too, clearly comments that, "the messenger of Yahweh ... is not an 'angel' in the sense in which 'angel' is now generally understood", but this messenger as a symbol representing Yahweh is "God himself" (Durham 1987, 30-31). Because this "angel of the Lord" is strongly

argued as Yahweh Himself, the flame of fire from within a bush is remarkably told a sign of the God's presence.

In verses 2 and 4 we see that God (the angel of the Lord) appeared and called Moses from the midst of (בַּתְּהוֹרֵךְ) the bush. And impressively the bush was on fire (בַּעֵר בְּאֵשׁ) burnt in fire), but did not burnt up (אֵינָנוּ אֹכֵל) not eaten or not consumed). Old Testament scholars interpret this event as God's presence as well. Both Durham and Tournay argue that the blaze of fire is a "theophanic fire" (Durham 1987, 30-31). That is, the fire in the midst of the bush is not an ordinary flame of fire. It was a symbol of Yahweh's presence (Clements 1972, 19). Clements, in his comment, reminds the Deut 33:16, which identifies Yahweh as "him who dwells in the burning bush" (Clements 1972, 20). Though, some explain this burning bush's phenomenon as naturally normal. Ones suppose the bush not really on fire, but like "plants exuding an inflammable gas" (Clements 1972, 20). Others consider it as a tree that has "leaves of a brilliant hue, or leaves that reflected the bright sunlight" (Hyatt 1971, 72). Nevertheless, other scholars support the idea of an extraordinary phenomenon. For instance, Clements stresses that, "we must note that the importance of the fire here is as a sign of the presence of God" (Clements 1972, 20). And Hyatt adds that, "All such naturalistic explanations of this narrative are vain; the Hebrews lived in a world in which they expected supernatural appearances, and they were accustomed to explain many events and occurrences as manifestations of the divine" (Hyatt 1971, 72). Also, Childs reinforces that the burning not consumed bush is "a visible sign of God's power which breaks through the limits of human experience" (Childs 1974, 74).

This perspective of God's presence is highly underlined by many scholars' interpretations. God is present in "Horeb", His mountain. God appears Himself, as an angel, in the midst of the bush on fire. The fire is an extraordinary one as a theophanic fire. Interpretation of Exodus 3:5 is strongly related to that perspective.

do not come near here (אַל־תִּקְרַב הֵלֶם). Still, interpretation here is based on "God's presence."

Durham asserts the following:

...the verb forbidding too close an approach by Moses, קָרַב 'approach,' is frequently used in the OT as a technical term to describe an approach to the Presence of God in worship, or to seek an oracle. Finally, in the ultimate certification of a theophanic site, a place where God is present, Moses is told that

he stands now on holy ground, and so must remove his shoes in reverence ...the certification of the place as a holy place by virtue of the appearance there of God. (Durham 1987, 31; 33)

According to that explanation of Durham, the use of the verb come near indicates the presence of God as well. Back to previous verse, Exodus 3:4, Moses is obviously told not to come near God. It is Yahweh who “saw” (וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה) and “called” (וַיִּקְרָא ... אֱלֹהִים) Moses.⁵⁰ That is to say, it is God who ordered Moses not to come closer Him. And because of this Presence, Moses should take off his sandals from his feet.

pull off your sandals from your feet (שָׁלֵךְ-נְעָלֶיךָ מֵעַל רַגְלֶיךָ). For Clements, holiness of the ground is due to the presence of God and that “it entails physical danger to undiscerning intruders”, that the holy ground “must only be trodden in bare feet” (Clements 1972, 20). He adds, by taking the example of Muslims custom of removing sandals when they enter the mosque, that the removal of sandals is a “sign of reverence” (Clements 1972, 20). It shows the idea of thinking of God’s presence. That is, God is present there, thus Moses should respect Him by taking off his sandals as a “sign of reverence.” Propp has the similar idea to Clements’. For Propp, the meaning of removal of sandals is “to not track dirty into God’s house” (Propp 1999, 200). And he continues that “bare feet symbolized humility and mortification in Israel (2Sam 15:30; Isa 20:2; Ezek 24:17, 23)” (Propp 1999, 200). Furthermore, it is not only a sign of reverence or symbol of humility. But also, it is to keep the purity of the holy ground according to the idea of Milgrom. He says that, “sandals, because made by dead animal, may affect the purity of the holy ground” (Propp 1999, 200). Hyatt does not give thorough idea. For him, the way of sandals’ removal simply shows the existence of a sanctuary (Hyatt 1971, 72).

because the place where you are standing is a holy ground (... אֲדָמַת־קֹדֶשׁ ... כִּי הַמָּקוֹם).

Because (כִּי) the place (הַמָּקוֹם) is a holy ground (אֲדָמַת־קֹדֶשׁ), Moses is not allowed to come closer and must take off his sandals. Propp explains that either הַמָּקוֹם [hamaqom] or אֲדָמַת־קֹדֶשׁ [admat-qodesh] can each indicates a sanctuary (Propp 1999, 200). That is, God is present there as the

⁵⁰ K. Elliger, and W. Rudolph, Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart, 1977). Note Masora magna 4^b אֱלֹהִים is translated to κύριος, or Lord, in Septuaginta (Greek).

sanctuary is a place where Deity is worshipped. Propp compares the surrounding of the burning non-consumed bush to the temple (Propp 1999, 200).

According to all previous interpretations, scholars mean that “holiness” points to “presence of God”. For them, from Exodus 3:5 a “holy ground” means a “ground where God is present.” It is possible that everyone has the same idea concerning “holiness” in this verse. Yet, some may have another point of view like Malagasy.

Malagasy perspective of holiness from Exodus 3.

Malagasy interpreters will see some of the same in Exodus 3 as the scholars referred for above. As presented in chapter 3, my Malagasy informants representing Malagasy thought tell that “holiness” status is from God (3.2.1). Concerning Exodus 3:5, they say that, “The ground where Moses stood is holy because of the presence of God who called him there” (3.2.1). It is easy for Malagasy to think about such presence perspective. Malagasy traditional belief has a lot of it. Malagasy believe that wherever, for instance, in a lake, or in a mountain, or in other place, is told “holy”, that means deity or/and spirit of a king, of an ancestor dwell there (2.2.3; 3.2.1). That is, wherever is thought to be dwelt by deity, by king’s spirit, or by ancestor’s spirit, is told “holy place.” They also emphasize from biblical texts that it is God who makes holy (3.2.1; Exodus 31:13 Lev 20:8,26; 21:8; 22:9,16). Thus, wherever God dwells or appears, that place becomes “holy.”

In addition, however, Malagasy interpreters have a second point of view from Exodus 3:5. They talk about cleanliness perspective. Propp mentions a bit about “purity”. But he does not tell clearly what he means. He only says sandals may affect the purity of the holy ground. On the contrary, Malagasy directly affirm without any doubt this cleanliness idea of “holiness.” For them, a place not allowed to be trodden with shoes or sandals is a “clean” place. They argue that, “If God ordered Moses to take off his sandals on the ground told holy (Exodus 3:5) it means that this place is clean that should not be dirtied. The fact of bringing sandals is like to make dirty (3.2.2). For Malagasy Traditional custom and belief, even if the “holy place” is in an open dusty area, it is forbidden to enter there with shoes or sandals. It shows that the “holy place” indicates “cleanliness” either concretely or abstractly.

Malagasy should refer to text and historical literary critic to have strong support.> The first of three required sacrifices is a sacrifice of purification to purify the priest (cf. Lev 4:3-12) (Adeyemo 2006, 123)//or see comment of Exodus 29 in next part

Compared to the Old Testament scholars, Malagasy draw two perspectives from Exodus 3:5. Scholars say “holiness” is “God’s Presence”. But Malagasy think “holiness” is “cleanliness” in addition to “God’s Presence”. Also, Malagasy have more points of view with the following text.

4.4 Exodus 29

4.4.1 Historical and Literary Contexts

Exodus 3 is argued to be a product of Yahwistic and Elohist sources. But Exodus 29 is told a Priestly product and might be written in fifth or sixth century BCE (Hyatt 1971, 25). Generally, Old Testament scholars argue for Priestly source, like Child, Driver and other old commentators (Child 1974, 529; Durham 1987, 350). Bächtli suggests for different Priestly redactions (Child 1974, 529). I do not want to criticize about what the source of Exodus 29 is. What is for sure, according to the narrative in this chapter, that there is a Priestly work within it because/as the text is about priesthood ordination.

Narrative of Exodus 29 was in a post-Exilic time (Hyatt 1971, 287). From narrative in the book of Exodus, we know that Israelites were gathering in the desert after their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Moses fulfilled his commission from Yahweh to lead Israelites out of slavery and Yahweh was with them. The next step is to instruct them to keep relationship with Yahweh as they are His people. Yahweh is forming the nation of Israel during His meeting with the Israelites in the mount Horeb/the stay of Israelites in the mount Horeb after their deliverance. Durham confirms that, “In the book of Exodus, the people of Israel is born; Torah is born ... the theology of Presence and response to Presence is born” (Durham 1987, xix). That is to say, the Torah and the covenant are necessary for the birth of Israel. The people of Israel need them as reminder that they are people of Yahweh. And the priest institution/organization assures the education of the people of Israel and the lead of the making of the covenant to keep this relationship between Yahweh and Israel, because Yahweh, their God, is coming to dwell among Israel, His people (Durham 1987, 350). When introducing Exodus 25-31, Durham says that

Such a residence demands response and provision of very special kinds, and that is what these chapters are intended to guide. They are begun, in fact, with a reference to a 'holy place' (מִקְדָּשׁ) in which Yahweh can 'settle down' (שָׁכַן) in their midst, and they are moved through a detailed specification of the primary symbols of his settlement, each a graphic representation of some aspect of the theological narrative of the deliverance, provision, guidance, and coming of Yahweh's Presence in Exodus. (Durham 1987, 350)

Scholars keep highlighting this Yahweh's presence throughout all their commentaries of the whole chapters of Exodus. Indeed, according to Old the Testament scholars' interpretation, the revelation of Yahweh on the mount Horeb in Exodus 3 is the basic theme of all chapters of Exodus. Clements asserts that

The three main elements interwoven from chapter 19 till the end of the book: "(1) a theophany, or manifestation of God, upon the sacred mountain, (2) the making of a covenant between the Lord and Israel, and (3) the revelation of laws and instructions for worship ... The theophany serves as a confirmation of the making of the covenant between God and Israel, and the laws and instructions show the purpose and consequence of the covenant in regard to personal conduct, social justice and the practice of worship which the new knowledge of God demands." (Clements 1972, 110)

Exodus 29 is a part of the instructions not only of the worship's practice, but also of the worship's Leader installation/investiture. It is about "Yahweh's Instructions for the Media of Worship" (Durham 1987, xxx). Some compared this chapter to the Leviticus 8 and 9 (Durham 1987, 394; Propp 2006, 352). And there is a hypothesis telling that Leviticus 8 is the source of Exodus 29 (Durham 1987, 394). No matter which one is the source. The important point is to know the subject/content of the text.

4.4.2 Brief Overview of Exodus 29

Yahweh called Moses for His plan to save Israel. Then the Israelites were delivered from Egypt slavery. Thereafter, they are instructed, covenant between them and Yahweh was established. Now the instruction of Priest ordination ritual is given in need of a Yahweh worship leader.

As Durham says, the Exodus 28:1-43 is a "description of the priestly vestments", and Exodus 29:1-46 is "the directions for the authority-giving preparation of the priestly ministers themselves" (Durham 1987, 351). There is a logical continuation/sequence between Exodus 28

and 29. The vestments of priests are first prepared in Exodus 28. Now, everything for priests' ordination ritual in Exodus 29 is ready and instructions are given (Hyatt 1971, 25; 286).

The chapter/Exodus 29 starts by declaring that the text is about what to do to consecrate priests. That is, Exodus 29 is an instruction's text concerning priests' consecration. The text begins describing the different kind of offerings. Animals without defect and breads without yeast are recommended or ordered as offerings for the priests' ordination ritual. These some is a sin offering and some a wave offering. Some of the offerings are burnt, but some can be eaten. And Aaron and his sons are the only persons allowed to eat them. It is not all people who can eat them because, as it is written there, these offerings are told holy. The blood of the animals is used to anoint the altar, Aaron and his sons. There is anointing oil as well used with the blood for anointment. It is impressive that it is not only the Priests who are anointed, but their garments also. After the anointment, Aaron and his sons, also their garments are consecrated. Before all of these ritual processes, Aaron and his sons should be brought in front of the Tent of meeting and dressed, after being washed.

The sacred garments belong to Aaron and his descendants. They are used for Aaron's descendants' anointment and ordination. And also, they are used during priests' service in the Holy Place. That is to say, the priests must wear them while ministering in the Holy Place.

The text shows that the priests' consecration is highly surrounded by sacredness or holiness concept. First, a "sacred diadem" is put above a turban on the head of the priests after they have been washed and dressed up/the washing and dressing time. Second, the anointing oil which is told sacred oil as well (Exodus 30:22-33), is used for the anointment. Third, the garments, which should be used by priests in their ministry, is consecrated and called sacred garments (Exodus 28:2-5). Forth, the priests who are going to be consecrated should be in the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the "sacred place" (cf. Exodus 29:31-32). Fifth, the meat of the ram for the ordination should be cooked in the "sacred place." Sixth, the offerings are told "sacred." Seventh, the altar, which is the center of the consecration's ritual as a place where atonement and burning offerings take place, is consecrated and become the "most holy." And lastly, whatever touches the altar, the "most holy", becomes holy too.

Exodus 29 can be summarized by the twofold purposes suggested by Clements. He says that the first purpose is "to cleanse the priests from every vestige of sin, since they were to be in

closest contact with the holy God” (Clements 1972, 187). And the second one is “to set up a bond of holiness between them and the altar which they were to serve” (Clements 1972, 188).

4.4.3 Holiness in Exodus 29 verses 1-6, 21, 27-37, 43-45

29:1. *to consecrate them to minister as priests to me* (לְקַדְּשׁ אֹתָם לְכַהֵן לִי).

Some version translate לְקַדְּשׁ to “sanctify”. Some translate it “consecrate”, and some “to make holy”. These English words have the same sense which is “associated or connected with God or with religion” (Crowther 1995, “holy”; “consecrate”). However, “holiness” has deeper/further meaning in biblical study.

Propp comments of this first verse shows “holiness” as “separateness”. He says that, “Aaron and his sons will be separated from their fellow Israelites and made into priests” (Propp 2006, 354). Hyatt also thinks the same idea, that “holiness” means “apartness.” He says that, “To consecrate the priests was to set them apart from the profane sphere in order that they might perform holy duties” (Hyatt 1971, 287). Durham, in *Word Biblical Commentary, Exodus*, uses “set apart” to translate קָדַשׁ, either in his text translation, or in his comment and explanation. African scholars agree with /share the idea that “holiness” means “setting apart”/“apartness”. They affirm that, “Moses must anoint and consecrate Aaron and his sons in order to set them apart for this service” (Adeyemo 2006, 123).

Different perspective than apartness can be drawn from scholars’ commentaries. Durham mentions in his comment the idea of Roland de Vaux. He writes that, “de Vaux ... correctly points out, such washing was necessary both before contact with holy things, and sometimes after such contact” (Durham 1987, 394). That is, holy things are considered clean then they cannot be touched or approached without washing ritual. In simple expression, holiness is not allowed to have any contact with uncleanness. That is why ritual of purification should be done. Durham explains that the ritual sacrificial and symbolic offering is for the purpose to purify Aaron for the service of ministry to Yahweh (Durham 1987, 394).

29:6. *you shall put the holy crown* אֶת־נֹזֶר הַקֹּדֶשׁ

נֹזֶר is defined a “crown”, a crown as a sign of consecration, or a crown as symbol of royal power (2 Sam 1:10) (Brown 2001, “נֹזֶר”, 634). For instance, נֹזֶר is thought to be a derivation from Egyptian *nzrt* which is the symbolic serpent worn on Pharaoh’s brow (Propp 2006, 456). But here in

Exodus 29, it is surely a crown as a sign of consecration. נִזְר is also defined a “consecration” (Brown 2001, “נִזְר”, 634). Thus, אֶת־נִזְר הַקֹּדֶשׁ can indicate “holy consecration.” But the circumstance here is to put נִזְר on something. “Consecration” is not concrete, that cannot be put on something. Then, נִזְר here indicates a “crown.”

29:21. And you shall take of the blood on the altar, and the oil of anointing, and you shall sprinkle on Aaron and on his garments, and on his sons, and on his sons' garments with him.

The act of sprinkling (נִזְדָּה) blood and oil of anointment, according to Durham, sets Aaron and his sons and their vestments apart for ministry to Yahweh (Durham 1987, 395). In addition, for Vriezen this act of sprinkling is “the most elevated kind” of consecration, “that can be performed only on the authority of God” (Durham 1987, 395). Also, Clements comments that the fact of using the blood on the altar sprinkled to Aaron, to his sons, and to their garments, is a kind of to relate the holiness of the altar to them. Clements mentions that,

As part of the blood was flung against the altar and part was used for this particular act, so it was believed to set up a particular bond of holiness between the priest and the altar. A similar reasoning underlies the action in which some of the anointing oil was sprinkled on the priests and their vestments. (Clements 1972, 189; 190)

This blood sprinkling ritual serves to consecrate or to sanctify priests' body and their garments. Milgrom argues that the blood purges by transferring sanctity from the Altar (Milgrom 1991:534 in Propp 2006, 463). However, for Propp it is not the blood that consecrates but the oil (Propp 2006, 463). Whatever they argue, either the blood or the oil that consecrate, the important point here is that holiness can be transferred. And Propp says that the stains of blood and oil on the garments are signs of holiness (Propp 2006, 463).

The garments are important tools for priests' consecration. Propp says that, “The garments themselves do not sanctify Aaron, but he cannot be consecrated without them” (Propp 2006, 431). And he adds that the priests garments is called “holiness garments” or “holy garments” because they are used by priests in the “Holiness” which is the Tabernacle, and this holiness remains with the garments nowhere it is (Propp 2006, 431).

27-37.²⁷ *And you shall sanctify the breast of the wave offering*

Clements comments that the fact of consecrating the parts of the sacrifice by being waved towards the altar means symbolically to give them to God before they could be eaten (Clements 1972, 190). That is to say, sanctifying or making holy means to set or to give to God. Propp asserts that, “Here the root qdš connotes not only receiving the supernatural quality of Holiness but also separation” (Propp 2006, 464). That is, the parts of the sacrifice are separated or set apart. In that way they become holy and that they are not allowed to be eaten by people not consecrated as priests (Durham 1987, 395-396).

²⁹ *And the sacred garments which are Aaron’s shall be his sons’ after him, for anointing in them and for fillings their hands in them.*

Clements says concerning Aaron’s sacred garments that, “these were only to be worn during the installation ceremonies themselves, since they were affected by holiness of the altar. They were afterwards the only to be worn when future priests were installed” (Clements 1972, 190). And Propp adds that, “the expression ... ‘the Holiness garments’ refers exclusively to the Great Priest’s costume” (Propp 2006, 465).

³³ *And they shall eat those things by which atonement is made, to consecrate them, to sanctify them, and no one else shall eat them, because they are holy.* ³⁴ *... you shall burn what is left with fire/you shall burn the remainder with fire, it shall not be eaten, because it is holy.*

Clements explains that “no one” is those who is not a member of the priestly families descended from Aaron (Clements 1972, 190). And he continues that, “Only those who were themselves holy could eat such holy food” (Clements 1972, 190).

35-36. *...you shall consecrate them seven days.* ³⁶ *And you shall offer a bullock of a sin offering daily for atonement, and you shall purify the altar in your making atonement for it, and you shall anoint it to consecrate it.*

For the ritual of consecration lasting for seven days, Hyatt explains that a sin offering should be done every day for the priests (Hyatt 1971, 290). He confirms that the concerned altar here is the great altar, and that, as it is to be anointed, a sin offering is to be done for it (Hyatt 1971, 290). According to Milgrom, the purification and the sanctification of the priests are

gradual (Milgrom 1991: 524 in Propp 2006, 470). Then a daily sin offering is needed to purify them from their sins or impurities because the impure and the holy, he stresses, “must never come into contact” (Milgrom 1991: 524 in Propp 2006, 470). Propp argues that the altar is prepared to receive full Holiness (Propp 2006, 470).

³⁷*You shall make atonement seven days for the altar, and shall sanctify/consecrate it, and the altar shall become/be most holy, everything/whatever touching/touches the altar shall become holy.*

The altar can be said as the most important tool and place in the priests’ consecration. For instance the blood that should be sprinkle to priests and their garments for the purification and sanctification ritual is taken from the altar. Propp confirms that the altar is described the “utmost Holiness” as the inner room of the Tabernacle “where God’s presence sojourns” (Propp 2006, 419). After being sanctified the altar becomes the most holy (קֹדֶשׁ קְדוֹשִׁים). In the following quote, Propp shows the value of the altar. He says:

Even though it stands outside the Tabernacle, the Altar possesses the highest degree of sanctity. It is a link between the contaminated world of ordinary people and Yahweh in purest Heaven ... This is why a physically defective priest ‘may not enter to the Veil, nor approach to the Altar’ (Lev 21:22). By their quality of ultimate Holiness, the Tabernacle and Altar are able to sustain the weight of Israel’s sins and impurities laid upon them during the Sin-offering ... (Propp 2006, 470)

Because the altar is consecrated, then it becomes the most holy. Thereafter, whatever touches the altar shall become holy (v.37, cf. 30:29). Hyatt suggests “whatever” can be changed by “whoever”, thus “whoever touches the altar shall become holy” (Hyatt 1971, 295; Milgrom (1991: 446-56) in (Propp 2006, 470)). And from this verse (v.37) Hyatt infers that, “Holiness is here conceived as a quasi-physical quality that is contagious” (Hyatt 1971, 295). Scholars try to explain this transfer of holiness from the altar. We see before that Hyatt uses the expression “contagious.” In other word, Milgrom uses “absorb” telling that “anything touching the Altar absorbs sanctity, even a pot or garment” (Propp 2006, 470)). Milgrom illustrate oil to explain this holiness transfer. He argues that, “More likely, the point is that, just as anything oil become oily, so the sacred anointing oil conveys contagious Holiness” (Propp 2006, 470). However, it is not everyone who can touch the altar. And it is dangerous for those who are not allowed to touch it. Propp mentions in his comment that, “Any unauthorized human touching Holiness must be killed

... But the proscription does not affect the priests who are already holy themselves (Propp 2006, 470; cf. Clements 1972, 190).

43-45. ⁴³*I will meet with the Israelites there, and it shall be sanctified by my glory;* ⁴⁴*I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate, to serve me as priests.* ⁴⁵*I will dwell among the Israelites, and I will be their God.*

Here, Yahweh declared that the place where He meets the Israelites, is told, it will be sanctified by His glory (וְנִקְדָּשׁ בְּכְבוֹדִי and it will be sanctified in my glory). When Durham comments on this verse, he stresses on the Presence of Yahweh that “makes sacred” or “set apart” the place of meeting, that is the opening to the Tabernacle (Durham 1987, 396). And he emphasizes that, “The Yahweh’s setting-apart of the Tabernacle, the Altar, Aaron and his sons by Yahweh’s Presence is to give priestly ministry” (Durham 1987, 397). Durham highly focuses on this Yahweh’s Presence in his commentary of the book of Exodus. He says that, “the Presence of Yahweh is at the center of the elaborate instructions for the media of worship in Exod 25-31 and of the account of their construction and consecration in Exod 35-40” (Durham 1987, xxii). Yahweh’s Presence, according to Durham, is always declared In every affirmation of holiness, like the holiness of the remaining food, the holiness of the vestments, and the holiness of the Altar (Durham 1987, 397).

The second last verse of Exodus 29 is considered as a conclusion of all the previous instructions. Yahweh declares that He will dwell among the Israelites and He will be their God. It shows the purpose of the sacrificial worship teaching strengthened by holiness concept. Clements asserts:

The whole purpose of Israel’s sacrificial worship is thereby summed up. God would be with his people by means of the glory which was to remain in the sanctuary. This divine presence was to be a source of life and blessing for the whole nation, and from it the priest would be able to obtain further divine instructions. (Clements 1972, 191)

In fact, the following perspectives can be inferred from all these previous commentaries of Exodus 29. Generally, western commentators show “holiness” as “apartness” or “separateness” as seen in commentary of Exodus 3 as well. As told before, Aaron and his sons are separated from their fellow Israelites because they are sanctified or made holy. Also their

vestments are set apart because they become holy by anointment. Either the priests or their vestments are made holy, consecrated, for they are set apart for Yahweh's service in the Holy place. Quite similar to apartness, "holiness" means "consecration." Aaron and his sons, and their vestments are anointed to make them holy. Then, they are consecrated or admitted to Yahweh's service. Alike Exodus 3, "holiness" in Exodus 29 is commented as the "presence of Yahweh." The altar and the place of meeting in the entrance of the Tabernacle, and of course the Tabernacle are holy because Yahweh tells and is considered to dwell there. "Cleanliness" perspective is obvious from de Vaux and Durham comments. It is said before that the ritual sacrificial and symbolic offering are to purify Aaron and his sons and anything that concerns the priestly consecration. The necessity of the washing ritual before contact with holy things proves the cleanliness perspective of holiness. The last impressive perspective is the powerful side. Even though this powerful perspective is not much remarkable it can be seen enough. It can be inferred from the statement of Propp that "holiness" has a "supernatural quality" (Propp 2006, 464). Also contact to the holy things, especially the most holy, can be fatal for those who are not holy. This powerful perspective is easily noticed in Malagasy concept than in western commentaries.

Malagasy perspective of holiness from Exodus 29.

Mostly the Malagasy perspective of holiness is already presented in the second part of chapter two, and in chapter three. Thus, the following is a simple reminder of what they think of Exodus 29. My informants infer three distinct perspectives from this chapter. They think from the text that "holiness" means "anointment" or "consecration", "apartness", and "power".

According to the Christian group of my informants, "holiness" means anointment or consecration. The opinion comes from the consecration and anointment of Aaron and his sons and their vestments. They think of the idea that because Aaron and his sons and their garments are consecrated (Exodus 29:1) and anointed (Exodus 29:21), then they become holy. Thus, for Malagasy Christian, persons or things anointed or consecrated means holy persons or holy things, or vice versa.

"Holiness" means "apartness" too for Malagasy understanding. Whatever set apart for God or for God's worship is holy. For instance, the altar is holy for it is a place set apart to worship God (Exodus 29:36-37). They even think that the clothes of the altar and is holy. The "holy garment" in which a person is consecrated is holy also because it is set apart for God's

service. We see in the case in chapter one that some say even that the “holy garment” should not be kept with other clothes.

The remarkable meaning of holiness for Malagasy is the power perspective. They think that if anything or anyone touching the altar becomes holy (Exodus 29:37), that means the altar, as holy, has power to transfer holiness. Malagasy belief is similar to this Exodus 29:37. As presented in the cases from the beginning in chapter one, the Holy Bible is believed to have a supernatural quality to heal. Some do not have courage to serve God without the “holy garment.” The point is they think as holy things have received the supernatural quality, or the power, from God. For instance, they agree the Bible is a book, and that they do not build their faith on the book. But the Bible is different from other books for it contains the word of God. So the book is believed as affected by holiness, power of God. Alike is their thought for the holy garment.

African scholars explain this transfer of holiness as following:

The need to purify objects implies that as physical objects are affected by their physical environment, so they are also affected by their moral and spiritual environment. For example, a house that is used for evil becomes polluted by that evil. And prayers and rituals are needed to ask God to cleanse the house. While inanimate things do not have a will of their own and may be neutral in themselves, the people who work with them, occupy them or own them ‘transfer’ to them whatever they themselves are. The need of making atonement for the altar and consecrating it is alike (29:37a). The ordinary needs to be cleansed and consecrated before the Lord can use it. Once this is done, it shares in the holiness of the Lord and whatever touches it will be holy (29:37b). (Adeyemo 2006, 124)

It is not easy to understand this transfer. It is too much spiritual, too much conceptual. For instance, how to understand the abstract figure of the evil that pollutes a house? Maybe there is an African context that makes Africans think alike. And so do the Malagasy. There is a Malagasy Traditional context about holiness concept that may influence Malagasy Christians. For Malagasy Traditional belief whatever or whoever, tree, water, lake, animal, human is thought “holy” there are believed to have supernatural power from deity or from mighty spirit. That is why people ask for blessing from anything or anyone “holy”. Taboos as well show that “holiness” is believed to have power to punish. It is similar to the comment of the western scholars mentioning that contact to holiness is very dangerous for the unauthorized or the non-holy, the impure (cf. Ehrlich 1908:382 in Propp 2006, 470; Clements 1972, 190).

4.5 Conclusion

Holiness concept is one pillar on Israelites faith and their knowledge of Yahweh. It is strongly linked to Yahweh's attribute. The most known of holiness meanings from western scholars are "apartness", or "separateness", and "consecration", especially "presence of God." But they also show cleanliness and power perspectives.

Priests and their garments are holy for they are consecrated and set apart for the service of God. The altar and any utensil related to it are alike. They are holy because they are consecrated and set apart to God's worship. The entrance of the Tabernacle, which is the place of meeting between Yahweh and Israelites, is holy because of the presence of Yahweh himself. Similarly, the ground where Moses was standing is holy due to the presence of Yahweh. And holiness should be kept clean. Purification is needed before contact to holy matter. Finally, holiness has a supernatural quality. Carelessness contact to holiness could cause dangerous consequence.

Malagasy perspectives of holiness are not different from those of western scholars. From Malagasy Christian point of view "holiness" means "apartness" or "separateness", "consecration", "anointment", "presence of God", "cleanliness" and power. Aaron and his sons and their garments are holy because of their consecration and anointment. And they are set apart for God's service. The ground on which Moses was standing is holy because of the presence of God. Holiness means cleanliness. That is why Moses was told to take off his shoes. And holiness is a power. So that, holiness is able to render or make holy whatever touches it.

Chapter Five

CONCLUSION

“Holiness” means “apartness”, “separateness”, “consecration”, and “presence of Yahweh” from the Old Testament.

Most of the Malagasy Christians are highly aware of religious holiness concept. They infer from the text of Exodus 3 and 29 that holiness means apartness, consecration, presence of God, cleanliness and power. And holiness is rooted to God. The “holy garment” is holy for it is consecrated and set apart for a religious use. The “holy garment” is not the same as other clothes, and it needs special care as it is holy. Since the Bible contains the word of God it is also holy. Malagasy Christians think that the power of God is transferred to the holy Bible. And that this makes the Bible very special or “powerful.”

On one hand, Malagasy Christians might be influenced by their traditional belief and culture. For Malagasy Traditionalists holiness is from deity, ancestor and king. They clearly affirm that holiness means power. They believe that holiness can bless as well as it can punish. They ask for blessing at a holy place or by the help of holy people and holy things. And taboo must be respected for fear of a disastrous outcome from the “anger” of holiness.

On other hand, Malagasy Christians might conclude the meaning of holiness merely as it is written in the Bible. We have seen that some Old Testament Scholars also think of powerful perspective of holiness concept. Yahweh’s presence is the source of holiness. And then it must be highly respected. The non-holy cannot be in contact with the holy. Disregard of holiness can lead to death.

In sum holiness is neither from human being nor from natural being. But it is from supernatural being. Then respect of holiness is a respect of its source. On the contrary, disregard of holiness is a disregard of its source. Anyone, anything, and anywhere attributed holy is not owner of holiness. I think, it is then relevant that holiness is defined apartness. If we say God is holy, it reflects that God is not like other supernatural being. And that anyone, anything, and anywhere related to God is set apart for God is holy. I find the expression of Childs a bit strange when I first read it. He says that, “the theophanic appearance of deity ... often at a holy place”

(Childs 1974, 65). I later understand he probably means by “holy place” a place that is already related to God as temple or altar and so on.

A place is not holy for its own but by the presence of God. Then the holiness status of anyone, of anything, and of anywhere is just a reminder of the holiness of God. And so does for the power perspective. If holiness is defined power, it reflects on the power of the holiness’ owner. But the “power” phenomenon is just a reminder to the mighty God. The most emphasized by my informants about this power perspective is the Exodus 29:37 saying that whatever touches the altar becomes holy. This phenomenon can be compared to the way of transferring blessing. Blessing is believed to be transferred by prayer, by laying hand, etc. It is not the person who pronounces the blessing is powerful to transfer it. But it is simply believed to be received from God. It is a question of faith. It is the same for the altar in Exodus 29:37. And so does the Bible. For example, if I receive anything I ask from God, I receive it by faith directly from God. It is a direct act from God, not by an intermediary of any matter.

Teaching of holiness is for one purpose, that people may know Him, His power, His presence.

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