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**Nenilava's Counseling within the Toby Ankaramalaza in the  
Malagasy Lutheran Church: A Case Study on the Practice and  
Content of her Counseling**

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## Chapter one Introduction

After my four years of pastoral training in the Lutheran seminary Atsimoniavoko in Madagascar, I served with my husband at the parish of Ranomainty, in the district of Mahatsinjo, at the Synod Alaotra of the Malagasy Lutheran Church (MLC), (2015-2016). During this time, I did not work officially for the MLC, and the tasks I were appointed to were limited, as the MLC does not ordain women. Under these circumstances, I found interest in pastoral counseling. It was a ministry that I could practice without being ordained and it directly touched the life of the persons who sought someone to talk to. I experienced that I could implement my vocation through this service. Unfortunately, I was not well equipped for this from the seminary. Therefore, I wanted to learn more about counseling at the bachelor- and the master levels.

In the bachelor level, I myself needed counseling, and my counselor followed the clinical model which was completely new to me, but which I found was helpful. I will develop it later in chapter three but in brief, it refers to the approach of counseling that offers a space of trust to allow the counselee express and accept his or her innermost feelings even the most evil ones, and especially does not dictate the counselee but helps him or her make his or her own decision freely.<sup>1</sup> Later in 2018, I conducted fieldwork for my bachelor thesis. I interviewed pastors and lay people in charge of counseling people in some selected churches and *tobys*<sup>2</sup> related to three different revival movements<sup>3</sup> which work within the MLC, and situated in Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. This is when I realized that the counseling led by most of my informants was really different from the clinical model that I had experienced. From the interviews, it seemed to me that they practiced mainly an authoritative counseling.

This way of conducting counseling by the pastors might have been due to the nature of the training in the seminaries. But for the lay people who did not receive any training for counseling, it might have been linked to the practice of the founders of the revival movements. Then, for this master thesis, I have been interested in studying the practice of the founder of one

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<sup>1</sup> In Dittes' words, pastoral counseling is "the pastoral response of providing the spiritual climate that maximizes the opportunity for the parishioner to grow in personhood and in the capacity to cope. The pastoral counselor empowers the parishioner to identify the problem and discover resources (Dittes, 1999, 10)."

<sup>2</sup> *Toby* or camp, if translated literally, are places established by the revival movements in the MLC where people with mental troubles are taken care of. For further information, see chapter 5.

<sup>3</sup> There was three main revival movements which have been working with the MLC, namely the revival moment of Soatanana, Farihimena and Ankaramalaza. These movements are given the name of the place where they appeared. They were established by three different persons who were located in these places.

of these movements, namely that of Ankaramalaza. I chose Ankaramalaza over the two other *tobys*, because from my childhood I heard that the founder, Volahavana Germaine also called Nenilava, used to receive people at her residence and advise them. She passed away in 1997. It seems to me that Nenilava's counseling during her ministry reflects how pastoral counseling is defined as "a more specialized form of 'pastoral care', normally characterized by a close relational bond between a counselor and a person seeking help" (Eide, 2008, 14). From testimonies in the context, her counseling surely influenced her followers how they carried out counseling as well. For these reasons, I have been interested to understand more about Nenilava's practice of counseling. The other reason why I chose Ankaramalaza is that the revival movement of Ankaramalaza is the movement that works with the churches in the synod where I work, so I thought the results of my study could be of particular relevance for my church context, support colleagues and myself in our ministry compared to studying a movement in another context of the church.

Through this research, I want to develop knowledge on the content of Nenilava's counseling and how she practiced counseling. My research question is as follows: how did Nenilava practice counseling? To answer this question, I will first describe Nenilava's practice of counseling from how the informants experienced it. Then, I will try to deepen the understanding of her practice from the context within which she served. Finally I will discuss it with theories of counseling. Hence, this study does not only aim to describe Nenilava's practice of counseling. It also aims at understanding the reasons behind her practice and at the same time brings it into a discussion with contemporary findings on pastoral counseling.

For these issues, I conducted qualitative research, interviewing people who could inform about her practice of counseling. The informants were selected according to their relationship with Nenilava during her ministry. One of the informants was her coworker in counseling. One was her coworker in teaching, preaching, and writing books about her. The three others were her counselees. Then, I analyzed the data collected from Nenilava's context and from theoretical perspectives through literatures about contemporary research on pastoral counseling.

In chapter three on theory, I present the main models of counseling that I later apply to analyze Nenilava's counseling, namely the classical model, the clinical model and the contextual model. I present the characteristics of each model, their strengths and weaknesses, and refer to

acknowledged researchers in the field. The purpose is to highlight how counseling is practiced through each model. I want to know what the main tools are in each model and what the goals of counseling are. For each model, the practice is inked with how the human being is understood in relation or not to God.

Chapter four presents some main characteristics of the context in which Nenilava lived that are relevant for answering the research question. It is not a historical presentation but focuses on her worldviews and religious convictions which lied behind her practice of counseling. For this reason, her familial background and the story of her call and general mission are presented. Also, the Malagasy worldviews of her time could not be overlooked as it surely influenced both her family and her.

Chapter five describes Nenilava's counseling according to how the informants reported it. Those who used to be her counselees reported the problems they brought to Nenilava during her counseling and how she received and advised them. Her coworkers reported what they saw when they were present in Nenilava's counseling. All their report reflects how they understood and considered Nenilava, which influenced their description too. Hence this chapter tries to present the topics that dominated their account, or some common topics that could be drawn from the data material. These topics reflect how the informants experienced what was particular about Nenilava's counseling, or what characterized her practice and the content of it found through their stories, and about their understanding of the person of Nenilava.

In chapter six, I interpret and discuss some characteristics of Nenilava's counseling by applying the theoretical lenses of the models of counseling described in chapter three. At the same time, I try to develop a deeper understanding of her practice by analyzing it from her context and the convictions that influenced her practice of counseling.

Nenilava has been a source of interest to Malagasy and international writers in various fields of theology. Within the church history for instance, many have written on her. To cite just a few, James Rabehatonina in the book entitled *Tantaran'ny Fifohazana eto Madagasikara* or the history of the revival movement in Madagascar and Tsivoery Zakaria in *Ny Tantaran'ny Fifohazana eto Madagasikara* wrote on the history of the three revival movements in Madagasikara and where the section about Nenilava's movement focused on how it developed in history. Sigmund Edland in *Tantaran'ny Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy* developed the history

of the Malagasy Lutheran Church (MLC) and wrote a section about her works within the MLC. Seth Andriamanalina, in the thesis entitled *Le ministère de “berger” dans les églises protestantes de Madagascar*, Fifohazana et Réforme dans le protestantisme, still from a church history’s perspective focused on the impact of the three revival movements including that of Nenilava on Malagasy Protestantism. Melchi Razato in *Biography and history* wrote her biography.

In the old testament field, Razafindrakoto Georges with his dissertation entitled *Old testament texts in Malagasy contexts: an analysis of the use of the old testament in three religious contexts in Madagascar*, talked about the Toby Ankaramalaza in his case study of the use of old testament texts in the explanation of Nenilava’s consecration.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding practical theology, Hans Austnaberg in *Shepherds and demons* wrote particularly about exorcism as understood by the shepherds from all the three revival movements in the MLC and reserved a section to talk about Nenilava, her call and her work. Cynthia Holter Rich in her book entitled *Indigenous Christianity in Madagascar* concentrated on the way the revival movement led by Nenilava through the *Toby* located in Ambohibao in the capital of Madagascar provided care to the sick people through inclusion, exorcism and empowerment.

There are also articles where one can read about her, but no researcher has focused yet on her counseling. So through this thesis, I am trying to fill a research gap. And as no book has been written yet on Nenilava’s counseling, I chose to lead a qualitative research which I explain in the following chapter.

## **Chapter two: Methodology and Method**

Research methodology is the overall approach to studying a topic and method is the specific way of getting the data needed (Dawson, 2002, 14). As no book has been written yet about Nenilava’s counseling, I chose an empirical work through qualitative research as a research methodology to understand how Nenilava understood and practiced pastoral counseling. Nenilava is no longer alive and is therefore unable to provide with this information. Hence, the method I chose is interviews of people who worked with her in her ministry of pastoral counseling and/or who

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<sup>4</sup> In the history of Nenilava, there was a moment when she was consecrated as a great priestess. It was a ceremony to be celebrated, according to Christ’s directive as she said. For this ceremony, a priestly robe like that described in Exodus 28 and a silver crown related to Deuteronomy 28 were created.



sought for counseling to her. In this chapter I will say how the informants were chosen, how the interviews were conducted and how the data were coded and analyzed. But first, I will talk briefly about qualitative research.

## **2.1 Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research involves making verbal description of real situations (Silvermann, 2014, 4). In other words, through qualitative research, one tries to get data in order to understand what is out there and then analyzes these data with established theories. In this study, I chose qualitative interviewing to get the data on Nenilava's counseling. In Rubin's words, "qualitative interviewing helps reconstruct events the researchers have never experienced" (Olsen, 2012, 3). As Nenilava has already passed away, I conducted interviews of five people in October 2020, the details of which will be stated later. Then I tried to analyze the data gotten from these interviews from Nenilava's context to better understand her counseling and from theories on pastoral counseling.

I am conscious that the informants were in contact with Nenilava long time ago before the interview. Thus they might not remember exactly the details about the information they provided. That constitutes a weakness of the method chosen. However, as the topic is about counseling, the data from the informants concern only the events that marked them personally in their life. It explains why I noticed so often during the interviews the informants saying, "I remember it as it happened only yesterday ... the expression of her face, the tone of her voice, she (Nenilava) said..."<sup>5</sup> So to reduce the effect of this weakness, during the analysis, I tried to focus on the main messages that the informants were certain of and not on the details that might have been distorted by the time. In addition to that, I am convinced that using this method for this research was a good idea as the information from these persons, as first-hand informants who interacted with Nenilava are important for the reason that they will no longer be available soon. Now, I will present in detail how I conducted the research on the field.

## **2.2 Selection of interviewees**

The informants for this research were selected from a precise criterion. They must have been present during Nenilava's counseling. It means they worked with her for this ministry or were

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<sup>5</sup> Four interviewees out of five reported similar statement during the interviews.

the persons who went to her for counseling. I asked a person of my family, who grew up in Ankaramalaza if she would help me get in touch with people who had personal and first-hand knowledge of Nenilava's counseling. I was introduced to three persons who again helped me come in contact with five more people. It means that I got the informants through snow-ball sampling. "Snowball sampling refers to extending the network of known cases outward using contacts offered by those within the existing sample" (Olsen, 2012, 24). The first person of my family appointed three of my informants and these last appointed the five others.

My plan was to interview these eight people, five men and three women. But due to the corona virus, one informant passed away, and with travelling restrictions, I could only interview five of them. All informants are over fifty five years old as they interacted with Nenilava when she was ministering. They are the rare persons who got first-hand information on the subject, and after a few years first-hand information will no longer be available. Among these informants for instance, one has also passed away because of the corona virus few months after the data collection. Now I will talk about the data collection process.

### **2.3 Data collection process**

I conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews as soon as I received the permission from the NSD (Norwegian Centre for Research Data) in October 2020. By semi-structured interviews, I want to say that I wanted to learn about a specific theme, prepared some questions in advance, but also planned to ask follow-up questions (Rubin, 2012, 31). The interviews were conducted individually but the informants can be grouped into two different groups, Nenilava's coworkers and Nenilava's counselees.

The interviews were performed in Madagascar. As the informants were all literate persons, I sent mail to my interviewees in advance to those who had access to mail to inform about my project, and to obtain their consent. For those who did not have access to mail, the preliminary information was given orally through phone call and they read the consent letter the day of the interview before it started. Preliminary information includes the goal and context of the research, namely to know about Nenilava's counseling in order to write a master thesis. It also says about the importance of the informants' participation and their right to retract themselves from the project whenever they wanted. They were also informed about the founder of the research which is the Birkeland Legacy, that the data would be collected through a voice

recorder, and about the collection of the data. The informants needed to be informed beforehand about the project according to ethical guidelines from the NSD so that they could have time to reflect on their consent and know well their right regarding their participation in the project.

I met no problem obtaining the informants' consent. They were pleased their stories could contribute to a research on Nenilava done in a postgraduate research and at an international level. Three of them were even surprised when I told them that their names would not appear in the text due to agreement with the NSD regarding processing personal data. They said it would not bother them even if their name were cited in the text and they even provided personal information that would make one recognize them in the data collected, but I treated the data in conformity with the agreement with the NSD.

The data collection was done in Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar where I met the informants. I started conducting the interviews in October 3, and I stayed there seven days before returning to Fianarantsoa where I proceeded to the treatment of the datamaterial. The cost of the travels was paid by the support of the Birkeland legacy, and the report of the data collection had to be sent to them before December 2020.

Each interview was recorded by a voice recorder. One benefit of this method is that I could listen to the recording as often as I needed when I worked on the field-materials. Moreover, the informants' emotions during the data collection are recorded and hence could be clearly noticed in the recording files to help me reflect on the credibility of their report. Each interview took one hour or two, at the most. However, I realize that one interview took one day as I spent several hours after the interview to take personal notes to facilitate my treatment of the files. During the interviews, I also took personal notes of my impression on the interviews. I took notes about what I considered to be important for my research question. I noted what the topic was about and when in the recording it was located, so that I could easily find it during my treatment of the file. I kept these personal notes and the recorded materials in my personal computer to which only I had access. However, for the sake of security, I put the recording files in a locked folder.

## **2.4 Coding process**

I coded the data according to Creswell's proposition to use a "combination of predetermined and emerging codes" (Creswell, 2009, 187). A predetermined code is a code that the researcher

expects in advance to find before doing the fieldwork and the coding whereas an emerging code is surprising and not anticipated at the beginning of the study (Creswell, 2009, 187). I started by listening to the recordings one by one. It was a general first listening to have general thoughts from the data. At this stage, I could distinguish the files that I did not need for this research, like the description of what counseling was according to the informants and not according to Nenilava; their personal stories that did not have anything to do with Nenilava's counseling; or their personal exhortation addressed to me.

Then, I listened to the relevant recordings again one by one. I started to take notes in my codebook. I wrote in the codebook a title which was the nickname I created for the informant in question and the date of the data collection. Then I noted the topics that answered my research questions. To do so, I needed to ask the question: "what is this about?" (Creswell, 2009, 186). Sometimes the answer was obvious but sometimes, I had to try to understand what information was underlying the passages in the report, like with the tools Nenilava used in her counseling. The focus was first on the topics that explained how Nenilava's counseling was. I put numbers next to each topic and used the same number for the same topics with other informants. The numbers are the codes in question. Several codes appeared like the codes which referred to the way she worked, her characters, her advices, the tools she used, etc. I put these topics in the chapter on description of field-material. Hence, I started first with the predetermined codes based on my research questions. Next to each code, I put the relevant citation and the location of the passage within the file to help me find the relevant evidence when I would have to present the code.

Later, I also took notes of the other emerging codes. I did the same process as with the predetermined codes. But these codes differed from the previous ones and they did not directly answer my research questions but were so frequent and dominant in the informant's account, that I found it necessary to note them. As when I listened to the other informants, some of these previous emerging codes appeared too, I noticed that it was needed to put them in the description too. It was for instance the case of the account of Nenilava as a prophetess that are presented in the chapter five. I found that these emerging data gave necessary information especially on how the informants considered Nenilava and thus helped to understand where they can be situated related to their report. After the coding process came the analysis process that I describe in what follows.

## 2.5 Analysis process

During the analysis process, I reflected on how I could interpret the data material and how I could relate the descriptions with the theories learned in chapter three. The first stage was the description of the data material. It consisted at rendering detailed information about themes that emerged from the coding process and that are the major findings in the study (Creswell, 2009, 189). At the stage of describing the data material, I already needed to separate my own interpretation from what the informants offered in their account. I tried to just present the data material the way the informants described their experiences. In other words, I needed to distinguish my position as a researcher from the position of the informants.

Regarding my positionality, what is needed to know about me? As I already said in the introduction, I, the researcher found the clinical pastoral counseling effective for my own case. This model was probably more effective for me as I grew up in cities in the capital of Madagascar, thus adopting a more or less individualistic way of living. And my interest in studying Nenilava's counseling started from the assumption that her counseling was kerygmatic because her followers conducted authoritative counseling. Hence, I am critical to what seems to be oppressive or involves distress in people and I am meticulous with any signal of the existence of distress or anxieties involved by oppression. However, I learned much on the third model of counseling found in chapter three.

The next stage of the analysis was the interpretation. I needed to know what lessons I could learn from my own interpretation of the data materials (Creswell, 2009, 189). For the analysis, the description done by the informants needed to be seen in a critical way to distinguish between how they interpreted what they experienced about Nenilava's counseling and how I as a researcher would interpret it. It is necessary to mention that the informants used to consider Nenilava as a woman different from anyone else because of the supernatural gifts they described she had. Hence, they had a positive view on Nenilava and her counseling although the stories they reported included information about how they struggled with her approach.

Another dimension about the analysis process is that I tried to make a discussion between the data materials described and the theories presented in chapter three. In Creswell's words, I tried to know what lessons I could learn from a comparison of the findings with the information from the theories (Creswell, 2009, 189). The question asked was: is there any relation between

the characteristics of Nenilava's counseling and the theories? Sometimes the characteristics described are just obvious to make it easy to answer this question. But sometimes too these needed to be studied more. I needed to ask what the reasons behind their existence were. Often, these reasons were related to Nenilava's context. And only knowing about these contexts could help to highlight the relation between Nenilava's counseling and a certain theory.

## **2.6 Ethical challenges**

I anticipated ethical challenges during the interviews through which the informants might have been influenced by my presence as a researcher for VID in Norway while answering my question. For instance, they could be willing to give me answers they thought I wanted to hear instead of answers they genuinely wanted to give. Hence in the consent letter sent to them by mail before the interview or read to them during the interview, I stated clearly why I needed them as informants and that I intended to learn from them. Learning was the major goal of my interview (Rubin, 2012, 31). Therefore, they needed to give me answers they thought were correct, not answers they thought I wanted to hear from them.

However, I also felt during the interviews that in some cases, explaining the informants verbally about my intention did not necessarily make them feel more comfortable facing me. The will to learn from them also needed to be shown from my attitude during the interview. Thus, doing the interview I tried to be the friendliest as possible, and tried to ask questions in the simplest way as well, not using theological words or assumptions.

Confidentiality and anonymity were also important issues during all the research, from the data collection through the writing of the thesis, as "researchers need to protect their research participants" (Creswell, 2009, 87). Fortunately, the NSD helped to handle these issues. Before starting the data collection, I needed to send my thesis project in detail, especially how I intended to use the personal data of the informants from the data collection through the end of the project. They gave me advice about how to process the personal data in a secured way and did not give me authorization to start the data collection before I gave them satisfactory answers regarding this matter. Hence, it was agreed that I would use fictitious names in my text rather than real names. I would not state personal information such as names, address, mails, background information that might help anyone identify my informants in my thesis. And I would also store the data materials in a secured place where only I would have access to. Moreover, I will delete

the data materials once the project ends. While analyzing the data materials, I met several times background information about the informants that might help to identify them. I tried to not mention any of them at all but rather to concentrate on the statements needed for the research questions.

The other ethical issue I faced was the risk of falsifying the materials to meet my needs as a researcher (Creswell, 2009, 92). To deal with this risk, every time I hesitated quoting my informants, I made sure what I had in mind was really what they wanted to say. I did so by listening to the relevant recording again.

Qualitative research through interviews is the approach that I chose for this research. Although Nenilava is no longer there to provide information on how she viewed and conducted counseling, this method allowed me to get the information about her counseling through the informants who were present with her or talking to her when she performed her counseling sessions. This approach has of course its weakness but the best was done to reduce its effect so that the data treated in the text are accurate. Then, I tried to understand the field materials with the context of Nenilava and with contemporary theories.

## **Chapter three: Theoretical perspectives**

In the present chapter I will present some selected models within pastoral counseling that I find relevant as perspectives to analyze the data material later. With pastoral counseling I mean the special form of pastoral care that is concentrated on the relationship between the counselor and the counselee (Eide, 2008, 14).

Scholars have established three main models for pastoral care that has shaped pastoral counseling so far (Patton, 1989, 4). These three models are respectively the classical or kerygmatic model, the clinical or therapeutic model and the communal-contextual model. I will present the models one by one and later will apply them in the analysis of some selected categories developed from the description of Nenilava's counseling. The models will serve as lenses to view Nenilava's counseling as described by the informants. They will help to better frame Nenilava's practice of counseling and to understand the ideas that lie behind her practice of counseling. For these reasons, for each model, I will try to know what theology is behind it, how can human and his or her problem be understood, and how such understanding influences the goal and practice of pastoral counseling in the paradigm.

### **3.1 Pastoral counseling according to the classical paradigm**

The classical paradigm is the model that has dominated pastoral care up to the domination of psychology in pastoral care in the western context in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This model is mainly characterized by the importance of biblical messages communicated by the caregiver to help the confident reestablish her/his relationship with God. It also focuses on biblical doctrine and emphasizes the importance of ecclesiastical tools such as God's word and sacraments for resolving people's problems. It gives importance to forgiveness of sin as the dominating conviction of the time was that sin destroys relationship between God and human being. We will first try to develop the anthropological convictions behind this paradigm. How is human perceived by this model? What is the most important in human being? How could a pastoral caregiver help the human being with his/her troubles?

#### **3.1.1 The importance of human's relationship with God**

How does classical paradigm see the human being? The human being is in broken relationship with God. Hence though there is one part in him or her who wants and can stay in relationship



with God, another part opposes this relationship (Thurneysen, 1958, 38).<sup>6</sup> Consequently, a whole and free person is a person who can make these two parts in harmony to stay in relationship with God (Thurneysen, 1958, 38). This is possible when the person knows the Word of God, Jesus Christ who has restored this broken relationship with God. Welfare is seen in a person's life when he or she stays in this restored relationship with God (Thurneysen, 1958, 42).

Consequently, the following statement really summarizes the aim of pastoral care according to this model: "Pastoral care should therefore be viewed... as a ministry of grace in which people are led into restoration of communion with God (Pembroke, 2010, 7)." If a person is troubled, any trouble is generalized to be the effect of a broken relationship with God. Patton says: "the classical paradigm tended to universalize its understanding of human problems and express them in exclusively religious terms" (1993, 39). Meanwhile, any care should aim at restoring this relationship. For this paradigm, pastoral counseling is often given the name "cure of soul" (in French: "cure d'âme"). Hence, understanding how the human being manifests itself, influenced how the classical model has been understood and practiced. But in the coming section, I will develop the importance of the church according to this model and that affects the goals and practice of pastoral care as well.

### **3.1.2 Soteriological and ecclesiological foundations of pastoral care**

In this section, I try to answer to the following questions, does the conception of salvation and the church affect pastoral care? If yes, how? A classical figure of this reflection in this model is Thurneysen. He studied pastoral care in a way that would emphasize and conserve the values of the church and the protestant traditions.

In the protestant tradition, salvation is understood not as an individual matter. This is due to the place of baptism. Baptism makes a person a child of God and hence part of the Holy Communion. Being a child of God cannot be separated from being part of the Holy Communion. He states: "in a parish, can the individual exist before God as an individual? Certainly, but only to the extent that the individual has become a member of the body" (1958, 13). Moreover, everything about salvation happens in community within the church, mainly through sermons

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<sup>6</sup> According to Thurneysen, human being is composed by three main components: body, soul, and spirit. The soul allows humans to be in relationship with God whereas the body opposes this relationship. The person knows Christ's work of restoration of this relationship through the spirit (Thurneysen, 1958, 38-42).

and sacraments. Faith necessary for salvation is given and nurtured in the Holy Communion through sermon and sacraments. Hence, Thurneysen criticizes the pietists who oriented the activities of the church to the cure of soul done privately (1958, 16-17). As a result, in pastoral care, the proclamation of God's word and the membership of the church are the most important tasks that shape the goals of it.

### **3.1.3 Goals of pastoral counseling**

According to the kerygmatic model, pastoral counseling exists to proclaim the Word of God, to assist the whole person to remain in relationship with God. Besides, the main goal is to orient the counselee to the communion of the church where the real tools for a good life are bestowed.

As said earlier, the welfare of the soul in front of God is the goal of this model. This is done through the proclamation of the Word of God. Thus, whatever problem the counselee is confronted with, the Word of God is to be declared. A person's problem might be related to culture, relationship or emotions which will be dealt with during counseling sessions but "all time the counselor should look for the root causes of the problem, man's relationship to God" (Eide, 2008, 18). Thurneysen mentions clearly that the content of pastoral counseling is the same as the content of sermons, with just a private character (1958, 12).

Moreover, pastoral counseling also must guide the counselee to the life of the church. When he defines pastoral counseling, he argues that this is a field of practical theology which deals with the doctrines of the community, her functions, edification and development, but just that it is done individually (Thurneysen, 1958, 11). However, the fact that it is done individually does not mean to adhere to the well-known individualism raised by liberalism. This paradigm seriously counters that so as not to stress on experience, relation, human and worldly reasoning (Thurneysen, 1958, 13). It emphasizes that pastoral counseling should orient the counselee to the importance of church life in its communality where sermon and sacraments, the real tools needed for faith are provided.

### **3.1.4 Practice of pastoral counseling**

We will see in this part how pastoral counseling of the classical model is performed. Who is the responsible for it? How is it performed? Due to its conception as an individualistic form of sermon, the pastor is the one who performs pastoral counseling. He is the one who is well

equipped and has the authority to carry it out (Thurneysen, 1958, 14). This concept of authority is important, as “the classical pastoral care perspective was enforced by thinking and practice related to pastoral authority” (Eide, 2008, 17).

The procedure is that the real source to be dealt with is the person’s relationship with God. It is “the word of God preached to the individual” (Eide, 2008, 18). In the languages of Patton, message is the most important in this paradigm (1993, 91). For each problem, the pastor needs to have a theological message to communicate to the counselee. This is often taken from the Bible.

To summarize, according to this model, the human problem is universal as it is caused by a broken relationship with God. For this reason, the tools used are ecclesial. Its practice is authoritative and does not consider the human dimension of the counselee. This paradigm is necessary for this thesis. In an African context, it dominates the understanding and practice of counseling done by many of the pastors as it was what the missionaries followed and brought to them (Eide, 2008, 17). How about Nenilava who was a female non-trained theologically? Is it possible to find characteristics of the classical model in her counseling or could we find something else? Let us first look at the two other models.

### **3.2 Clinical or therapeutic paradigm**

This paradigm shaped pastoral care during the first part of the twentieth century. It started from the domination of liberal theology which considers salvation as personal. It has also been dominated by the findings of Freud on psychoanalysis and the works of Antoin Boisen (Gerkin, 1997, 59-62) and Carl Rogers (Gerkin, 1997, 65) on pastoral care. We will see how individualistic salvation frames this model and the place of theology within this view on pastoral counseling. Psychology also dominated the understanding of human being, the goal and practice of pastoral counseling.

Psychology was considered as central to knowledge and even central to theology. According to liberal theology, “the key to unlocking the mysteries of religion and reality was ‘in ourselves’” (Gerkin, 1997, 54). Hence, knowing about the self is the most important. Liberal theology, with the domination of psychology gave birth to what was called “religious development” (Gerkin, 1997, 54). Religion was self-development. All about religion could be known from ourselves. Hence, psychology helps for the investigation on religious development. Carl Rogers for instance

was formerly trained in theology but moved to the field of psychology in which he received a doctoral degree (Gerkin, 1997, 65).

If we are to look at how the human being and its problem are seen by this model, we need to consider the psychological dimension. This is because how this method developed is closely linked to psychology and even the methods it uses are psychological. The father of this model, or of the development of pastoral care and counseling training, was Boisen, a pastor who had been victim of mental illness. He was treated in a psychiatric hospital. After this episode, he wanted to investigate the relation between religious conversion and mental anguish, which resulted later to the establishment of the clinical pastoral education in the United States and to its spread worldwide (Gerkin, 1997, 61-62). Boisen held pastoral care education within hospitals for troubled persons, and later also with focus on the general need for care. It means that psychological theories were used in educating pastors for pastoral care. At the beginning of this model, psychology of adjustment dominated (Gerkin, 1997, 63). Later, it was also influenced by Freud's findings. Such influence has not stopped, psychological theories are still useful for pastoral counseling.

What are the goals of pastoral counseling within this model? If we refer to its founder, namely, Boisen, his goal from the beginning was to provide human stability based both on psychology and religion. Nevertheless, it can be noticed that psychological stability is more emphasized than the religious one. Clinebell for instance wanted to develop a model of pastoral counseling that emphasized theology more than psychology. However, he based his model on human's needs, and about these needs, only one out of five concerns relationship with God (Clinebell, 1966, 18). In the same way, when Gerkin developed the space for theology in this paradigm, his points can be summarized in a way that theology is the basis of pastoral care in general. Pastoral care is a means given by God to care for people and is a mark that God cares (Gerkin, 1997, 67-70). Theology does not affect the way counseling is done according to this paradigm. In Patton's words, what makes pastoral care "pastoral" "has more to do with the person and accountability of the counselor than with the methods adopted (Patton, 1993, 213-214)." Psychology has then always been given a great importance in pastoral care.

Hence, the way pastoral counseling within this paradigm is performed is quite different from the classical model. Here, people are given the chance to express their struggles and their own

experiences. In addition to that, their freedom to choose and their ability to get out of their problems are prioritized. First, it is necessary to mention that for this model, counseling is reduced to a one-to-one relationship. It is individualistic (Patton, 1993, 4). The pastor is the one who performs it. Second, according to this model, every counselee is different. Thus, there cannot exist one model to use for everyone. The way counseling is approached, depends on the counselee, and differs from a counselee to another (Clinebell, 1966, 60-63). Third, Roger's non-directive method dominated this model. "The pastoral counselor empowers the parishioner to identify the problem and discover the resources (Dittes, 1999, 10)." The counselor is not supposed to be authoritative. His or her task is to help the counselee grasp and see his or her feelings or anything that blocks him or her to make decision. According to Gerkin:

it (listening which is the basis of pastoral care with individual concern) means being attentive to the emotional communication that accompanies the words. It means listening for the nuances that may give clues to the particular, private meanings that govern a person's inner life. It means listening for hidden conflicts, unspoken desires, unspeakable fears, and faint hopes (1997, 91)

Hence, the counselor does not direct special ethics to be followed and the communication of God's word is not the priority. It is even totally forgotten. That is why later researchers like Clinebell for instance wanted to reintroduce the active position of pastors when performing counseling.

But there is another model that we need to know of. It is the contextual paradigm. It is relevant due to its relation with the African context and its emphasis on context and community as opposed to individualistic western approaches.

### **3.3 Communal-contextual paradigm**

The communal-contextual model of pastoral care has been dominating from the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until now. It is closely related to post-modern and liberation theology which resulted from emphasizing on context and community of the church. We will try to understand the theological and anthropological foundations of this paradigm, its goal and practice.

### 3.3.1 Post-modern and liberation theologies as bases

Post-modern theology recognized the limit of reason to attend the truth which consequently led to acknowledging the limit of theories established about men from psychology in the field of pastoral care and counseling. Patton, for instance, says that psychological theories have developed from the study of white western males and are not necessarily valid for other persons such as females, or for people in other parts of the world (Patton, 1993, 23-24). Lartey reported a relevant statement from an international congress gathering practitioners of pastoral care and counseling: “it is... no longer permissible to assume that one culture- in West or East, in North or South- can supply all the insights needed to restore humanity to man...” (2003, 50). Africans, African scholars have also noticed that the clinical paradigm did not correspond to their context. An African counseling needs to stress on the importance of studying African worldviews which highlight communality’s role in people’s life (Eide, 2008, 20). In other words, the ultimate place of modern psychological theories was questioned to give place to other sources of knowledge for pastoral care, among them are context and community. It is necessary to mention that this paradigm reflects the African context because it stresses on living in community and on mutuality.

Still as an impact of post-modern theology, it was assumed that humans in general and human problems cannot be considered separately from his or her context. Patton explains that human context is threefold (1993, 42). A person is particular and hence has a context which makes him or her different from anyone else in the world. At the same time, this person is member of a particular society. That makes him or her have societal context that he or she has in common with some other persons. But this person has also a universal context that he or she shares with everyone in the world. Therefore, while caring for people, knowing these contexts became crucial for this paradigm.

Apart from context, community has also been given a significant place in pastoral care and counseling. It is because tradition regained an important place from the raise of post-modernism. One of the most important Christian traditions is the vitality of ecclesial communality for caring. Eide explains that for this paradigm, the perspective on pastoral care and counseling “must have a strong basis in a theology of the church (ecclesiology) as community” (2008, 21.) It means that

the care given to the counselee is the task of the whole church as a community and at the same time, the means used are also those of the church.

Another theological trend that also influenced this paradigm is liberation theology. This theology raised the importance of working in and with society. Consequently, pastoral care is no longer focused only on the individual. A way to change a broader context of the person cared for is also investigated. That is, even though pastoral care and counseling really care for individual's well-being, their goals are no longer limited to it. This is for instance the case of family therapy (Gerkin, 1997, 73).

### **3.3.2 The four main goals of pastoral counseling**

It is necessary to mention that the contextual paradigm does not intend to reject the two former ones. Instead, it wants to preserve the important parts of them (Patton, 1993, 5). Thus, it is generally agreed that the aims of pastoral care are to heal, sustain, guide, empower and reconcile (Eide, 2008, 71-80). In healing we encounter the tools of the clinical paradigm. Healing means restoring what is broken and bringing the person's concerns to his or her wholeness (Eide, 2008, 72). This is done through the presence of the counselor who is ready to provide a safe environment of trust and love where the counselee can be him or herself and can share whatever might make him or her struggle. Listening is the most important part here. However, the use of various resources such as religious resources, psychology, medical science, etc. is recommended for this goal. All of this is done based on Christ's ministry which sought to bring care to the people in their wholeness. Related and similar to it is the task of sustaining. The pastor's presence is a sign that he or she shares the person's burdens. The pastor is there to strengthen the weak through his competences and personal resources.

From both the classical and clinical paradigms, contextual paradigm introduced guiding as one task of the counselor. It recognizes that people in trouble usually need guidance. However, guiding should not be done in an authoritative way as if the pastor "takes over the responsibility for the care-seeker's life and future (Eide, 2008, 79). The pastor needs to respect the person's integrity in helping him or her see the alternatives behind any choice involved by a problem.

The contextual paradigm also makes it important to empower and contribute to reconciliation. In the process of empowerment, the pastor helps the counselee to recognize his or

her own resources and to be able to use them to deal with his or her problems, to improve his or her life and relationships. According to Eide, “empowerment happens when the counseling processes (a) enhance the care-seeker’s self-respect; (b) enable them to resist and fight against oppression; and thereby (c) increase their possibilities of meaningful participation in the social and cultural communities to which they belong. (2008, 80). Reconciliation assumes that relationship is vital for humans. “The aim of a counseling process where reconciliation is focused is *the re-establishment of broken relationships* (2008, 80, Eide’s italic).” This reconciliation might concern individual persons, small or big groups or even ethnic groups. The persons in conflict are brought together and the pastor helps them to reconcile.

### **3.3.3 Practice of pastoral counseling**

As stated earlier, community and context have been made crucial for the contextual paradigm. This affected pastoral counseling’s practice. First, the one-to-one relationship of the clinical paradigm has been questioned. The community has been seen as vital for the care of people. A pastor is just a designed person by the community but the first responsible for care is the whole congregation and they have the ability of caring: “while pastors often are important symbolic caring figures in the community, the primary care of the church for persons is provided by the family and group interactions that take place in the life of the church” (Gerkin, 1997, 73). Practically then, groups or other forms involving communion in the church exist in order to provide care for one another. The task of caring is not reserved to ordained persons. At the same time, church’s tools, such as prayer, songs, baptism, holy-communion, laying on of hands, the church’s rituals which are called symbolic acts, pointed out by the classical paradigm are also needed and can bestow significant care in particular situations (Gerkin, 1997, 82). Nonetheless, it is not rejected that the care for individuals done by pastors through pastoral counseling are not needed but this is not the only form of care that can be provided by church.

Second, the importance of context is seen in pastoral counseling’s practice. It is seen in the question asked during the counseling session and in the goal to be reached. The questions to be asked during the counseling are not limited to addressing the inner causes of the counselee’s trouble, to them should also be added questions about the counselee’s surrounding: “what in the social situation of the people receiving our care may be causing or exacerbating people’s distress? Are the social structures that surround the lives of those under our care providing the



social supports that people need in order for their lives to flourish?” (Gerkin, 1997, 91). The counselor does not stop with the reasons. He or she also must investigate how change could affect a broader context.

In this chapter, I have presented three relevant models in pastoral counseling that I will apply in the analysis and discussion of Nenilava’s counseling in chapter six. I saw that in these models, the understanding of the source of people’s troubles and relationship with God is important to shape the practice of pastoral counseling. For the communal-contextual paradigm of pastoral counseling that is also characteristic of African counseling, pastoral counseling cannot be separated from the communality of the church both in its understanding and in its practice. In chapter five, I will describe Nenilava’s counseling from how her coworkers experienced it. But first, we need to develop an understanding of her background and story in the context, which will be dealt with in the following chapter.

## Chapter four: Contextual Perspectives

In this chapter I will present the religious and familial context in which Nenilava grew up and that led her to serve in the MLC as a prophetess and as a counselor. The stories that will evolve on the following pages aim at providing an understanding of the context for my research question. Nenilava is a famous person in the history of the Malagasy Lutheran Church, a person who achieved to give place to her own practice in the church. Her story is in itself interesting, but it cannot be isolated from the Malagasy traditional belief as before becoming a Christian, Nenilava grew up in a non-Christian family. By Malagasy traditional religious context or Malagasy traditional belief, I mean the religious context before the Christianization of the missionaries. For this reason, before I talk about her familial and religious background I will first try to understand Malagasy ancestral theology and anthropology.

### 4.1 Malagasy traditional belief

The question that I will first deal with when it comes to Malagasy ancestral belief is, how is human life understood relating to God? Such information is given by researchers who made deductions from proverbs, fairy tales, myths, ancestral cultic practices as well as Austronesians and Arabic people's beliefs as these last are the great Malagasy ancestors. Let us first look into Malagasy Ancestral Theology.

#### 4.1.1 Malagasy traditional theology

Malagasy ancestral theology is pluralistic. It implies at the same time a belief in one great God and in many other gods or deities? On the one hand, it may refer to a belief in one God who created the world and humans (Raherisoanjanto, 1992, 72-73). This God is called *Zanahary*. *Zanahary* is the source of everything, who cannot be seen but who is present everywhere. On the other hand, everything in this world is special, needful and could be considered as god (Raherisoanjanto, 1992, 73). A king for instance is a god that can be seen (Raherisoanjato, 1992, 59). A king has *Zanahary*'s power and characters. At the same time, any object could be considered similarly after particular cultic practices through which they are given special powers, after these objects become gods that humans can see and they are then called *sampy*. Likewise,

after death, every human being, apart from the lowest cast (those called *andevo*) becomes a god, called *Razana*. Hence Malgasy ancestors used to believe in many gods.

The gods were believed to have power to make both good and bad things happen in people's lives (Rakibolana, 2005, sv: andriamanitra, 93). People feared and respected them. One can relate with and respect gods through two ways: cultic public practices or the so called *sikidy* in Malagasy. Cults were performed publicly and regularly, whereas *sikidy* was a cultic practice for individuals or particular groups for special reasons, like knowing about future, asking for explanations of an event, asking for advices, in case of sickness, etc. Only appointed persons could lead such practices. Such a person is called *ombiasy*.

*Ombiasy* were highly respected in Malagasy tradition. They were believed to have a god's characters. They could communicate with gods, namely the *sampy* or the objects divined (Raherisoanjato, 1992, 63). For this reason, they were those who provided medicines and *sampy* for protection of the people. They also had the particular power to know what is hidden to ordinary people, like future, intention, people's thoughts, etc.

What is important to retain here is Malagasy pluralism, their belief in gods' powers in their life, the importance of the *sikidy* (cultic practice) and of the *ombiasy* (highly respected person) in people's lives. Also, it should be pointed that the *ombiasy's* spirituality is the ground of god's powers expect God or Zanahary. Now, we will turn to Malagasy ancestral understanding of human life.

#### **4.1.2 Malagasy traditional anthropology**

According to Malagasy ancestral traditions, what is the most important in human life? We will see here the connection between soul and body, the importance of families and prosperity, and the place of women in society.

According to Malagasy traditional belief, the human being is made of two important parts: the soul or spirit, and the body. When a person dies, the spirit goes to the realm of the dead to become a deity, but the body returns to be a part of the earth (Raherisoanjato, 1992, 25). Activities in the realm of deity are not so different from those in the realm of the earth. The gods live like humans do but in their realm that humans cannot see. They are born, they eat, work, and have emotions. The gods get married and die (Raherisoanjato, 1992, 81).

Hence, one can say that in a lifetime, the main goal is to get what one needs through flourishing economic activities, based on farming. What is gotten on earth defines lifestyle after death. Family is also an important part of life. A good life consists of having one's own family. But a spouse can change in each life, which might explain why in Malagasy belief, love is not necessary for building a family.

The place of women in Malagasy traditional belief needs to be explained here as well. Based on the fact that women give life, have menstruation and are good at creating a caring environment, in history, Malagasy used to have a positive interpretation of women's value. They believed that the creation of the world coincided with the arrival of woman on earth (Rakibolana, 2005, s.v. "vehivavy", 1094). Women have a special power as they relate closely with the moon (hence menstruation). Most importantly, they mediate between the gods, or *Razana*, and the descendants (Rakibolana, 2005, s.v. "vehivavy", 1095). They are those who make continuation of life and power possible. So, women are highly valued at least in their families. It is necessary to mention that in ancient times, the most important organization in society was not tribes or kingdom, but family (Esoavelomandroso, 1992, 41). Power within family was not based on gender but on elderliness. Those who had the authority in the family were the elders, men or women (Raherisoanjato, 1992, 41). Gender was not yet an issue.

But things changed with the establishment and concurrence of tribes from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the arrival of Christianity. The establishment of tribes was based on the conviction that a particular cast, called *andriana* or *mpanjaka* (which can be translated as "king"), was more powerful than the other casts and should be the leaders. They tried to conquer and dominate the existing groups of families. Led by men, they adapted the conception of women with their practices. Women were then considered as those from whom kings had their powers just by relating with them, as mothers and wives (Rakibolana, 2005, s.v. "vehivavy", 1095). Therefore, women are important, but the leader should be the men. Even public speech was reserved for men (Rakibolana, 2005, s.v. "vehivavy", 1095).

With the entry of Christianity, the view on women changed with the introduction of the patriarchal tradition of the Holy Scriptures. This influenced the place of women which became more limited. A good woman was believed to be the one who respects her husband and who takes well care of her household (Rakibolana, 2005, s.v. "vehivavy", 1095).

To summarize, Nenilava lived in a context where life on earth was considered not too different from the afterlife. Family was an important institution which was a must for a human being, but which was not necessarily based on love. The place of women was restricted to family life. Now, we will look more closely at Nenilava's personal story which will help us also to understand her convictions and practices.

## 4.2 The Story of Nenilava

Nenilava was a woman from the south-east part of Madagascar who was born on 1918 and died in 1998. The place where she received the call to serve God is called Ankaramalaza, which is the reason why her movement was given the name: *Fifohazana Ankaramalaza* or the 'revival movement of Ankaramalaza'. In the previous section, I talked about the general religious background of Malagasy people before the entry of christianism in order to understand more about the implication of Nenilava's religious background which is pagan. In the present section, I will state Nenilava's religious background briefly without developing it in detail. I will also talk about her familial background and later on the story of her calling and the works she performed in the MLC.

### 4.2.1 Nenilava's familial and religious background

Nenilava's original name is Baolava Volahavana. (Austnaberg, 2008, 50) Jesus used the name Volahavana when he talked to her and Germaine is the name she got after being baptized in the Lutheran church (Austnaberg, 2008, 50). Later, some group of people who followed her coworker Petera<sup>7</sup> and who did not like her gave her the surname Nenilava which means "tall mum". She enjoyed this surname, and this became the name through which people knew her.

She came from a gentile family. By "gentile", I mean that her family did not confess the Christian faith. Her dad was an *ombiasy* (see explanation above, in 4.1.1). People who wanted to become wealthy or who had problems with getting pregnant and giving birth, for instance, came to him for his *sikidy* (cultic practice) (see above in 4.1.1). He claimed that what he heard from his *sikidy* was god's words and will. People used to say that he knew things in advance, like people who would come to him in the future and the reasons of their visit. Nenilava then grew up in a family with a father who possessed a particular spirituality in the Malagasy traditional belief.

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<sup>7</sup> She was called to preach the gospel with this man called Petera. Please see the details in the story of her call 4.2.3

It was not clear when exactly the gospel was preached in Ankaramalaza for the first time, but from what Nenilava seems to have said to the author of the story about her, it is obvious that she did not have any knowledge about Christianity until her marriage. An interesting issue, though, is that she used to quarrel with her dad in her childhood about his faith and practice when he claimed that he discussed with gods through his *sikidy*. She challenged him, saying: “Where is this god you mention in this *sikidy*?... We cannot see God (Zakaria, 1972, 181).” She believed there was a greater God and did not consider what her dad worshipped to be God.

We have seen that Nenilava grew up in a non-Christian family that had an ancestral understanding of God. She did not know about Christ, but she was neither convinced by her familial belief. At the same time, spirituality or the spiritual world was a dimension she knew of from her dad’s work and practice.

#### **4.2.2 Nenilava’s marriage**

The understanding of the meaning of marriage is an important matter in Nenilava’s counseling. For this reason, looking closely at her own marital life might provide some interesting information about her conviction about married life.

Nenilava really did not want to get married. At the age of fifteen, some men started to ask her for marriage. She always refused these proposals, which made her parents think that maybe the reason was that she was married to a spirit (Zakaria, 1972, 182). When she was seventeen, she finally accepted to marry a man called Mosesy Tsirefo who proposed her for marriage. According to a book written about her, it was because her family forced her to (Zakaria, 1972, 186). This man was a catechist in the MLC in which she was later baptized and served. He had already been married once, but his spouse had passed away. He already had children with his previous spouse before marrying Nenilava. Nenilava then started going to catechism classes to prepare for her baptism. This was the first time she heard about Christianity and the Holy Scriptures (Zakaria, 1972, 186).

Nenilava and her husband did not have children<sup>8</sup> but it is written about her that three different couples decided to give her their sons. So, officially, she has three sons, called

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<sup>8</sup> In her story it is said that she had a vision in which she had to choose between three different things. The first two were of the same nature and the same shape but of different colors, white and red and the third something different but cute. She chose the white object which represented the Holy Spirit. The red one represented the world

respectively: Germain Rafanomezantsoa Rabearivelo, Germain Randrianarijaona Rajaofera and Merlin Germain Ramanantsoa (Zakaria, 1972, 235-237).

In the story of her official call, she and her husband were both called by Christ to serve Him (Zakaria, 1972, 190). They served together in the first years following this call, in their district, until he died in 1949. From that time, Nenilava started to visit other places, all in the Lutheran church in Madagascar for her mission. Now, let us look in detail at how she was called to serve Christ in her country.

#### **4.2.3 The story of Nenilava's call**

Nenilava considered that she was being called to serve Christ from the age of ten. However, she did not realize this until the call has appeared to come from Christ when she was eighteen, after getting married. According to her, this was her official call. Only then she could confirm that it was Jesus who has always been communicating with her from her childhood, but as she did not know about Christianity, she could not know about Him earlier on.

Nenilava had difficulties enjoying what ordinary children of her age did. At the age of ten, she was more curious about knowing God than about experiencing and feeling the joys other kids felt when playing. She always needed to isolate herself from the others (Zakaria, 1972, 184).

From this young age, she started to have weird dreams or to hear an unknown voice calling her name at a fixed time, for several years. The particular dreams revealed a strong man taking care of her. This was repeated until she turned twelve years old (Zakaria, 1972, 183). Then, the dreams ceased, and she heard an unknown voice calling her name every day at noon for one year (Zakaria, 1972, 184). From the age of thirteen to fourteen, she experienced new repeated dreams of a strong man bringing her into a large house full of persons and who asked her to stand next to him when he was talking to them (Zakaria, 1972, 185). She understood later that the place of these dreams was a church, that the man was preaching, and that Jesus was this man who preached. Then, the dreams ceased again and were replaced by the call every day at noon until she was fifteen (Zakaria, 1972, 185). But this episode had stopped for one year.

At the age of sixteen, the voice who called her came back again. But the confirmation of her call was when she was eighteen years old. The 30<sup>th</sup> July 1941, her husband's daughter was

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and the cute one represented a baby (Zakaria, 1972; 191-192). In some interpretations, this might be the reason why she did not have children. Maybe she could not have or just did not want to have.

sick, being possessed by evil spirits, and Nenilava's husband, Mosesy with a friend of them called Petera practiced exorcism in the name of Jesus at their home to deliver her. They practiced exorcism following Petera's practice who was at that time a shepherd. The girl got healed the 1<sup>st</sup> August and Jesus called the three of them, Nenilava, Mosesy and Petera, officially on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1941, saying: "Stand up, preach; the gospel everywhere. Cast out demons. Work... Do not wait. Time has come to glorify the Son of man in this country... You are the ones I chose to proclaim that. I order you" (Zakaria, 1972, 190). From that moment, the voice she used to hear at noon stopped. But she started to have dialogues with Jesus.

According to the story written on her, Nenilava did not accept easily Jesus's order. She asked him to be taught as she did not know how to read and write, nor did she know much about the Holy Scriptures. It is stated that after her official call, one day Nenilava disappeared and had lived in the forest during 3 months (Austnaberg, 2008, 52). Many things have been written about this period according to Zakaria, namely supernatural stories that aim to say that Nenilava has been prepared for a long period before going out of Ankaramalaza to expand her movement. However, according to a western testimony, Nenilava did not have several memories of this period but only shared that once she was brought to heaven and was taught what to do (Austnaberg, 2008, 53). Hence, according to this testimony, the supernatural statements recorded about her during this period are "hardly more than overwrought (Austnaberg, 2008, 54)" especially because Nenilava was not a kind of person who talked much. This point of view is understandable but there is also a possibility that later at the stage of her life, she changed her mind and wanted to talk about her experience from her childhood. The story of Nenilava written by Zakaria contains several personal details that make one want to trust the credibility of the source of such information, and especially that the story about her was written in 1970 and published in 1972 when she was still alive. So, after the period of her instruction, Nenilava started to work according to her call. We will see it in the following section.



#### 4.2.4 Nenilava's works with the church

Nenilava worked with her husband in the places surrounding where they live, meaning in the district of Manakara. In 1953, Ankaramalaza was first called *Toby*<sup>9</sup> by the church as several sick people came there to be nurtured through her movement (Zakaria, 1972, 261).

In 1953, she started to go out to reach other parts of Madagascar (Edland, 2002, 186). She began with the central part of Madagascar in the region of Vakinankaratra and Imerina. She continued to the east part in Toamasina. Then she went to the island Comores and after being back, she went to the south and the north of Madagascar.

Everywhere she went, she asked to work with the local Lutheran church, with church workers, pastors and missionaries (Edland, 2002, 186). People also already started to hear about her. So, when she arrived at a place, many people gathered. She started to preach the gospel. During or after her sermon, evil spirits possessing people manifested, so she continued with exorcism to cast them out. After that, she laid her hands on people to comfort them. This became the pattern of her work: preaching, casting out of evil spirits and comforting them through the laying of hands (Zakaria, 1972, 218-219). The act of casting out evil spirits and the laying of hands received the name *asa sy fampaherezana* which was the main characteristic of this revival movement in Madagascar.

In the beginning of her ministry, such services led by Nenilava lasted many hours because she did still not have many coworkers.. In Antsirabe for instance, they started at 9:00 am until 7:00 pm. Then they started again at 8:00 pm to 3:00 am (Zakaria, 1972, 220). In other places, besides these services, people also demanded to meet her personally for personal problems, or in our terms, for counseling (Zakaria, 1972, 230).

Through her works, many persons who had left the church returned. Christians repented. Gentiles became Christians. And people suffering of sicknesses, of evil spirits' possession, deafness, blindness, paralysis, and other several bondages were healed (Zakaria, 1972, 239,265). When she met with people who suffered in such ways, she made sure they prayed to Jesus and

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<sup>9</sup> *Toby* or camp, if translated literally, are places established by the revival movements in the MLC where people with mental troubles are taken care of. For further information, see chapter 5.

believed in Him. She often asked: “What do you want from Jesus?... Is it really Jesus to whom you come?... Why do you come to Him?” (Zakaria, 1972, 243).

The works she began in the places she had visited were continued by local church workers and other volunteers consecrated as shepherds.<sup>10</sup> These persons are her coworkers who, from the time of their consecration as shepherds could preach the gospel too and lay hands on people. Often, she appointed her coworkers saying that Jesus called them to work with her. Sometimes the call was more specific like to drive her in her mission, to preach, to teach writing and reading, or to be responsible for counseling.

When many sick people were being nurtured in a place, that place would be called a *Toby*. In a *Toby*, sick people were being taken care of with foods and clothes. They were taught the Holy Scriptures and received every day holy services following the pattern established by Nenilava (Zakaria, 1972, 262).

After a certain time, she stopped travelling and settled in the capital in Antananarivo, in the city called 67ha (Edland, 2002, 187). She visited Ankaramalaza from time to time. In Ankaramalaza, every year, there is a celebration and memorial of Nenilava’s call from 27<sup>th</sup> July to 2<sup>nd</sup> August. Every 2<sup>nd</sup> August, new people are here consecrated as shepherds. From the time she got settled in 67ha, she concentrated on the task of counseling.

Knowing about Nenilava’s context and personal story is of importance to understand the research question and the later discussion of the data materials in chapter six, but we are now moving to chapter five. In the following chapter I will describe how the informants understood and experienced Nenilava’s counseling.

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<sup>10</sup> Please, see the definition in chapter five.

## Chapter five: Presentation of data material

In this chapter I will present the themes and topics that were developed from the data materials. As introduced in chapter 2, I noted themes that would answer the research question to know about Nenilava's practice and understanding of pastoral counseling. These are themes that I anticipated to find in the materials like the nature of problems brought to Nenilava and the aim of counseling. In addition to that, through the materials, I noted the importance of listening, the inclusion of coworkers, her gentleness and compassion in her practice. These themes answered the research questions too. However, I also present emerging themes and issues that seemed to be common to some informants, and that seemed to be important to them even though they did not directly answer the research questions. This is the case of her answering as a prophetess for instance. I did so as these themes help to understand the position of the informants toward Nenilava.

The interviews were conducted individually but the interviewees can be divided into two groups, Nenilava's coworkers and Nenilava's counselees. First, I will present the main characteristics of her counseling, from how her coworkers and her counselees describe it. In other words, first, characteristics of her counseling from a common point of view of the informants are shown. Second, I will present the two groups' descriptions of her counseling practice, of how they experienced the outward circumstances surrounding her practice are stated separately. Before presenting the However, before the description, we need to review some key terms that are unfamiliar but crucial in understanding Nenilava's counseling.

### 5.1 Definition of terms

The terms that need to be defined reviewed are: *asa sy fampaherezana*, *Toby*, Nenilava's "children," prophet and shepherd.

*Asa sy fampaherezana*: refers to two new practices that were added to the special holy services that were carried out within revival movements. Hymns and sermons already played part of the Lutheran worship established by the missionaries. But through the revival movements, the casting out of demons or *asa*, and the encouragement through the laying of hands, called *fampaherezana*, were added. So, *asa sy fampaherezana* refers to the act of casting out evil spirits and laying of hands, that we can translate to exorcism and encouragement.

*Toby*: refers to a place where sick people are nurtured through the revival movement. Each revival movement led by different founders has its own *toby*. When revival works were performed at a certain place and attracted more sick people who came there to be healed. Later, these places received the name of *Toby* to take care of these people and to others in the future.

*Nenilava's children*: we saw earlier in 4.2.2 that Nenilava had three official sons whom she had adopted. But the fact is that she used to call many other people her children as well. The persons she called to come and work with her, or those who came to spend time with her, she welcomed as family members.

Prophet: in Malagasy understanding, some people might have supernatural powers that ordinary people do not have (see 4.1). From the concept of prophets in the Bible, the term “prophet” came to be used to refer to a person with particular abilities of knowing beforehand what is hidden, namely dimensions of the future (Rakibolana, 2005, s.v. “mpaminany”, 800). Such abilities were understood as a spiritual gift, and Nenilava was believed to be a prophetess.

Shepherd: In her ministry, Nenilava established many camps or *toby* where people were nurtured through the preaching of the Gospel and the *asa sy fampaherezana*, or exorcism and encouragement which were performed there during services. These works needed coworkers, and the persons who volunteered for such work were called shepherds. But volunteers needed to be trained and consecrated for the task to become a shepherd. When someone is consecrated to be a shepherd, she or he can preach the gospel and perform the *asa sy fampaherezana* in the revival movement's context.

## **5.2 Main characteristics of Nenilava's counseling**

Three categories or characteristics emerged from the data material concerning Nenilava's counseling. First it is about the weight she put on counseling, meaning the importance of counseling in her ministry. The second characteristic relates to the kind of problems, or the particular topics, that were treated in the counseling and third is about the aim or goal of the counseling.

### **5.2.1 Counseling as an important ministry**

Counseling had a central position in Nenilava's ministry and was given high priority and importance. She spent her daytime receiving people who queued up in line, wanting to meet her.

The informants met her for counseling in the city of Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. The name of the *toby* in which she lived was called *toby 238* and was located in the city of 67ha.<sup>11</sup> There, Nenilava spent several years carrying out her ministry. She had already established the pillars of her work, namely the different *toby* (see the context in chapter three) and the revival movement's practice in many other places (Edland, 2002, 187). At her house in 67ha, worships were led, often by her coworkers, and she also received people for counseling. She consecrated the *toby 238* in 67ha to be a place for nurturing people's faith. This means that this particular *toby* was given a different compared to the other many *toby* where sick people were received and treated by the shepherds. At the *toby 238* of 67ha, the place was designated as a space for sharing God's word, doing the "*asa sy fampaherezana*" and carrying out counseling.

There were so many people who wanted to meet her that there was almost always a long queue in front of her home in 67ha. She received all kinds of people who were waiting for her, and often it was not until 5:00 pm that she could have lunch after completing her day's service and people having left.<sup>12</sup> She never refused meeting anyone who came to her even if she was exhausted or sick.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from receiving unknown people, she also spent time with those she called her children. Some of them talked to her about their problems. But sometimes, they also just spent time worshiping together.<sup>14</sup> It is not clear how much time Nenilava could rest, or how long her rest at night was. Ellen Pearce, one of her coworkers used to leave Nenilava home around midnight at around 2:00 am, and return to Nenilava around 6:00 am.<sup>15</sup>

### **5.2.2 The Nature of Problems brought to Nenilava**

Nenilava's coworkers reported that she welcomed everyone who came to her. She even welcomed politicians.<sup>16</sup> Obviously, she had to deal with many kinds of problems. However, one nature of problem often brought to Nenilava during her counseling is pinpointed. That was about marital problem. This was a dominant matter that she encountered in her ministry. Adultery,

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<sup>11</sup> 67ha is a name of a city in Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. Nenilava used to live in this city and 238 refers to the number of her house there.

<sup>12</sup> E.Pearce, personal interview, November 5, 2020.

<sup>13</sup> P.Dereck, personal interview, November 01, 2020.

<sup>14</sup> E.Pearce, November 5, 2020 .

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> P.Dereck, November 01, 2020.

sterility, and children's bad behavior were major reasons why people came to her. People for instance came to see her because they could no longer stand their spouse's unfaithfulness. Some wanted to divorce, etc.<sup>17</sup>

Apart from marital issues, some people also came to her for financial problems. For instance, a trade man asked for her advice after his client did not pay his due amount for his product.<sup>18</sup>

Youth also came for academic issues. This is the case of R. Ellis's nephew who was seeking help as he had difficulties choosing the right field after getting his baccalaureate;<sup>19</sup> or of Dawson's classmate who wanted to seek counseling on which subjects to prepare for her exam.<sup>20</sup>

To my surprise, the informants did not report many cases of religious and spiritual issues that was brought to Nenilava in counseling. But there is a unique case which is that of Ellis's husband. Before meeting Nenilava, he had been visiting many churches and could not settle in any of them and Nenilava ordered him to be part of the MLC from that day and not to test other denominations any longer.<sup>21</sup>

Hence, Nenilava welcomed people with various kinds of problem. They are mostly related to financial, academic, and marital issues. Now we will see what the goals of her counseling according to our informants are.

### **5.2.3 The Aim of the Counseling**

According to the informants', Nenilava had two goals or aims with her counseling. The first goal was to proclaim the salvation of Christ: "Counseling is an open gate through which Christ bestows his salvation to people" said one informant.<sup>22</sup> This does not mean necessarily that in every situation, Nenilava would preach. She did so in some situations but not always. However, she would often read from the Holy Scriptures texts that would fit the situation of her counselees.

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<sup>17</sup> E.Pearce, November 5, 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> R.Ellis, personal interview, November 3, 2020.

<sup>20</sup> F.Dawson, personal interview, November 4, 2020.

<sup>21</sup> R.Ellis, November 3, 2020.

<sup>22</sup> E.Pearce, November 5, 2020.

The second goal of her counseling according to the informants was to make people follow God's will in their life. Most of the time, people went to her to know which decision about their life to make. In other words, they wanted to know the way that God had prepared for them in a particular situation. Dereck for instance, regarding his studies, were told by Nenilava which one among the three universities that had been proposed to him, he ought to choose.<sup>23</sup> A couple wanted to know if it was God's willing for them to get married. This couple was given the answer that that was not the case. However, they insisted on marrying one another, and they experienced difficulties in their life.<sup>24</sup>

From both her counselees and coworkers, we grasp the weight put on counseling in her ministry, and we have seen what were the typical issues brought to her for counseling. The informants also saw in Nenilava's counseling a way to make Jesus's salvation and God's will in life known by the counselee. There is also another side to Nenilav's counseling ministry, and that is about her practice of counseling.

### **5.3 Coworkers' account on Nenilava's counseling practice**

Details about how Nenilava went about in the actual carrying out of her counseling practice, is here portrayed according to how her coworkers experienced it and described it, and how I was able to grasp it. It is necessary first to understand that Nenilava had coworkers for her ministry. They were people whom she appointed for specific tasks such as preaching in some places, taking care of sick people, be responsible for the *tobys*, teach writing and reading, help her with counseling, for particular events, etc. Four of the informants were her coworkers. Two of them were particularly trained by Nenilava for counseling so they could assist her in the counseling sessions. Even though they were not able to tell me about all the cases of Nenilava's counseling, the data material that I was able to develop in the interviews with them provided insight into the most common characteristics of her counseling. Among then, there is the importance of listening.

#### **5.3.1 Importance of listening**

The coworkers highlighted that Nenilava's counseling could be divided into three main parts. In the first part, she gave the floor to the counselees who came to talk to her. Then the counselees introduced the reason why they needed to meet her. I pointed at these reasons earlier in this

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<sup>23</sup> P.Dereck, November 01, 2020.

<sup>24</sup> R.Ellis, November 3, 2020.

chapter but here, we see how important listening was to her. When the counselees are given the floor to talk about the reasons why they came for counseling, from the side of Nenilava, listening was important. The informants report that they observed that she listened carefully to what was being said. She had her own way of listening. According to Dereck, besides not saying anything, she closed her eyes, as if she was asleep but she was praying while listening at the same time.<sup>25</sup> Apart from the exposition of the counselee's problem, the counselor's response constitutes another major part of counseling, which are explained in the following.

### **5.3.2 Inclusion of coworkers in counseling**

In the second part, the counselor might use a particular approach of his or her own. For Nenilava's case, she adopted different approaches to address her counselees' problems. she talked to them, but she also included her coworkers to participate in dialoguing with and answering the counselees.

Nenilava made her coworkers participate in her ministry, including in the counseling process. Pearce, one of Nenilava's coworkers, was assigned to particularly assist in the ministry of counseling.<sup>26</sup> She recalls that during some of the counseling sessions, Nenilava asked her to answer people's talk right away: "answer that!"<sup>27</sup> After allowing Pearce's participation, Nenilava sometimes added her own answers, when she thought it was needed.<sup>28</sup> The purpose for additional comments seemed to be for for the sake of training Pearce. Pearce clearly recalled: "I received no biblical training apart from what my parents made me follow, like Sunday school. Nenilava just trained me by letting me participate... what Neny asked me to do was really hard for me!"<sup>29</sup> To Nenilava it was common to include her coworkers in the practice of counseling. Dereck was also one of those who were sometimes asked by Nenilava to come and talk to people together with her.<sup>30</sup>

From the informants, Nenilava was not only very abrupt in how she related to the counselees. They also characterized her as being gentle and compassionate.

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<sup>25</sup> P.Dereck, November 01, 2020.

<sup>26</sup> E.Pearce, November 5, 2020.

<sup>27</sup> P.Dereck, November 01, 2020.

<sup>28</sup> E.Pearce, November 5, 2020.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> P.Dereck, November 01, 2020.



### 5.3.3 Gentleness and compassion

Nenilava told her counselees what she meant to be was the will of God for them, which was not always easy to accept by the counselees. In front of their reactions, she had to be steadfast. Dereck clearly recalled that her way of doing this was not about suggestion what the will of God was. She just told people frankly what God wanted to happen in their lives, even though that would make them disappointed.<sup>31</sup> She also did not hesitate to tell people when they were on the wrong path. Even when she talked to politicians about politics and empowerment, she kept steadfast about her opinion in front of them.<sup>32</sup>

However, Nenilava was also gentle. In Pearce's words, she often coaxed her counselees. For instance, when Ellis, an informant was informed about her future spouse, she had difficulties accepting him. Nenilava tried to convince her, saying: "how would you like him to be?... if we asked him to have a different haircut, would you accept him?"<sup>33</sup>

Her gentleness appeared even when the counselee was doing something wrong and even when they were lying. Even though she knew the truth beyond their words, she was not rude to them. She adopted a gentle approach to make them acknowledge their reality. For instance, there was a man who came to her and complained about his wife. He said that he wanted to divorce her. Nenilava told him gently that when her sons were having affairs or were chasing after other women, then when they came to her, she could imagine? She saw the women in question standing with them although they did not come together. According to the informant, this is how Nenilava knew a person had an affair. Then, she asked him if what he told about his wife was the real reason for him wanting to divorce and if not instead, he wanted to divorce because he already had another woman in his life. Then she described this woman in question. The man acknowledged that he was actually having another woman in mind and asked for forgiveness.<sup>34</sup>

Another of Nenilava's characteristics that was manifested during her counseling was compassion. She could understand people's problems and pain. She expressed that through

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<sup>31</sup> P.Dereck, November 01, 2020.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> R.Ellis, November 3, 2020.

<sup>34</sup> E.Pearce, November 5, 2020.

words, such as: “how painful you feel now!”<sup>35</sup> She also showed her willingness to help those in need. Often, she referred to Christ’s will through her, saying: “Christ can help you!”<sup>36</sup>

We saw the accounts of Nenilava’s coworkers. Now let us look at the account of her counselees about her practice of counseling.

#### **5.4 Counselees’ account of Nenilava’s practice of counseling**

Here we focus on the report from Nenilava’s counselees. The informants are people who came to her for counseling. There were persons who were just her counselees. But her coworkers are also included as suitable informants here as they were at a certain time only her counselees before becoming her coworkers. However, only their reports as receivers of the counseling are considered here. I reserved a section for their description separately from that of Nenilava’s coworkers as here, their personal stories are emphasized. They gave a report based on how they experienced Nenilava’s counseling as counselees and not as third persons who were present. Their reports are then more reliable. We see here the different approaches used by Nenilava as how the counselees experienced her counseling.

The counselees reported different ways that Nenilava approached them. We can say through their report that she mixed strictness with respect and care. She was flexible with the counselees’ mood. She sometimes answered with silence. She cared to not offend them and respected them.

Through the coworkers’ description, we saw that Nenilava gave space to her counselees to express the reason why they went to see her. The majority of people coming to her used verbal expression. But Nenilava accepted other ways that her counselees used to express their pain. She also used herself other ways of expression consequently. Through Dawson’s indication, Nenilava respected and welcomed a non-verbal expression. For her case, she had many problems that she could simply express verbally. Instead, In front of her, she just cried a lot and could not articulate a single word. Nenilava just allowed her crying, in a tender way. At her turn, neither did Nenilava say anything to her. She just hugged her. But such gesture brought peace to Dawson.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> E.Pearce, November 5, 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> F.Dawson, November 4, 2020.

Nenilava was also strict about the way people considered her and about accepting her advices. She wanted people to see that Christ was behind her works. One day, Ellis brought her a woman who wanted to meet her. She strongly corrected her, saying with rude voice and face: “you want to meet me or to meet Jesus?”<sup>38</sup>

Nenilava also advised in a strict way that her counselees could not argue with her. It was for instance the case of Ellis’s husband who used to visit many churches and denominations without deciding to go to only one of them. Nenilava told him strictly: “From now on you will be a member of the church of... You won’t go to visit any other church any longer!”<sup>39</sup>

Her counselees were to accept what she said as she communicated God’s will and not hers. For Ellis for instance, her husband was called to be a pastor. Knowing the financial difficulties that students at theological seminars faced, she intended to work in a bank not far from the seminar. But while she was trying to tell about her intention to Nenilava, Nenilava told her that she also was called to be a pastor. She gave three arguments to refuse. For the first two, Nenilava coaxed her gently and gave solutions to make her accept but after Ellis gave a third argument to refuse, Nenilava changed her mood and said strongly: “it is not me who call you to be a pastor. It is Jesus!”<sup>40</sup>

In other cases however, Nenilava remained silent when her counselees asked her something. Her answer was then left unknown. When Dawson was 17 years old, she wanted to become a shepherd. At that time, she was in Ankaramalaza, teaching people how to write and read, after leaving her school and family. But the *toby* Ankaramalaza had a strict rule that people below the age of 25 could not be consecrated as shepherds. Dawson insisted to be consecrated by going and arguing at all levels. However, the only one who could give the ultimate answer to her request was Nenilava. But when she asked her, she did not give any answer. She just held Dawson’s hands tightly and kissed them gently. Dawson took that gesture as an acceptance. But when people criticized her after her consecration, she felt skeptical and hesitated if God really allowed her to be consecrated. She went back to Nenilava. Nonetheless, Nenilava assured her that it was God’s will to consecrate her and that she should not hesitate.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> R.Ellis, November 3, 2020.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> F.Dawson, November 4, 2020.

Another approach that one could see with Nenilava was one through which she tried not to offend her counselees even if she presented her opinion in a powerful way. Ellis was a young woman when she met Nenilava. She enjoyed using nail polish. One day she wore a red nail polish when she visited Nenilava. When she was about to leave, Nenilava held her hands and returned them in order to see the nail polish she was wearing. She said softly: “It seemed to me that you had blood on your hands.”<sup>42</sup> These words had a powerful effect on Ellis who run away and could not wait to come home to remove her nail polish.<sup>43</sup>

We could see that Nenilava was mostly strict when it was about telling what she judged right. But she also showed another approach through which she did not order the counselee what to do even if she knew what would be right. Instead, she respected the counselee’s conviction but introduced little by little arguments to make him or her change his or her mind. Ellis was having her second baby whom she really wanted to be a girl. She prayed for that. The noun she prepared for the baby was a feminine one and all clothes she bought were for girls. When she discussed with Nenilava about the noun of the baby, Nenilava just told her that it would be wise to prepare a masculine name too. But Ellis did not take this advice seriously. In her mind, her baby was a girl and she did not need any other name. Few time later, she just told Ellis directly: “John is his name!” Ellis still thought this was the second name to prepare and did not mean that the baby was a boy. But Ellis actually gave birth to a boy. For Ellis, Nenilava prepared her little by little to accept that the baby she carried was a boy.<sup>44</sup>

We could then see that Nenilava was flexible during her counseling. Most of the time, she gave her advice arbitrarily, without any possibility to argue. If she listened to argumentations against her advice, she gave gently solutions to make it possible to accept. But there were moments when she did not give advice at all, as if she respected the person’s choice about the matter.

Now we will move to the next section where the particular contents of Nenilava’s counseling are described. This description combines the reports of the two groups as their reports appeared to be similar.

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<sup>42</sup> R.Ellis, November 3, 2020.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> R.Ellis, November 3, 2020.

## 5.5 Particular Features of Nenilava's Counseling's Content

Both Nenilava's coworkers and counselees stressed on the fact that Nenilava's being a prophetess made her counseling exceptional. Also, they reported on the general messages Nenilava shared in her practice of counseling.

### 5.5.1 Answering as a prophetess

If there is something that the informants did not forget to mention about Nenilava, it is that her being a prophetess was obvious in her answers during her counseling. Here, by prophetess, the informants mean that she knew about things before they took place, she knew what the will of God for people was, she knew what was going on in the deepest of people's heart and mind, she manifested Christ's strength. Her spirit could be at different places at the same time. She knew the future. She could be at two different places at the same time and she knew what was in people's mind.

Nenilava knew about things before they happened. One day, she called Dereck and told him about a dream she had had the previous night, concerning him. In her dream, he was alone in a great dark and scary forest. After asking Christ about the meaning of that dream, she understood that it meant that Dereck would have several enemies in his lifetime, and that whoever stood against him would struggle. Dereck later experience this. People who disliked him and countered him faced difficulties such as health problems.<sup>45</sup>

She knew what God's will was for people, for instance what a person was called to do. During her first meeting with Nenilava, Pierce had her own issues. But Nenilava did not allow her to initiate the talking. Instead, she underlined that she had instead something to tell her, which was about her calling to be one of her coworkers.<sup>46</sup>

Nenilava could also know what was in the deepest of people's heart even though their words said the opposite. A woman who cheated on her husband once came to Nenilava with her husband. This woman asked Nenilava if what she heard about her was correct, that Christ told her people's secrets. Then Nenilava asked her what she ate the day before during lunch. She answered that she ate meat, which surprised her husband, as he did not give her enough money to

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<sup>45</sup> P.Dereck, November 01, 2020.

<sup>46</sup> E.Pearce, November 5, 2020.

buy such lunch. Then Nenilava said that she had used the money she got after sleeping with another man. The woman acknowledged this, wept and asked for forgiveness for what she had done and for not having trusted in Christ's power.<sup>47</sup> It was also the case of Ellis. One day, Nenilava called Ellis to tell her that she was going to marry someone who will be introduced to her. It was hard for her to accept that. She struggled a lot and prayed: "if I have to get married upon someone's choice, Jesus, why shouldn't it be upon my choice?"<sup>48</sup> Another day, when she came to Nenilava, she did not say anything but Nenilava ensured her, saying: "Do you know Ellis? People think that what I say is my choice; that I choose people's spouse. But I tell you, we will all be held accountable before God, both me who tell his will and you who are told it."<sup>49</sup> In Ellis's opinion, Nenilava was communicated her struggle by Christ and that made her know it even if she did not tell anything to her.<sup>50</sup>

Nenilava had Christ's strength. One day she was really sick when a foreigner, a Chinese man, wanted to meet her. Before studying in the United States, he went to see Malagasy traditional healers and brought *sampy* from them to the United States to help him with his studies. But he became demoniac after a few times. When he came back to Madagascar, he wanted to meet Nenilava and to be delivered, but Nenilava could not receive him as she was really sick and could not even get out of her bed. When she heard the man, she asked her coworkers to tell him that he would be okay. But the man so insisted that she lays her hands on him. Then, she asked people to wake her up and laid her hands on him. Just when it was done, she appeared again to have no strength at all. And the man screamed that he got healed. According to Dereck, it was Christ's strength that made her stand up and lay hands on the man.<sup>51</sup>

Nenilava's spirit could also be at two different places at the same time, and she answered people accordingly. There was for instance a moment when Dereck's flight to go back home was delayed. Her wife worried and came to her. The day after, she assured Dereck's wife that he was safe as she saw him at the airport, talking with a tall white man and a black man. Dereck later confirmed that what she had seen was what had happened.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, in the case of Dawson, Nenilava called her to leave her family and study to teach adults in the countryside how to read

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<sup>47</sup> B.Badley, November 1, 2020.

<sup>48</sup> R.Ellis, November 3, 2020.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> P.Dereck, November 01, 2020.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

and write. Nenilava needed to talk to her parents to give their permission. She did not meet them personally. Instead, she sent three coworkers of her. When the discussion was over, Dawson wanted to tell Nenilava what happened in the meeting. But Nenilava said that she knew everything as she assisted the meeting from her home.<sup>53</sup>

The second part of this section is the content of Nenilava's message as how the informants reported it.

### **5.5.2 Nenilava's message**

It was obviously not possible to talk about all the counseling sessions of Nenilava. However, the informants mentioned the general content that they noticed in her messages to those who sought her advice. As we saw earlier, as prophetess, Nenilava transmitted God's will to people when they came to her, which was the major content of her message. She also talked about Christ. And often people who came to her received a call for religious services and for repentance.

#### **5.4.2.1 God's Will**

According to the informants, the major content of Nenilava's message was God's will for people. By "God's will", they meant that the opposite way was the evil's way that led people to difficulties, or worse, to death. There is no other alternative.<sup>54</sup> According to them, what she said was always confirmed. It was for instance the case of Ellis's nephew, who according to what she promised worked as a doctor abroad and is still living there until now.<sup>55</sup> When she said that following one way was harmful, and that people still kept going through it, they experienced difficulties later. It was the case of the couple who still wanted to get married even though they knew that their union was not according to God's will. Their child had a malformation and the wife died at a young age after being sick.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> F.Dawson, November 4, 2020.

<sup>54</sup> R.Ellis, November 3, 2020.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> R.Ellis, November 3, 2020.

Nenilava was considered to communicate God's will as "she had God's word in her."<sup>57</sup> She was closely related to Christ who told her what his will was. It was her gift. And that was possible as she did not live according to the flesh. One day, Ellis asked her what kind of food she liked the most. Her answer was: "Me? Nothing. I have no more will. I am already dead, you know?"<sup>58</sup>

Another issue about God's will is that it is the opposite of the will of the flesh which counters it every time. As for Ellis and Dawson, flesh always countered God's will. Then, in her counseling, Nenilava tried her best to make people follow her advice even though it was painful for the counselee.<sup>59</sup>

### 5.5.2.2 Telling about Christ

Nenilava often mentioned Christ during her counseling sessions. Sometimes, she introduced this message after the counselees had talked about their problems and before she advised them, to stress that the reason for her advice was Christ. The coworker referred to the cases of marital problems which she often dealt with. She could for instance say "How you are struggling Christ knows your struggle and only He can help you. That is why He brought you here."<sup>60</sup>

Most of the time, she also talked about Christ's love as an example of the attitude that the complainer needed to adopt. She said: "Our Christ is a loving Christ. His love is not like ours. He is patient and He gives love freely... you should do like that: do not dispute him when he's home. Be loving, be courageous and be patient. Be the one who shows love to him more than any woman outside..."<sup>61</sup> After giving her advice, she also sometimes said: "our Christ is a loving Christ, do you know? He saved us by giving himself through the cross. He can help you. Trust Him!"<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> P.Dereck, November 01, 2020.

<sup>58</sup> R.Ellis, November 3, 2020.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> E.Pearce, November 5, 2020.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> E.Pearce, November 5, 2020.



### 5.5.2.3 Call for Religious Services and Repentance

Something that people also remembered about Nenilava is her giving of Bible verses to her counselees. Each counselee who came to her, received a verse that fitted their situation and that they remembered afterwards. Often with these verses, she also told people about a call for service. For instance she often said: “do you know? Jesus calls you to be a shepherd!”<sup>63</sup>

Apart from religious callings, repentance was also an important message in Nenilava’s counseling. When people were in the wrong path, Nenilava welcomed them gently without hesitating to tell them about what they did. But after that, she asked them to repent.<sup>64</sup> For the case of demon possessed persons, Nenilava counseled their family members. The only important thing that they had to do to deliver the possessed person was to repent from their worships of their gods.<sup>65</sup>

I also find it useful to mention the informants’ report that in some cases, Nenilava asked to meet with particular persons to resolve some problems. Nenilava used to call people to come to her. She did not always wait for them to come to her. She did so in the cases of complaint from a spouse. If the husband complained about his wife, then Nenilava would ask to meet the wife to ask for her version and to exhort her. For instance, a wife was asked if she refused to have sexual intercourse with her husband, or if he abused her.<sup>66</sup>

What we saw in this chapter is a description of the informants’ report without any interpretation from the part of the researcher. We can then notice that the report reflects the informants having very positive views of Nenilava. This might be due their conception of her as an extraordinary woman. Besides hearing about Nenilava, they could experience her uncommon gift like to know what people thought. They had strong convictions that Nenilava represented Christ in her ministry, especially when she practiced counseling as she knew Christ’s will. Now, we come to the analysis of these materials in the chapter six and we will try to work on the description separately from the informants’ interpretation.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> E.Pearce, November 5, 2020

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> E.Pearce, November 5, 2020

## **Chapter six: Analysis**

The main goal of this chapter is to deepen the understanding of Nenilava's counseling.

I will analyse her counseling practice and its content from the perspectives of the three counseling models that I presented in chapter three, the kerygmatic model, the clinical model and the contextual model. Embedded in this task is that I also seek to understand how her own background in a Malagasy context and her personal stories influenced her counseling.

### **6.1 Nenilava's counseling from the perspective of the kerygmatic model**

In this section, Nenilava's practice will be discussed through the lenses of the kerygmatic model. It is necessary to remind us of the fact that the kerygmatic model has focus on preaching the Gospel and the salvation in Jesus Christ. It has a universal conception of human's problems which is a religious understanding (Patton, 1993, 39). It means that for this model, people's problems are caused by the alteration of their relationship with God. In other words, sin is the reason for people's problems. Consequently, counselors who follow this paradigm aim at removing sin's power over the counselees' lives by reconciling them with God through the forgiveness of sin. In Jay E. Adams' words, through counseling, counselees should be helped to "subdue" the rule of sin (Adams, 1978, 128). That means that counselors want to help the counselees into a reconciled relationship with God shown by a life which follows God's will and sin's will.

The kerygmatic model has as its starting point Christian dogmatics, with more focus on Christian teaching than on the problems of the wounded person, the counselee. The counselor will seek to preach the gospel in meeting with the wounded, rather than trying to understand his or her genuine problems. Counseling from this perspective is thus directed towards Christian dogmatics for the sake of the salvation of the counselee. It wants the counselee to act according to God's will in his present problem in order to solve both the apparent problem or the reason of the counseling and the source of it (sin). This way characterizes subduing sin.

In Nenilava's practice, we saw how she considered the voices inside of her, and also her place as a prophetess. She considered that she knew God's will in the lives of the counselees lives. The main reason for her counseling was to communicate to her counselees what God's will

was for their life. One of our informants even said “Nenilava’s words were Christ’s words”<sup>67</sup> From the interviewees, it is underlined that what she considered as being God’s will, could not be discussed. She used to talk to her counselees saying: “you will do this” like when she addressed Ellis or Dawson about their to-be spouses and professions or when she told Pearce about her call (see chapter five). Nenilava’s understanding of herself was that she was the messenger of God. So did people think of her. They had this thought about her as according to them, Nenilava had supernatural power that made of her a prophetess who had access to mysteries especially about God. Because of that, what she said could not be contradicted. And in her counseling, even if it was reported that she was gentle and compassionate (ref. 4.3.1.1.3), gentleness and compassion were used in order that her counselees accept her directive, no matter how difficult that might be for the counselee. People needed to accept what she said as it was God’s will and even if it was difficult. She then practiced directive<sup>68</sup> counseling. It was problem-solving too as the main goal focused at applying her directive in the present.

This directive approach of the classical model was the main reason of its critiques from the clinical approach. In Patton’s words, it makes the counselor neglect the “being someone” compared to “doing something” (Patton, 1993, 5). In my opinion, it is exactly what Nenilava did as she focused on the action she thought her counselees should carry out and neglected their feelings or struggles induced. In Dawson’s narratives for instance, one day, she (the woman who was called at her seventeen age to leave her family and move to the countryside to teach writing and reading) felt sick at Ankaramalaza and wanted so much to go back home. She was missing her family. But she was not allowed to as it was thought that she was sick because she needed to repent. Nenilava even rebuked her strongly.<sup>69</sup> Repenting from sin is part of the kerygmatic model, however, Nenilava took a powerful stand towards her counselee that is far beyond the limits of sound and respectful counseling,

This directive practice is also related to power issues. This model “was enforced by thinking and practice related to pastoral authority (Eide, 2008, 17)”. It means that according to this model, counselors consider themselves and are considered to be the ones who are able more

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<sup>67</sup> P.Dereck, November 01, 2020.

<sup>68</sup> I use the word “directive” here to refer to the opposite of the “non-directive” approach of the clinical paradigm. By “directive approach”, I mean authoritative approach through which someone dictate to other person what should be done or not.

<sup>69</sup> F.Dawson, November 4, 2020

than others to show the counselees the right way, through their knowledge of God's scriptures (Thurneysen, 1958, 14). Hence, this practice leads easily to power abuse. In my opinion, power abuse is one character of Nenilava's counseling. She considered herself as the one who heard Christ's voice and so His will. She was also considered as a prophetess, meaning the one who has access to mysterious world. Consequently, people were asked to accept what she said and approached her without any critical mindset. For instance, when she said that she wanted people like Pierce to work with her, she said that it was not her who called them but Jesus, stating that they had no right to refuse. It was the same when she appointed husbands for girls. They were not supposed to refuse in spite of the fact that they wanted to be free to choose.

In Nenilava's practice, one needs to reflect to what extent the voices heard by Nenilava could be considered as Jesus's voices and not her own. Researchers have accepted that human beings have multiple voices inside which reflect their multiple selves (Cooper-White, 2011, 51-61). There is a strong possibility that if not always, at least often, the voices she heard were her own. We remember that she herself needed help for that issue when she said that she heard too many voices that it became hard for her to distinguish which was that of Jesus (Rabehatonina, 84). Besides, stating that Nenilava could hear Christ's voice distinctly also point at a spiritual dimension that God acts in an immanent way in persons who relate to God, independently of who they are. Personally I would like to suggest that in this case, even if Nenilava could receive a message from Christ, such a message cannot be free from her context, interpretation and worldviews just like messages in the Bible. Hence, it is important to have also look at Nenilava's counseling practice from a critical perspective, mindset. One needs to reflect on the fact that Nenilava also was a woman with her own opinion. One needs to ask if what she said could be approached in a way that wonders the motivations and relevancy of her statements rather than just accepting them based on the fact that she knew God's will. Otherwise, there is a risk of falling into fanaticism. This is for instance the case of the members of the revival movement of Ankaramalaza who are forbidden to wear nail polishes, trousers or to dance, based on the fact that they inherit from Nenilava's practice.

From the informants' report, one could also notice the importance of the concept of God's will. This is a difficult concept. I think nowadays, stressing that would could lead to dangerous outcomes. How can one know exactly what is God's plan for him or her? Such concept would just increase people's anxiety and inability to make a firm decision freely. It

prevents people from taking the responsibility of their own life and being empowered for their daily lives. Moreover, saying that a way apart from what God planned is that of the devil, one would limit God's deity, power, and ability to act in all circumstances in believers' lives.

The classical or kerygmatic model is also known by its use of theological messages. It is because restoring right relationship between humans and God, is the goal that this model tries to achieve. Theological message is the most important feature of this paradigm (Patton, 1993, 91). We can see in Nenilava's counseling this characteristic of the kerygmatic model. Theological message was dominant in her counseling. Nenilava dealt with many kinds of people's problem during her counseling, which were not religious. But for her, she often found ways to proclaim Christ in it. Christ's love was the reason why people could come to her. Christ was the basis of her work and advice. And Christ was the reason of her counselees' hope (see 4.3.1.3.1). Apart from that, she always gave a verse from the Bible to her counselees.

Apart from theological message, ecclesial orientation is another feature of the classical model. Counselors try to lead people to the church where complete nurture can be received through God's words and sacraments. God's words and sacraments are the tools that can restore relationship between God and humans. This feature is seen in Nenilava's counseling. She also often led her counselees to ecclesial tools. When she received people with marital problems, she asked: "are you baptized? Are you legitimately and religiously married?"<sup>70</sup> And often, she advised her counselees at the end of her session to attend *asa sy fampaharezana* or exorcism and encouragement.<sup>71</sup> The *asa sy fampaharezana* or exorcism and encouragement was for Nenilava means to get forgiveness of sin, the Holy Spirit and comforting from Her. It was then an important tool to restore her counselees' relationship with God.

Apart from the directive approach of Nenilava's counseling, its use of theological message and ecclesial tools, let us see the other aspects of her counseling from the perspective of the clinical model.

## **6.2 Nenilava's counseling from the perspective of the clinical model**

The clinical model is known to be defined by its critiques of the kerygmatic model (Eide, 2008, 18). It shifted from the directive approach of the classical paradigm to the non-directive or

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<sup>70</sup> E.Pearce, November 5, 2020.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

client-centered approach. It focused more on the counselee as a person rather than on the actions she or he needed to do for her or his actual problem. The mental well-being of the counselee and his or her inner ability to deal with his or her problem freely are prioritized over the actions he or she are thought to have to do in order to solve his or her actual problem. The main feature of this paradigm is then the non-directive approach which gives freedom to the counselee according to what convinces him or her. But before that, through this model, the counselor needs to help the counselee grasp his or her real problem by listening to his or her burdens (Gerkin, 1984, 219). The counselor cannot do so without knowing about the problem brought during the counseling and if the counselee does not trust him or her enough to talk to him or her openly.

In Nenilava's counseling, one notices that listening was important to her. Meeting her counsees, she asked them to talk and listened to them carefully. She, then, established a relation of trust with her counsees. This was also seen especially when she showed that she understood their struggles and that she loved them through verbal or non-verbal means. Pierce said clearly: "Nenilava showed in her counseling that she carried people's problems with them."<sup>72</sup> At the same time, she did not trust everything her counsees said; she made it important to know what was really going on beyond their words. In the informants' account, she knew the truth about the counsees, by being acknowledged in the context as a prophetess. But she did not keep what she knew to herself. What was important to her was that they know their inmost struggles and admit them too. In one informant's words, to admit and accept the truth leads to repentance and the opposite is self-justification.<sup>73</sup> Hence, in her counseling, she tried to make the counsees aware of their inmost or authentic part of themselves. She led them to self-awareness.

One can say that here, Nenilava's counseling aimed at healing and sustaining, two characters of the clinical paradigm. One talks about healing when the counselor gives a safe environment to the counselee to share his or her struggles and helps to restore what is broken. (Eide, 2008, 72) Nenilava offered healing counseling when she made listening important and when she helped the counsees grasp their inmost part. Nenilava's counseling was also sustaining which showed to the counsees that she shared their burdens. She did so by giving verbal or non-verbal signs of accept and inclusion

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<sup>72</sup> E.Pearce, November 5, 2020.

<sup>73</sup> B.Badley, November 1, 2020.

Malagasy people tended to stress upon Nenilava's particularity such as viewing her as a prophetess in her counseling practice. It means that she knew what was in people's mind. But this ability could also be seen through another angle. Like in the case of Ellis who struggled to accept her future husband. The ability to know that she was struggling might have been a supernatural gift as a prophetess, but it could also have been an emotional intelligence that any person with wisdom and compassion could have. As she was a compassionate and wise woman, she could understand Ellis's struggle and approach her accordingly. Personally, I think stressing on that transcendentalist spirituality might lead to an underestimation of the ability of an ordinary person to pursue an effective counseling. So one needs to be reminded that besides being a prophetess, she was an ordinary woman too.

The other aspect of the clinical paradigm is the non-directive approach. One could see that Nenilava held an authoritative counseling as she thought she was communicating God's will to people. There was no way to argue with that even if it was difficult for her counsees to accept that, and her gentleness was just a way to make them accept her advice. But it is interesting that Nenilava had other approaches. Sometimes, she just remained silent in front of her counselee who longed for an answer like in the case of Dawson and her consecration to be a shepherd (see chapter). It can be interpreted as her allowing the counselee to act freely according to his or her conviction. There were also moments when she did not direct her counselee at all. She just revealed her opinion but this action was so powerful that the counselee reacted as if she had instructed that something be done. Let us take the case of Ellis and her nail polish. Ellis was left free to decide. One cannot say that in Nenilava's mind, there was a try to make her remove what Nenilava called to seem like blood. But the fact is that she did remove it as if that was the case. And she even considered not wearing nail polishes as a rule to follow, meaning that women should not wear nail polishes. Ellis said: "at that time, I still enjoyed wearing nail polishes", as if the right thing to do now is not enjoying wearing nail polishes at all.<sup>74</sup> We can also say here then that Nenilava's counsees gave her more power than she herself wanted.

While Nenilava used a non-directive approach or when she encouraged her counsees to adopt Christ's attitudes facing their problems, especially marital problems for instance, we can say that her counseling was empowering too. It was as counseling seeking to empower people

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<sup>74</sup> R.Ellis, November 3, 2020.

which helped the counselees recognize their resources and use them to face their struggles (Eide, 2008, 80). This reflects also what is the aim of all diaconal work, to make people agent in their own life (LWF, 2009), and pastoral counseling plays part of the church's diaconal work. Here we see that the content of Nenilava's counseling has dimensions of diaconal approach.

So, besides practicing directive counseling, Nenilava also used non-directive approach. But what induced the use of these different approaches? It seems that Nenilava's approach differed according to what she considered important. For instance, she used to be strict when the matter was about marriage, profession, and church. Other matters like noun to be given to kids, consecration as a shepherd, wearing nail polish were not that important and she gave the counselees freedom to decide on their own. But a question arises: how did she set a matter more important than another one? Nowadays for instance, one tends to think that marital matter is so important that freedom should not be left apart when dealing with it. But the way she considered the question was different. Maybe considering her context would help us answer this question. On the one hand, in the Malagasy traditional context, we saw that a good life on earth consisted at having family not necessarily built upon love and a flourishing economic life. That explains why in Nenilava's context, marriage was obligatory. So, marriage and profession were two important things in life. On the other hand, Nenilava's experience of heaven surely influenced her. Not betraying Christ on earth assures the afterlife. Hence religious life on earth was also important for the afterlife.

It is also necessary to mention that how Nenilava's counselees experienced the directive approach she used in some circumstances in her counseling confirmed the critiques of this approach made by the therapeutic model. Her counseling was also oppressive. It is seen in the way she arranged marriage. Those women had choice neither on the time of their marriage nor on whom they would marry. These just depended on the men's request to have a woman to marry and on Nenilava's choice. These women thought they had no other choice than to accept. For the case of Ellis, she even thought that refusing would affect her relationship with God. She said: "I prayed: if I refuse, Jesus, I won't be able to relate with you anymore?"<sup>75</sup> So, through the lenses of the therapeutic model, Nenilava's counseling which used directive approach did not achieve healing at all. It was oppressive.

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<sup>75</sup> R.Ellis, November 3, 2020



Through this study, I noticed that the approach of non-ordering could be more effective compared to just ordering the counselee to do something. The counselor would show his or her opinion. He or she may just point at the bad effects of a particular practice without ordering anything to the counselee. The counselee's freedom is respected but at the same time he or she would keep in mind the counselor's opinion. The action she would adopt consequently would be a conscious, deliberate and probably even a long term resolution. Oppositely, we could notice that most of the time, the Nenilava's ordering approach often caused people to oppose or refuse her advice (like the case of Ellis's marriage or the couple who wanted to get married). Even if the refusal was not shown right at the moment of the counseling presented like an order, it appeared later. This was the case of Dawson. She did not refuse at all when Nenilava ordered her to leave her family and study to move to the countryside, but later at place, she wanted so much to return back to her former life and even got seriously sick because of that (Dawson, November 4, 2020).

Now, we will analyze Nenilava's counseling from the perspective of the contextual paradigm.

### **6.3 Nenilava's counseling from the perspective of the contextual model**

In this part, we will look at Nenilava's counseling through two main characteristics of the contextual model. First, how contextual counseling provides a dialogue between African context and Christianity. Second, how the contextual model is community oriented.

#### **6.3.1 Dialogue between Malagasy context and christianity**

The major characteristic of the contextual paradigm is its insistence on the importance of the counselees' context. Persons and their problems are different from others and cannot be generalized on the pattern of western males' situations as it has been done with the classical and clinical paradigms (Lartey, 2003, 50). Implemented in Africa, contextual paradigm recognizes African context and "opens opportunities for a dialogue between traditional cultural values and Christian theology (Eide, 2008, 21)." It means that in Africa, contextual counseling would not ignore African context but acknowledges it. But at the same time, it knows how to introduce Christianity in this context, what changes need to be made and how to make Christianity respond to people's and communities' real needs.

Such dialogue was present in Nenilava's counseling. Her practices are in accordance with Malagasy worldviews<sup>76</sup> and also with hers through her personal stories. First, her authoritative or directive approach enters in this category. This approach was grounded on the conviction of the power deities or spirits have over humans' lives and of the place a counselor has related to such power. In Malagasy traditional worldviews, as seen in chapter four, deities are the ones in control of humans' lives, in detail. For Malagasy ancestors, gods have close interaction and power over humans' lives. The course of human life, like the fact that one is to be born and to die, is under God's arrangement. Whatever one has in life is a part (*anjara*) that God has reserved for him or her. This is the case of a spouse for instance. Such a part is given only by God and has nothing to do with choice (Rakibolana, s.v. "anjara", 2005, 109). But other spirits might be in interaction and even in control.

From Nenilava's experience, other spirits could also communicate with people and even enter their lives. She reported that her father already communicated with other spirits. She herself heard other voices that she asked for a prayer to a pastor, saying: "remember me in your prayer as the voices I hear are so many that I have difficulty to distinguish them (Rabehatonina, 84)." And in her ministry, she met many people who were victims of evil spirit's possession. That surely explains why it became important for her that details in Christians' life like profession and marriage follow God's arrangement so that no other spirits would interfere. Eide confirms it, saying that for Africans, religion involves the whole of life and whatever one thinks, says or does has religious implications (Eide, 2008, 15). So, people need to be careful. Human's freedom and choice have nothing to do with that. People need to accept what God has prepared for them, like their spouses or profession.

In parallel with that conviction, Nenilava grew in an environment where it was believed that people could have the supernatural power to communicate with these deities in control. It was the case of her father, categorized in the society as a *ombiasy* who could communicate with

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<sup>76</sup> "Worldview [is] the essential paradigm or framework that comprehensively explains a person's place in the world or the universe, and by extension, the particular structure of reality that is shared by members of the person's group (tribe, society, etc.)." said Lisa Lopez Levers, Michelle May, and Gwen Vogel in *Counseling People of African Ancestry*, 57. They explain, "While Western societies tend to be marked by individualism and competitiveness, with a rather rigid dualistic world view, indigenous societies tend to be more collectivist and cooperative in nature, with a more relativistic perspective of the universe." (Levers, May, Vogel, 2011, 57). Malagasy traditional worldviews does not differ too much to this definition, but to see more about it, please refer to chapter 4.

traditional gods. The main task of these persons was to communicate gods' will to people who came to them. The will communicated was gods' will and should be followed to avoid harm coming to people's life. There was then a power issue related to such title. The sayings of the *ombiasy* could not be contradicted as they are gods' sayings. Nenilava was a Christian counselor who was considered to have the same particular gifts as those of the *ombiasy*. She was like a Christianized *ombiasy* who had the duty to communicate God's will to people. It was considered by her, her followers and counselees that what she told could not be contradicted as it was God's will. Contradicting her sayings could be harmful as it would induce the control of evil spirits' control on their lives. That explains her directive approach during her counseling.

A directive approach was a common practice done by the missionaries in Nenilava's context but Nenilava was not trained theologically. So one can say that she instead received more training next to her father who was a *ombiasy*. It is then more plausible to say that this approach has more to do with her context and contemporaneous worldviews rather than with the practice of missionaries. The point is that doing counseling and using directive approach were Malagasy traditional practices. Nenilava made a dialogue between these practices and Christianity when she performed counseling which proclaimed Christ's will instead of that of the pluralistic gods of her ancestors. Doing so, she kept the directive approach of her context and neglected humans' freedom and choice.

Second, the importance of counseling in Nenilava's ministry shows that she made a dialogue between Malagasy traditional worldviews and Christianity according to her personal conviction. Counseling was really important to Nenilava that she spent long time doing it during her ministry. She felt it was her duty to make counseling to people in order to proclaim about God's will for them. It was typical of the kerygmatic model but we also find in it a contextual motivation. It was also due to her personal story and the ancestral worldviews she shared. The ancestral worldviews in question here is the need for a spiritual guide to which Nenilava tried to respond. Nenilava grew up in a particular family where the father was a respected person by his gifts that made him a *ombiasy*. Nenilava did not believe in the ancestral gods her father worshiped and that made her be in disagreement with her father, but she could experience people's needs for a person like her father in order to communicate them about deities' will and about what they needed to do in their lives. Nenilava tried to answer to these needs. In her

ministry, counseling was also very important. But she introduced new content, Christian content of her own that she got from her personal story.

As we saw in Nenilava's personal story, she could see how heaven and hell looked like. Christ asked her to proclaim about the danger of betraying Him to make people repent (Zakaria, 2001, 188). That affected her conception of the meaning of life and of salvation. On the one hand, life aims surely for her to get a place in heaven and achieve to preserve it. So, her task as Christ's servant consisted at making people know about this truth. Her ministry including counseling had three inseparable goals: to make people have faith in Christ, to repent—meaning to get rid of sinful life—and to live a life according to God's will, the three themes that dominated her counseling. We can understand her motivation to spend a lot of energy doing counseling. Counseling was indeed important to her. Likewise, we see why gentleness was a dominant character while approaching her counselees. On the other hand, salvation was for her based both upon faith and good ethic. To believe in Christ was the main criteria for salvation. But this faith had to be kept through a life according to God's will, far from sin. Thus, having an active church's life and following regular *asa sy fampaherezana* were important for Christians. *Asa sy fampaherezana* was not reserved for people possessed by evil spirits only but also for Christians to keep a holy life (Zakaria, 2001, 219). We remember that through Nenilava's ministry, the gospel was proclaimed, many other people were back to church life and lived a life of repentance. We understand why the dominant messages in her counseling was about Christ, repentance and call to religious services.

Therefore, Nenilava made a dialogue between ancestral Malagasy worldviews and Christianity by responding to people's contemporaneous needs for spiritual guide. She did so by introducing Christian content based on her personal experience, that explains the importance of counseling to her. Her counseling aimed at proclaiming about Christ to make her counselees have faith on Him and live a repentant life according to His will, in detail.

This leads to the third evidence that Nenilava's counseling reflects a dialogue between Malagasy traditional values and Christianity by the use of symbols. Apart from prayer and the Holy Scriptures which are important in her counseling, she used the *asa sy fampaherezana*. This practice consists of casting out evil powers and encouraging people by laying hands on them. As Eide said, "religious symbols, ritual and thought are ... basic for any restoration of what is

broken in the lives of Africans (Eide, 2008, 16).” Symbols and rituals were important in traditional Malagasy practice too and Nenilava responded to this need but in her own Christian way. If traditional healers used to give sorts of holy objects or *sampy* to those who came to them as means to get protection or healing and as symbols of god’s presence in their lives, Nenilava pointed out to *asa sy fampaherezana* which induced their repentance, strengthened their faith in God’s forgiveness of their sin and symbolized Christ’s power against enemies working in their lives. Such symbols are then among contemporaneous people’s needs that Nenilava provided. *Asa sy fampaherezana* was not a practice of the contemporaneous church led mainly by the missionaries who concentrated more on God’s word and the Sacraments as means of grace. Nenilava was one of the revival founders who established this practice and doing so, she responded to the spiritual needs of the people who strongly believed in the power of evil spirits.

The last evidence of Nenilava’s making a dialogue between Malagasy traditional worldviews and Christianity to be brought in this discussion is her approach to marriage. We could notice that for Nenilava, women did not have the right to choose their spouses and had to remain in their marriage no matter what. This is due to her personal experience of marriage and also to her conviction about spirit against flesh. In traditional context in which Nenilava lived, marriage was an obligatory passage in women’s lives. Before becoming a Christian, Nenilava was forced to marry her husband. Nenilava stressed that she did not want to get married but she accepted it after being forced to (Zakaria, 2001, 186). However, she respected her marriage. In her ministry, she did not leave the concept of arranged marriage behind. She adopted the concept of one’s part (*anjara*) that we saw earlier and just did the same practice but based on Christ’s directive. Actually, in parallel with her personal experience, she also held a strong conviction about the concept of spirit countering flesh.

Nenilava’s training emphasized that high spirituality which guaranteed success over her enemies needed to make the flesh suffer. For instance, in her story, it was stated that before she started her work, she was driven three days to a mountain called Bevorotsihy to fight against a dragon. Christ said that she needed that to get prepared for her future works which will be difficult (Zakaria, 2001, 198). For this battle, she needed to fast for two months and a half. And even when she was on mission, she did not make it a priority to take care of herself, like to eat. It was stated that for nine years, she was allowed to eat only bread or cassava or sweet potato at a small quantity without being satisfied (Zakaria, 2001, 199). So, spirituality was important to her

to relate with God, and to overcome in fight, the flesh should be neglected. We can understand why for her where there was something that she considered was God's will according to the voices she heard, even if it was difficult for a person to follow it according to the flesh, one has no other choice than to accept it. Freedom and choice are concepts of the flesh that need to be overcome. To act otherwise would be harmful. Such a concept was so dominant that in Ellis's interpretation, when she had anxiety accepting the man appointed to be her husband, it was a question of fight against her flesh and her spirit.<sup>77</sup> This is why Nenilava tended to be authoritative and did not care about people's anxiety. And when one refused, she became strict and even rude (in the case of Ellis and Dawson). Hence, through her practice, we see that for her, marriages did not need to be built upon love. It was a necessity and it was God who appointed the to-be spouse. We also understand why for her women needed to endure problems in her household to keep it working.

To summarize, we saw here that Nenilava's counseling had many aspects of the contextual paradigm. She made a dialogue between Malagasy traditional worldviews and values and Christianity. She also responded to her contemporaneous contextual needs in a Christian way based on her personal experience of Christianity. But we can also notice that she did not dare to implement a liberating counseling which is another major characteristic of contextual model. Actually, contextual counseling aims also at working on a broader context in which the counselees' problem raised (Gerkin, 1997, 91). In Nenilava's treating marriage, this characteristic lacked and her counseling was even oppressive, leading to anxieties and distress to the women in question. Now, another aspect of the contextual paradigm that serves us analyze Nenilava's counseling is the community orientation of it.

### **6.3.2 Community oriented counseling**

This model is also called "communal-contextual model" (Patton, 1989, 5) as apart from context, community is also considered important by this model. Community, especially ecclesial community is the first responsible for care giving. The pastor is just a leader. So, the caregiver can be non-ordained. This feature is seen in Nenilava's counseling. First, in her time, counseling was reserved for clergies but she dared to practice it as a lay woman. She also called a lay woman to be the one who worked principally with her as a counselor and to pursue this task until

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<sup>77</sup> R.Ellis, November 3, 2020.

now. Now, lay people are the ones who do counseling in the *tobys* of the revival movement of Ankaramalaza. They do not have to be ordained. They do not even receive a formal training. Their bases are the revival movement's traditions and the teachings of the church. It is also necessary to mention that Nenilava asked her coworker to attend counseling sessions she practiced and even made her respond to the counselees' talks.<sup>78</sup> Why did she do that? Noone trained Nenilava for counseling but she had a background not too different from counseling through her father's practice. In her father's practice, other people could also attend his meeting with his clients. It was a common way of doing counseling in Africa.<sup>79</sup> Nenilava was among these third persons as it was reported that she used to criticize her father's practice in front of the clients (Zakaria, 2001, 181). So, it can be said that her experience with her father was the ground of her practice which stressed on the importance of the communal characteristic of counseling.

Second, communal counseling considers community important by orienting the counselees to the community life which contributes too to the continuation of their well-being. Nenilava's counseling had this character as she oriented her counselees to the service of the church. Generally, she often asked her counselees to serve as shepherds. Doing so, they would not only belong to a new active community but also would be able to implement new skills to care for others too.

Besides, one of the main tasks of communal –contextual counseling is reconciliation. This is because it was acknowledged that relationship is crucial for humans. One the one hand, everyone in general is relational, meaning that no one can be regarded out of relationship. “There is no I taken in itself, but only the ‘I’ of the primary word *I-Thou* and the ‘I’ of the primary word *I-It*.”(Patton, 1993, 23) On the other hand, in African culture more than other cultures, it was noticed that community was important for life. “A key aspect in the African perspective is, ... to see every person as person-in relationship.” (Eide, 2008, 15). Hence, when relationship is concerned, counseling cannot be satisfied by working only on the individual. It aims at restoring what is broken in humans' relationship too. This is seen in Nenilava's practice. Nenilava's counseling tried to preserve relationship. Her counseling was reconciling. We saw that when persons with marital problems came to her for instance, she called the persons involved in the

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<sup>78</sup> E.Pearce, November 5, 2020.

<sup>79</sup> In the case of Ghana for instance, it was stated that traditional counseling that aimed at resolving problems was held by many persons. Sometimes even family councils were needed (Ghunney, 1993, 92).

relationship to come to her for this end. According to her coworker who attended most of her counseling sessions, she did so to confirm the report of the complainer or to exhort the person she called regarding their relationship.<sup>80</sup>

This practice which focuses on relationship concerns also a typical concept in African context, which is shame. Shame is a delicate concept for African context, including Madagascar as in African context, “whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group (Eide, 2008, 15).” For this reason, “it is not possible to appreciate the role religious experts play in restoring the power of life without considering such practices as ... shame and guilt...”(Eide, 2008, 15). One can say that Nenilava practiced counseling which corresponded to Malagasy needs. With marital problems for instance, she tried to make the counselees focus on keeping their marriage no matter what. She then focused on preserving relationship as she tried to avoid shame that any breaking of relationship would induce, a shame that concerns both the community and the church.

## **Chapter seven: Conclusion**

Nenilava’s counseling reflects features of the three main models of counseling presented in chapter three, namely the classical model, the clinical model and the contextual model. Through the kerygmatic model, Nenilava’s counseling had as goal to establish and/or maintain good relationship between God and her counselees by telling them what God’s will in their lives was. As Nenilava was the gifted person to know about God’s will, her advice could not be contradicted. What was important for her is that the counselees follow her advice, which was God’s will, even though that hurt them. Her counseling focused on the actions to do rather than on the feelings and mental well-being of her counselees. Hence, she led an authoritative counseling. Other kerygmatic characteristics of Nenilava’s counseling were also her use of theological messages and of ecclesial tools like God’s word in the Scriptures or the exorcism and encouragement (*asa sy fampaherezana*) in her counseling.

From the clinical perspective, Nenilava’s counseling aimed at healing and sustaining her counselees when we look at the importance she gave to listening to them and saw how she helped them to come to self-awareness by showing them and making them accept what was the

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<sup>80</sup> E.Pearce, November 5, 2020.



reality beyond their words. Her counseling was empowering too as in certain circumstances, she encouraged her counselees to use their inner resources to face their problems. However, when we look at the effects her authoritative approach had on her counselees with marital and career issues, we can say that her counseling did not reach the healing goal of the clinical model. It was even oppressive.

The features cited above indeed confirm that Nenilava's counseling belongs to the kerygmatic and the clinical models. However, from the contextual model's perspective, we also have interesting findings, especially when we dig deeper to find the why of the existence of these features. These features were motivated by traditional context and by Nenilava's personal history and can be seen as typical characteristics of the contextual model. Nenilava's authoritative approach for instance corresponds to Malagasy traditional worldviews on power deities and counselors who represent them have over humans' lives. The importance she gave to counseling in her ministry coincides too with the Malagasy traditional need for counselor or spiritual guide. Nenilava's use of exorcism and encouragement (*asa sy fampaherezana*) responded to Malagasy contextual needs of symbols. And her practice of arranged marriage did not counter Malagasy contemporaneous practice. It means that to these traditional matters, Nenilava introduced Christianity according to her personal convictions about Christ. Through the contextual paradigm, we also see that Nenilava's counseling was community-oriented. She set the ministry of counseling as a task of lay people. She also led the counselees to participate actively in the community by calling them to community services. And she made of reconciliation an important task of her counseling.

Therefore, the contextual model fits more with Nenilava's counseling. Actually, contextual model does not exclude to two former models but tries to preserve their most valuable features (Patton, 1993, 5). So, when we accept that Nenilava's counseling was contextual, stating that Nenilava's counseling contained characteristics of the classical and the therapeutic models does not exclude the fact that the why of these characteristics are contextual based. These characteristics were grounded on traditional worldviews and on Nenilava's religious convictions.

Apart from that, Nenilava's counseling also presented dimensions of diaconal work as it was empowering. However, one needs to acknowledge that contrary to the aim of contextual counseling in theory, Nenilava's counseling was oppressive and could not be liberating. Her

counseling presented power and gender issues that provoked distress to her counselees, especially the women to whom she appointed the to-be spouses and careers.

Through this study, we could see that yes, Nenilava's followers inherited from her practice of counseling when they do an authoritative counseling. But I think they now need to have critical mindset on these practices. When the contextual foundations of these practices are clear, it should be possible to reflect on to what extent Nenilava's words are to be believed as Christ's words. That would help to see what needs to be left nowadays and so how to correct its weaknesses and introduce a liberating approach in it.

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## APPENDICE

### Interview Guide

1. Regarding the interviewee's background and credibility:  
What responsibility did you carry out in the church or in the Toby when Nenilava was present?
2. To understand her consideration of main problems to be treated:  
From how you experienced it, did Nenilava welcome everyone who came to her for counseling?  
Did she set criteria before receiving people for a counseling session?
3. Concerning her practice of counseling:  
Were you present when she received one or more people to talk about problems?  
Have you ever talked to Nenilava about problems or to get advice when she was ministering?  
Could you describe to me how one such conversation went on?  
Were there particular advices or recommendations she did not omit for each counselee?
4. Was counseling important to her?
5. Preaching the Gospel wasn't it enough?