

Meaning of the Traditional Custom Regarding the Umbilical Cord in the Sahafatra Society in Vondrozo District

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Abstract: The ethnic group "Sahafatra" really has a practice of their custom that is part of its identity. In terms of organizing society, they have the "fatrange" system. This Fatrange system have a basis on which the traditional wedding which is called "fafivady".

Although it is not enough if the children and grandchildren do not follow the different waysof their customs. Then, in order to respect the "fatrangé" system, the umbilical cord must be taken care of, so as not to be lost, it must be placed in a specific place according to the definition of the "fatrangé" community.

This umbilical cord is mainly concerned with the method for affiliating children in the "fatrangé" system. A symbol of the link between the whole family's father and their children. This creates a complete bond between the father and the child, whether male or female. So, this umbilical cord and the place where it is placed are two of the most important things.

So, no matter where people from the South-East live, for example, in Europe or America, or in Mahajanga, Tomasina, or Diego, all the umbilical cords of their children must be sent to a place where the "fatrangé" of the child's father lives. Only the people in the father's hometown who shared "fatrangé" with him know where to place the umbilical cord according to the customs and practices of this ethnic group. Parents must do this if they want their descendant to be a member of the "fatrangé" of the father's. If the father passes away, the mother has to send the umbilical cord to the relatives of the child's father to fulfill the custom.

Keywords: *Ala volon-jaza* : means cutting the hair of a baby. *Fanariana tadi-poitra*: Place for putting the umbilical cord. *Fikitra* : a holy place like chair that was made by stone, *Fafivady*: custom on the traditional blessing for the married couple. *Fatora* : a sharp tree built on top of the "fatrange" to be used for the sacrificial bull. *Fatrangé* : refers to the reunification of families which is the basis of Sahafatra society, *Fatrangé raiky*:many persons (many people) who are members of a "fatrange", . *Fisofa*" : a place for asking the blessings, *Kisolombo*": a kind of knife made by bamboo, *Kotra*": a type of small suitcase made of pumpkin or leather *Tadi-poitra* : The umbilical cord, *Tavony*": placenta, *Tranobe* : A large house for meeting, *Zanahary*: God, . *Zazasary*: refers to children who are born but whose father(s) is/are unknown.

1. INTRODUCTION

We conducted our particular research in social anthropology in the Vondrozo district, the area of the Sahafatra ethnic group which is the study field of our research.)There is a lot of customs to see in this society. So, it is very interesting for us to study the different customs that make up the rules and regulations of the "fatrangé" system in the social life of the population of South-East Madagascar.

Our research focuses on "Asset-based community development" for the "Sahafatra" ethnic group living in the Vondrozo District. This district is known to be one of the stragglers in terms of development. It is precisely on this basis that we are studying their culture to see what might be the obstacles to development and what good talents can be used as a tool to bring them development. We have already written an article on "The foundation of the 'Fatrange' system within the Sahafatra ethnic

sub-group in the Vondrozo District"¹. This explains what makes a person part of the "fatrangé" community, but the "fatrangé" system has several rules for those who are already members². The inhabitants of South-East Madagascar are emigrants from all over the island, even from outside, such as France, Belgium and other countries. Even if they live in another country like this one, they still have to respect the rules of the "fatrangé" system.

One of the points that is very interesting in the rules of the "fatrangé" system concerns the position of the "umbilical cord", which is part of the very important traditional customs that had a great place among the peoples of South-East Madagascar. The "Sahafatra" ethnic group is found in the Vondrozo district, the area where we made the research, really includes a special place for the umbilical cord in their customs³.

2. AIM OF THE STUDY

During our field trip, we knew that the umbilical cord in this "Sahafatra" ethnic group is very important. We noticed this when we looked in depth at the "sahafatra" community. All the "fatrangés" of the "sahafatra", each of them had a place where they placed the umbilical cord of their descendants. So, when we did an in-depth investigation, it was found that there is not just one place to place the umbilical cord, but several and that each family has its own. From our investigation, we found that no matter where they live in Madagascar, whether they live abroad, then it must be sent to the place where the umbilical cord is placed for all members of "fatrangé". Every family who is scattered across the island must bring or send all their children's umbilical cords to the place where they ought to place it in their area of origin⁴.

Thus, this practice concerning the umbilical cord is very interesting in the Sahafatra and even in the whole South-East. This is why we analyzed the value of the umbilical cord in the "Sahafatra" ethnic group of the Vondrozo district, which has been the subject of the research for many years (2015–2023). For this idea, we ask this question during our research: What is the main meaning of the traditional custom regarding the umbilical cord in the "Sahafatra" society in the Vondrozo district and can it be used as a tool for its development?

What we are doing here is not a scientific explanation of the umbilical cord, but an illustration of the role of the umbilical cord in society. What we want to emphasize here is not the role of the umbilical cord in the womb of the child's mother, but the importance of the umbilical cord in the child's filiation and relationship with the family system. This is how we will see the results and the discussion of this umbilical cord in the community.

2.1. Presentation of the Study Setting

2.1.1. Natural Situation

Geographical Location

The District of Vondrozo is one of the five Districts of the Atsimo-Antsinanana Region. It is bounded to the North by the District of Ikongo, to the South by the District of Vangaindrano, to the East by the District of Farafangana and to the West by the District of Ivohibe. It is located approximately 68 km West of the District of Farafangana, the capital of the Atsimo-Antsinana region, along Route Nationale N°27 linking Farafangana-Vondrozo-Ivohibe-Ihosy. It is made up of eighteen (18) rural communes: Ambohimana, Anandravy, Andakana, Antokonala, Iamonta, Ivato, Karianga, Mahatsinjo, Andoharano, Ambodirano, Mahavelo, Mahazoarivo, Manambidala, Manato, Moroteza, Vohimary, Vohiboreka and Vondrozo. The District capital is the rural commune of Vondrozo, with a

¹ KOTO BESOIA & Dr. Jean Raymond Rakotonirina. Ruphin Solange Marie, Professor "The Foundation of the "Fatrange" System within the "Sahafatra" Ethnic Sub-group in the District of Vondrozo" International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE), vol 9, no. 4, 2022, pp. 169-182. doi: <https://doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0904015>.

² KOTO BESOIA. & Ruphin Solange Marie, Professor, Dr Jean Raymond Rakotonirina The "Bongary" and "Debaky": in the Sahafatra "Society, District of Vondrozo" International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE), vol 9, no. 4, 2022, pp. 150-161. doi: <https://doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0904013>.

³ Ibid.

⁴Source Monographie de District de Vondrozo, 2019 p. 12-14.

geographical location between longitudes 47° 18' 22" East and latitudes 22° 41' 12" South. It has a total surface 3,600 km² the whole area⁵.

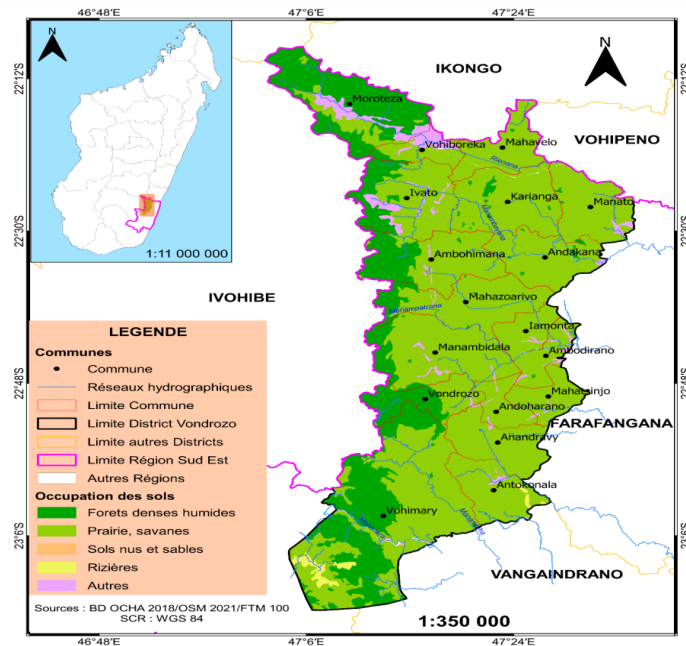


Figure1. Distribution of superficial areas by municipality Geographical location map of the District of Vondrozo

Source: Monographie du District de Vondrozo, 2019

2.2. Human Environment

a) Population⁶

The District of Vondrozo, according to the results found by INSTAT in 2021, the total population of Vondrozo is 164,971⁷; this is a density of 51.6 inhabitants per km² and the household size is 8 people per household.

To this day, the inhabitants are still very attached to their traditional customs and traditions, indicators of their cultural value. For housing, the use of wood is still the most common, while rammed earth construction is beginning to gain ground in some villages. Like the population of Madagascar, the most dominant age group in Vondrozo is between 0 and 14, (from 0 to 14) followed by 15 to 29. The following tables show the distribution of the population by age.⁸

b) Poverty

Almost the entire population of Vondrozo District is poor (97.5%), compared with 82.2% nationally. Almost 100% of people live on less than \$1 a day, compared with 76.5% nationally. In addition, more than half of the population have a daily income below the 1-dollar threshold, compared with around 1/3 nationally⁹.

c) Food Insecurity

The people of the Vondrozo District are highly exposed to food insecurity, and experience episodes of famine of varying degrees of severity. This vulnerability is linked to a number of factors, including natural disasters, price rises, disruptions to the market for food products and possibly a poor agricultural season¹⁰.

⁵Source Monographie de District de Vondrozo, 2019 p. 12-14.

⁶ RGPH3-INSTAT: INSTAT 2021.

⁷ Source : INSTAT 2021. Il y a une augmentation de 2970 habitants sur l'effectif total au cours des 2 dernières années.

⁸ RGPH3-INSTAT.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Source: VPEI/CREAM/ Monographies 2009.

3. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The methodology adopted was to work with groups of people to carry out surveys in each commune using specific, open-ended, neutral questionnaires. We carried out our survey in 18 communes in the Vondrozo district, and "600" people per commune were interviewed, adopting two forms of survey management. We also interviewed 300 people, including 25 people who migrate for the sake of work and live in Antananarivo and Mahajanga, 25 rickshaw drivers living in Mahajanga and 25 in Tamatave, 50 farmers living in the Boeny Mahajanga area, 50 farmers living in the Menabe area. We asked these people how they managed with the umbilical cords of their newborn children.

An interviewee was asked about his efforts to bring the umbilical cords of his children to the place where they are supposed to put it according to the frequency of each of them. Most of the interviewees were also asked why this was done and what possible negative effects it might have on the current system in which the village and the tribe to which they belong and/or live.

Most of the information obtained from the questions asked enabled us to clarify or justify the statements made by the people interviewed. Some of the questions prepared and posed during the first trip to the site led us to formulate other questions that we must try to answer. This enabled us to pool ideas and ask more detailed questions to get more information on what was not clear during the first trip.

Secondly, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used, particularly for data collection and processing. Firstly, the quantitative methods consisted of collecting data through a survey conducted with each person on the basis of an open-ended questionnaire. Qualitative interviews were conducted with the various managers. We continued our research on the findings of social science researchers related to our research theme.

4. LIMITS OF THIS STUDY

This research works on the field, it is clearly just the starting work. This research is incomplete and completely unsatisfactory. Oliver Woolley, who is a man from London is known to have done an etude on Sahafatra. He is the only author who conducts academic research on the history and population of "Sahafatra" in Vondrozo. We continue to do that research ourselves nowadays. Therefore, there is a serious lack of literature to conduct research on this area especially their customs.

One of the biggest problems during this field work for the research is that the resident people or local people do not know the meaning of their culture and their customs. So even if we try to do the investigation ourselves, and ask so many questions to them, they find it difficult to explain the meaning of the customs. They do not know how to explain either the reason or the meaning. But he adopted the method without any explanation, so that it is handed down traditionally and orally without any writing, so they just practice it as a tradition from their ancestors, that there is no analysis of his opinion.

For these reasons, our article is limited and not enough. It is just starting research; however, we hope some researchers will continue it in the future. However, we believe that although this research work is limited in this article, we hope that it will help the young to do research in the future.

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

5.1. The Umbilical Cord

It is not a scientific explanation that we wish to put forward in this article, but an explanation of the role of the umbilical cord in society as a whole.

5.1.1. The Umbilical Cord and the Placenta

The umbilical cord is the tube that connects the mother to the child during pregnancy. It has three blood vessels: a blood vessel that carries nutrients and oxygen from the placenta to the baby in the uterus. A substance called Wharton's jelly cushions and protects these blood vessels.

The umbilical cord begins to form about four weeks into pregnancy and is usually about 22 inches long. Umbilical cord conditions include the cord being too long or too short, poorly attached to the placenta, or attached or kinked. These conditions can cause problems during pregnancy, labor and delivery. The umbilical cord plays a role in the mother's womb, as it feeds the child in the womb¹¹.

The two words "navel" and "umbilicus" come from Latin. Umbilic was borrowed from the classical Latin umbilicus, and evolved into the form embelic. Nombri evolved from the popular Latin "umbilicus", and passed into oubli and then l'oubli or nombril, through the initial agglutination of the article (definite and indefinite, respectively), which became nombril after dissimilation. The names bedis (umbilical cord) and badine (navel), of the same origin as boyau and boudin (from the Latin bordelleuse), were also used in the past¹².

This umbilical cord is cut when the baby is born to free it from the placenta, but there must be a small section of around 20 cm still attached to the baby's belly. The navel is a fibrous scar on the anterior wall of the abdomen, formed by the fall of the umbilical cord, which occurs on average³³ at around 10 days of age. It appears following the fall of the umbilical cord in newborns belonging to the class of placental mammals. It is the vestige of fontal circulation and, earlier, of embryonic inflection. On the external (anterior) side of this wall, it is located medially, in the middle of the lineal alba, between the two rectus muscles. On the internal (posterior) side of the anterior abdominal wall, the navel is connected to the liver at the top by the round ligament of the liver, and to the bladder at the bottom by the median umbilical ligament¹³.

On either side of this ligament are the medial umbilical folds, which connect the navel to the lateral walls of the lesser pelvis. The round ligament is the remnant of the umbilical vein, the median umbilical ligament is the remnant of the urachus and the medial umbilical folds are the remnants of the umbilical arteries. The navel is located on the disc between the third and fourth lumbar vertebrae. In medicine, it is an interesting landmark. The navel is innervated by the tenth pair of intercostal nerves¹⁴. Thus, the umbilical cord refers to the entire umbilical cord that connects the placenta and the baby in the womb, i.e., allowing the baby in the womb to receive air, food and blood from the mother. But the navel refers to the scar on the belly of every human being, where the umbilical cord started. The good thing to note is this: the umbilical cord is the whole cord, even the remaining 20 cm attached to the baby's belly is still called the umbilical cord.

When your baby is finally born, the umbilical cord is still attached to your placenta. After birth, the umbilical cord is cut - sometimes by your support person and sometimes by one of the providers in the room. Once cut, a small stump remains. When the stump falls off a few weeks after birth, all that's left is your newborn's navel. Babies feel no pain when the umbilical cord is cut. If your baby cries after birth when the umbilical cord is cut, it's probably because he's no longer in the warm, comfortable environment to which he's become accustomed in your womb¹⁵.

"Mums don't feel pain when the umbilical cord is cut either," said Dr Garcia. "Technically, the umbilical cord belongs to our body, but at the same time it doesn't. It has no nerve endings. The cord is just a temporary line that connects mum and baby before birth. Once your baby is born and the placenta has been released, the umbilical cord is no longer part of either body. Your provider's care team will suture your baby's umbilical stump. The providers will only sew up the stump and not your baby's skin. Because it has no nerve endings, the baby cannot feel anything when it receives stitches¹⁶.

The part attached to the placenta is also the umbilical cord, but it is buried with the placenta when the mother gives birth. The place where the placenta is buried is called the "tavony" place. The place where it is buried is called: the place of the "tavony", which is how the placenta is called in the Malagasy language.

¹¹ Marina Basta; Brody J. Lipsett , Anatomy, Abdomen, and Pelvis: Umbilical Cord. July 24, 2023. National Institutes of Health (NIH); <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>

¹² Wikipédia <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nomb>

¹³ Louis Molet, Conception, naissance et circoncision à Madagascar [article Homme Année 1976 16-1 pp. 33-64 Persée <https://www.persee.fr> .

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ OSF HealthCare, How to care for your baby's umbilical cord, <https://www.osfhealthcare.org>

¹⁶ OSF HealthCare, How to care for your baby's umbilical cord, <https://www.osfhealthcare.org>

5.1.2. The Umbilical Cord in the "Sahafatra" Community

When the baby is born, the umbilical cord connecting the placenta must be cut. However, around 20 cm remain in the baby's belly. Tie off the head of the remaining umbilical cord so that no blood comes out of the baby's tummy. Wrap it in a clean cloth to avoid contamination. The baby's tummy is also well wrapped so that no air enters through the umbilical cord around the baby's body. This umbilical cord is strongly protected so that it cannot be touched, as this could harm the child's health. It is very important for mothers and midwives to protect it¹⁷. And it is extremely important to keep the newborn's navel clean.

This navel is not washed with water, but it is left to dry, but when it dries, the 20 cm just comes off. But it is very careful not to be exposed to moisture.

The "Sahafatra" is a small tribe of the people from the Vondrozo region in the South-East, who take care of the baby and the umbilical cord. As in many other places, there are traditional midwives known as "substitutes". The "substitutes" cut the umbilical cord with a pointed stick, usually made of bamboo, called a "kisolombo". The cut is approximately 20 centimeters long in the baby's womb. The mother and the newborn are immediately washed in cold water, then placed near the fire on the west side. The placenta is buried deep outside the hut, in front of the door on the east side¹⁸.

In some tribes, the placenta is sometimes fed to cows or calves. Most often found in the "sahafatra" ethnic group, the placenta is buried to the east of the house where the child was born. According to Grandidier, there was also a burial outside the house, but at the base of the wall, on the east side¹⁹. There are rituals for burying the placenta. For example, the person burying the placenta must not turn his or her head to the right or left when burying the placenta²⁰. The 20 cm umbilical cord attached to a newborn baby's stomach can be cut off by itself after two weeks or at least up to one month. This 20 cm umbilical cord is the most interesting in the "Sahafatra" community. This is what we will be looking at in the research results.

6. RESEARCH RESULTS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE UMBILICAL CORD IN SAHAFATRA SOCIETY

6.1. Protection and Preservation of the Umbilical Cord

6.1.1. Preservation of the Umbilical Cord Attached to the Baby's Stomach

When the baby is born, the umbilical cord has to be cut. The umbilical cord gradually dries out a few days after the baby is born. Its color turns brown and deforms like dried chitoza. When it is completely dry, the umbilical cord falls off by itself, and in the end, the baby's navel becomes like our big belly button. In general, the baby's umbilical cord should fall off by itself 7 to 15 days after birth. Even if the ancients didn't know about this disease, they already knew how to protect the umbilical cord. They did, however, know that they had to be careful not to get dirty, as dirt causes the navel to swell. As mentioned above, a baby's umbilical cord breaks naturally 7 to 15 days after birth²¹.

Gratefulness to the development of current knowledge, the protection of newborn babies' umbilical cords has rapidly improved. Those who had to take care to prevent umbilical cord "infections have not done it any more now for the new medical medicine. To prevent "infections" from a newborn baby's umbilical cord, parents should take good precautions when caring for the baby. Keep your hands clean when changing and cleaning the baby, especially if you have to touch the umbilical cord, as dirt carried by the hands causes germs²².

But what we really want to highlight in this research is the value of the 20 cm long umbilical cord when dry in the community. It is recognized that the placenta and the umbilical cord are both important; but when we did the survey, the dried umbilical cord of their children is very interesting in "Sahafatra" society.

6.1.2. Protection and Preservation of a Cut Umbilical Cord

¹⁷ Raymond Decary, Quelques pratiques malgaches relatives aux accouchements [article] Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris Année 1930 1-1-3 pp. 3-7 Persée <https://www.persee.fr>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ moov.mg, Ireo fomba atao hikarakarana ny tadim-poitran'ny zaza vao ,<https://moov.mg> « reny-zaza »

²² Ibid.

When the umbilical cord is dry, the remaining 20 cm attached to the baby's stomach is cut off by itself. The time at which it is cut is not specified, so the baby's stomach is wrapped to protect the umbilical cord from loss even if it is cut. When the 20 cm long umbilical cord is found to have been cut, it must be kept in a very well protected place so that it cannot be eaten by rats. It depends on the child's parents what the equipment is used for. According to the people we interviewed, it used to be stored in something called a 'kotra'. Kotra is a leather bag for travelling or fighting; a bag of painted goods on the way. The bag is usually made of leather, but it can also be used as a heavy bag. Some of them are made of bamboo, like a violin, they are assembled and hung where there is a hole²³.

Some are also made from pumpkins. This pumpkin is called a "lima" or "alima" and is a kind of zinga for drinking water or cow's milk. But when the pumpkin is made from "kotra", it has a lid and was used to store objects inside. It was also used to store the umbilical cord²⁴.

In other words, what the elders did was to find a way of preserving and protecting the umbilical cord so that it didn't get lost, but it is very precious and sensitive for the Malagasy people, particularly in this tribe that we studied. The question is this: why is this umbilical cord kept for so longtime?

6.2. Ala-Volon-Jaza" and the Umbilical Cord

"Ala volo" means cutting hair and "zaza" means baby. The "ala volon-jaza" refers to a rite where a Malagasy baby receives his/her first haircut. This rite must be performed when the child is between 3 and 9 months old. This tradition is mainly practiced by the "Merina". What is unusual about the ala volon-jaza is that the hair that has just been removed from the baby's head is mixed with food and the mixture is served to all those attending the ceremony²⁵.

According to the survey we carried out among the "sahafatra" ethnic group, there is no big celebration like the custom in the highlands of Madagascar. It's a very special day and the family has already given permission from the "ombiasa" to do this. But the hair is inserted where the dry umbilical cord is stored in the "kotra". In other words, the child's hair is assigned to the place of the dry umbilical cord, but not to the food²⁶.

According to the research we have carried out in the practice of the "Sahafatra," the dried umbilical cord and the hair from the child's first cut, then they are first assembled in one place. It will also be taken to the place where they will all be placed. This ethnic group already has a designated place to place the umbilical cord. Even if the first hairs are cut and the umbilical cord dries as a whole, according to custom, only the umbilical cord is called the place of the umbilical cord or "fanariana tadi-poitra". The umbilical cord can dry out and break after 7 to 15 days, but the baby can be depilated as early as three months after birth. This is why the umbilical cord must be preserved, as it is waiting for the baby's hair.

6.3. The Place where the Umbilical Cord Was Placed

According to the investigation that we carried out on the areawhere the umbilical cord was placed, this is the information that we obtained at the time, all the sahafatra throw the umbilical cord in the river which is not the place of the father of the child. This river is a river in the village of the father, but not in the mother. In general, this river has land that was cultivated by the father's ancestors, generally located in the river near the traditional field.

So, it's not just one place, there are many places to place the umbilical cord. So, according to the unit of "fatrangé", it is also the number of places to file the umbilical cord, because they are connected. But the umbilical cord has to be thrown into the river where the grandfathers' rice fields are near. It is not thrown in the rice fields, but in the rivers that are not far away. Everyone has their own story about how it became a place to put the umbilical cord. So the place where the umbilical cord is stored and thrown is quite linked to the idea and meaning of "fatrangé". Rombaka says that the traditional

²³ Dictionnaire et Encyclopédie malgaches, <https://motmalgache.org> SV « kotra »

²⁴ Rakibolana sy Rakipahalalana malagasy <https://tenymalagasy.org> SV « lima »

²⁵ « Ala volon-jaza » : une pratique culturelle malgache <https://www.vol-direct.net> Madagascar Par KEVIN EBELLE, Le « ala volon-jaza ». Madagascar, un pays aux rites traditionnels multiples Le 28 février, 2016 (mis à jour le 31 mai 2023) <https://generationvoyage.fr>

²⁶ L'Alavolon-jaza: l'incontournable tradition à Madagascar [nocomment.mg https://www.nocomment.mg](https://www.nocomment.mg)

rice field is just one part of 'fatrange'²⁷. According to the information provided by the interviewees, this is the place where the umbilical cord is placed and is linked to the 'fatrangé' system.

The concept of "fatrangé" was created so that the descendants of a generation could, on the one hand, enter the capital of the territory to live there, and on the other, preserve the unity of the inheritance and avoid the separation of all descendants.

In this way, the role of the "fatrangé" system is to strengthen the community's identity. Only the generation accepted by society can be fatrangé. Both have the "fatrangé" and the race head to protect the unity of their descendants. All generations are called "fatrangé raiky"²⁸.

The place can be compared to the places for asking the blessings of the ancestors which called "fisofa", but what's different the activity that has to take place there. Here, the umbilical cord is thrown away, but at the same time, it is also a place to ask for blessings for the descendants²⁹. When you throw the umbilical cord into the river, these are the places where you should throw it.

- ✓ This is a place that the grandfather has accepted to be used to dispose the umbilical cord of their descendants.
- ✓ The umbilical cord is thrown into a river near the rice fields of the ancestors or the grandfather of a descendant.
- ✓ A place by the river, but in very calm water, not in a fast-flowing stream.
- ✓ It's a place on the river where there's a swirl of flowing water where the umbilical cord is placed.
- ✓ There isn't much specific rite, but only one person can throw it, but there must be a prayer on the part of the person throwing it into the water.

In other words, calling the Zanahary and the ancestors and especially their grandfathers of these descendants are to bless and protect the child, that is to say it calls on the Zanahary and the ancestors and grandfathers to be blessed with good blessings. Bless this child, all generations will grow and grow³⁰.

6.4. When to Discard the Umbilical Cord

There is no fixed time for discarding the umbilical cord. But according to the results of our survey, it is very certain that the umbilical cord is discarded after the child is three months old. That's what's behind all this, if the child is three months old, that's the time to cut the hair. This is the child's first haircut³¹. The cut hair is worn together with the umbilical cord when they throw them into the river where they are placed. Although the umbilical cord can be cut 7 days or 15 days after the birth of the child, it is necessary to wait until the end of the trimester as it is combined with the first haircut³².

For those who do not live in their place of origin, it does not specify a time, but it depends on the possibility of going to their place of origin. The rule that must be followed by all generations is that the umbilical cord of all generations must be cast at the place that the place was accepted by their ancestor. It is not traditional to throw the umbilical cord where you live nor where you were born. It is not traditional to create a place to throw the umbilical cord, but no matter where you live and where

²⁷ ROMBAKA J.-Ph., 1970 : 37).

²⁸ Beby Seheny Andriamanalina, Rivo Andrianirina-Ratsialonana, Rôle des Guichets Fonciers communaux dans une société où la gestion traditionnelle du foncier reste encore importante, <http://www.observatoire-foncier.mg/undex.php>

²⁹ Tataseno Donace, Ny manodidina ny fivavahan-drazan'ny Sahavoay, (Thèse Master, SALT, Ivory Avratra Fianarantsoa, 2016), p. 121-123.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ L'Alavolon-jaza: l'incontournable tradition à Madagascar <https://www.nocomment.mg> ROMBAKA J.-Ph., 1970 : 37).

³² « Ala volon-jaza » : une pratique culturelle malgache <https://www.vol-direct.net> Madagascar Par KEVIN EBELLE, Le « ala volon-jaza ». Madagascar, un pays aux rites traditionnels multiples Le 28 février, 2016 (mis à jour le 31 mai 2023)<https://generationvoyage.fr>

a child is born, the umbilical cord must be thrown in the place determined by the ancestors. According to our survey, it is even said to be taboo³³.

The taboo in the "sahafatra" is like all the Malagasy laws or rules that control each other, they are protected throughout life and this affects like religion, the regularities of society, and the simple rules of life. For example, in this "Sahafatra" tribe, throwing away the umbilical cord has become a tradition and has made it taboo to do so in other countries not designated by the ancestors³⁴.

The interesting thing, therefore, is not to limit the time taken to discard the umbilical cord, but to respect the basic rules. The basic rule is that the umbilical cord must be disposed in the region of birth. This does not depend on the choice of the individual, but on what has been determined by the ancestors. Every generation's umbilical cord must be placed where their ancestor chose. In this article, we focus on answering this question: what is the importance and role of the umbilical cord in the "fatrangé" system within "Sahafatra" society? This brings us to the discussion of the possible importance and significance of the umbilical cord in Sahafatra cultures. The aim of the whole research in this "field" is to make these cultures an effective tool for sustainable development.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1. The Meaning of Placing the Umbilical Cord on the Father's Territory

7.1.1. Recognition of Children

According to the results of the research, the place where the umbilical cord is placed must be that of the father, but not that of the mother. The significance of this practice in the Sahafatra ethnic group is that the woman is the true owner of the child born, whom she has kept in her womb for nine months. So, to show that the child has really been given to the father, the umbilical cord must be placed in the birth village of the child's father. Thus, the acceptance of placing the umbilical cord in the father's birthplace is linked to the fact that the mother is giving her child to the father.

Consequently, the placement of the umbilical cord in the father's home village plays a very interesting role in the man's recognition of his children. In front of the mother's family of the child that is born, it is also a great sign that the father has approved the child as his son or his daughter. This creates a big problem for Sahafatra, if a woman has a child whose father is unknown or not recognized (Zazasary). So, placing the umbilical cord is a sign of the child's father. The conclusion is therefore as follows: the results of the survey show that placing the umbilical cord in the father's native village is to prove the father's recognition of the child.

7.1.2. Method for Affiliating Children in the "Fatrangé" System

The 'Fatrange' System in General

The term 'fatrange' is a name used to describe the group of families (lineage) that make up the community of a 'tranobe'. the lineage recognizes the male descendants of a common ancestor. On the other hand, the term "fatrange" is also used to protect their union and to describe social order within the "Sahafatra". They use the term "fatrange" to refer to someone's home village. The fatrange is marked by the presence of a sacred place where the sacred stone and the sacred wood (fikitra, fatora or hazomanga) are located in the villages. There is a place in the center which is reserved for the various traditional ceremonies. This public square, known as the "fatrange", is the symbol of the ancestor's taking possession of the land to build their "tranobe" and the surrounding houses. The "tranobe" is the house of the head of the extended family, which preserves the various elements and ancestral customs³⁵.

³³ Rasolonjatovo Joseph Martial, Mora ny mitondra tehina, Fa sarotra ny mitondra tena, Edisiona Md Paoly impremirie CNAPMAD 1999, pp 66-70

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ZANAMASY ,Ny Fanandratana Mpanjaka amin'ny Fiarahamonina Antemoro Anteony, Tarafina amin'ny tananan'Andranovolo Atsinanana Kaominin'i Vohitrindry Faritr'i Vatovavy Fitovinany, ANTANANARIVO : Université Antananarivo, Mémoire de Fin d'études pour l'obtention du Certificat d'Aptitude Pédagogique de l'école Normale(capen).2016.

Not only that, but "fatrange" can refer to the inheritance left by the ancestors, common and indivisible, and the right to use it can be transferred. Each generation has the right to inherit 'fatrange', but there are rules governing it for each generation. The inheritance remains indivisible and can be used for future generations. The principle of the fatrange was created so that the descendants of one generation could enter into communion for their lifetime. On the other hand, it is one of the things that keeps the generations together around the cultural heritage and solidarity left by the ancestors so that it may not be disturbed. The "Fatrange" system thus has its own identity in Sahafatra society³⁶. The "fatrange" is a social system linked by the rituals that accompany it, in particular the question of the location of the umbilical cord.

Affiliation of Children in the Fatrangé System

A child must be included as a member of the "fatrangé" system by many different methods. Couples who must be "married" according to the traditional wedding ceremony for their child's share of affiliation to be a member of their father's "fatrangé". A child born to a married couple who has been finished the traditional "fafivady" custom is definitely a member of their father's clan. In order to show that he is a member of the child's "fatrangé" system, the umbilical cord must be sent to the place where all the umbilical cords of all the children of the common "fatrangé" are placed.

This makes no difference between boys and girls; all children's umbilical cords must be sent to their father's fatrangé. The place where the umbilical cord is placed in their "fatrangé" is the most interesting for all newborns, all children who are members must affiliate to send the umbilical cord in their father's "fatrangé". This is why the umbilical cord is placed in the father's native country, so that the fatrangé that really belongs to the newborn is very clear.

7.1.3. A Symbol of the Link between the whole Family's Father and their Children

The child and the mother are linked by the placenta and the umbilical cord for nine months. So, the umbilical cord placed in the right place according to the father's "fatrangé" is a symbol of the bond of the child born with the whole of his father's family. What is meant by: the homeland is often designated by the place where the traditional cemetery is located. But in the course of this research, it is covered that the person who tied the umbilical cord is also a true homeland³⁷. It's not just a question of being born as a child, but the place where the umbilical cord is actually laid down for all generations. From the moment the umbilical cord is placed in the place of the 'fatrangé', it becomes bound as part of the 'fatrangé'.

According to Robert Dubois, children and their parents have a union that is not just the result of emotions, but is very natural and very strong. The mother, who carries the baby for nine months, is at one with her child, and this can be seen in the umbilical cord and placenta. The father is also united with the child because the child's umbilical cord has been in its place, a symbol of unification according to the custom of "fatrangé". This is what he describes as the concept of the continuation of life in Malagasy thought³⁸.

The continuation of life is very precious and interesting in the Malagasy society, including in the "Sahafatra" ethnic group in Vondrozo. The umbilical cord has become the unification and affiliation of children with their father's family, tied in a place shared by all and accepted by the members of the "Fatrange" community.

Robert Dubois also says that in view of this continuity of life, according to the Malagasy, men and women have equal value, husbands and wives have equal value, brothers and sisters have equal value. Therefore, since the rights of men and women are equal, this means that they are included in the continuity of life and that they are equally united. It is not just something that passes, but something that marks until death the collective life of all those who live together. It was at the wedding

³⁶ KOTO BESOA & Dr. Jean Raymond Rakotonirina. Ruphin Solange Marie, Professor "The Foundation of the "Fatrange" System within the "Sahafatra" Ethnic Sub-group in the District of Vondrozo" International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE), vol 9, no. 4, 2022, pp. 169-182. doi: <https://doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0904015>.

³⁷ Envoi N0 6, Histoire des institutions, CNTMAD Madagascar.

³⁸ Robert Dubois, Malagasy aho, Antananarivo edisiona Md Paoly, 1998, page 29

ceremony that the marriage began, so that not only the husband and wife became a union, but also the family of the woman and the man. This means that all the members of the woman's family lead a harmonious life. The umbilical cord placed in a common place is also a symbol of communion³⁹. Because the mother is one with the father in bringing about "marriage", it is always a confirmation of this communion and harmony that is the main purpose of putting the umbilical cord in the place of the family.

7.2. The Importance of this Research to "use your Talents" Local Development Approach

Our main objective is to find all the ideas for developing the Vondrozo district. However, we are convinced that we need to start by studying the area's society in order to develop it. The main aim of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is to make efforts towards sustainable development⁴⁰. According to our development study, we must use the "use your talents" approach to solve problems. This development consists of implementing the "use your talents" approach within the "Fatrange" system⁴¹.

The traditional organizational structure is a very useful resource for development. It can be seen as a tool to educate and encourage people to take responsibility for the development of all existing customs. Rituals such as the umbilical cord position improve communication and respect within the community⁴². The existence of this "fatrangé" system, which is reinforced by the various traditional customs, means that residents help and support each other in difficult and painful situations, and the unity between them seems to protect the honors of their parents or their "fatrange". It is then a highly effective tool for empowering the population and all those descending from the diaspora in the interests of development.⁴³

All their customs are precious and can be used as a tool to motivate residents to take on the responsibility of their descendants for the development of their homeland. They are therefore considered as talents within the "Sahafatra" ethnic group and are expected to contribute to the development of this native land⁴⁴. We can see that this presence of the umbilical cord is a confirmation of patriotism and love for compatriots, because that is where the umbilical cord has been placed. Thanks to this umbilical cord, all generations are very active in taking responsibility for the development of their territory. According to the results of our own survey, it is quite clear that the existence of the custom of this umbilical cord only strengthens their attachment in their "fatrangé" to what is mentioned above.

8. CONCLUSION

The place where we are carrying out social anthropology research is the district of Vondrozo, and "Sahafatra" is the name of the tribe living in this area. When we examined the Sahafatra society, we found that this tribe is one of those that still preserve their traditions. They see their strong adherence to these customs as part of their identity. A person who does not respect his customs is a person who has lost his dignity. There are many "Sahafatra" customs, some of which form the basis of society, such as the "fafivady". The umbilical cord is also very interesting in Sahafatra customs. People who

³⁹ Robert Dubois, *Malagasy aho*, Antananarivo edisiona Md Paoly, 1998, page 29

⁴⁰ Zo Ramiandra Rakotoarison, *Tackling Poverty with Local Assets: A Case Study on Congregational Asset-Based Community Development in a Lutheran Church in Madagascar*. Kari Korslien "Frivillig Arbeid I Kirken: Kartlegging Av Forskning På Frivillighet. Erfaringer Og Anbefalinger for Videreutvikling Av Kirkens Frivillige Arbeid" (VID vitenskapelige høyskole, 2019). <https://doi.org/10.13109/diac.2019.10.2.119>

⁴¹ Pastor KOTOBESOA, *Practice In Diaconal Work And Mission Of The Christian Church In Vondrozo Context In Madagascar*, Malagasy Lutheran Church, *Use Your Talent*, 2020, p. p. 7. 15-17.

⁴² Lolona Razafindralambo, *Culture, changement et développements : l' (ir) responsabilité des élites*, Madagascar, *Crise cyclique, culture et développement: la condition de relances*, ouvrage collectif, sous la direction de VANF, juin 2012. p. 46-50.

⁴³ Lalaina Rakotoson, Kotondrajaona Rajoeliso, and Jeannette Rasoarimalala, "Assessment of the "Empower FLM" Program through Its Two Components: "This Is Our Church" (Touch) and "Use Your Talents (Uyt)", Final Report. (Fianganana Loterana Malagasy and Norwegian Missionary Society, 2015).

⁴⁴ Lolona Razafindralambo, *Culture, changement et développements : l' (ir) responsabilité des élites*, Madagascar, *Crise cyclique, culture et développement: la condition de relances*, ouvrage collectif, sous la direction de VANF, juin 2012. p. 46-50.

live far away and have a child must send his/her umbilical cord home to be placed in a place where it should be placed in the traditional way.

However, this has meaning and significance within the structure of society as a whole. This is why we sought the answer to this question: What is the main meaning of the traditional custom regarding the umbilical cord in the "Sahafatra" society in the Vondrozo district and can it be used as a tool for its development?

What is the main significance of the traditional custom concerning the umbilical cord in the "fatrange" system within the "Sahafatra" ethnic group in the Vondrozo district and is it a tool for its development within this area? Consequently, the place where the child's umbilical cord is placed, whether male or female, must be that of the father. This confirms the father's recognition that the child is his kid. The fact that a mother gives the father of her child the power to send the umbilical cord in his native town and his "fatrangé" to her shows her approval that this man is indeed the father of her child. Thus, placing the umbilical cord on the father's family constitutes the child's affiliation as a member of that "family and also "fatrangé" of his father.

So, from the moment the umbilical cord is placed in the place of the umbilical cord, the child becomes a real participant and member of the father's clan. The symbol of this custom is the link between the child and the father. The father does not give birth, but when this method is applied, the village and the father's "fatrangé" become interesting for the child. The child becomes the owner of this area, that area become a native land of the child, when the umbilical cord is laid, the child: boy or girl, has all the rights as a child in the "fatrangé.", including even the right to inherit from his father.

In our local development research, it is very interesting to understand the customs of a community. This method can also be used as a tool for development. We are promoters of the "Use Your Talents" concept. For us, knowing one's customs is very interesting, because we consider them to be one of the people's "talents". In our view, this custom can be used to encourage all residents and children of the diaspora to develop their territory. It is a tool that makes them worthy of their patriotism and can therefore be used to mobilize them in local development activities.

Here, we still believe that there is still room for more research into this custom in this area, which is called "fatrangé.". The aim is to be able to use it as a tool to get the descendants of this region to participate in the development of their native region, or their "fatrangé," as a tool to achieve development in this area. The question then arises: What are the customs that enhance the value of the land from which they originate and that can be used as a tool to persuade them to take an active part in the development of this area?

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