Constructing ‘Antankaraña’: History, Ritual and Identity in Northern Madagascar

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation is an historically informed study of a polity in contemporary
northern Madagascar. By focusing on the intertwined interests of the polity’s rulers (those
influential figures of the past and present who have claimed and been recognized as having
authority in the region), its constituents (those supporters who have legitimated these
claims through forms of service that periodically reassert the primacy and sanctity of
rulers), and those who recognize it (those powerful outsiders who are confronted with
these claims) it proposes that this is a political system legitimated from within and without
where subjection results less from the power of a few to impose it than from the
willingness of many to accept it. This is especially apparent at an event -- called
Tsangantsainy -- at which polity constituents construct and erect a mast that is said to
embody the 'sacredness of rulers'. Through the Tsangantsainy they willingly re-establish
their ruler's rule and in so doing symbolically guarantee the continuity of the political order he represents. Given that they are observed to do so by the many powerful outsiders (state officials, representatives of foreign governments, representatives of development and conservation organizations, etc.) who are invariably invited to attend, their participation also contributes to the symbolic capital which their ruler wields in his efforts at negotiating local interests.
For my parents,
Ann C. Walsh and John A. Walsh,
and in memory of
Said Abdorahimo Soltoany.
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Finally, I wish to thank my parents — Ann and John Walsh — who have instilled in me a sense of family that I cherish. This dissertation is dedicated in part to them. It is also dedicated to the memory of Said Abdorahimo Soltoany (Dadilahy Said), a man who contributed greatly to the work presented here. Jenjeriňy izahay.
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Notes on the Text

In this dissertation, I use the spellings of Malagasy generally used by the people with whom I worked. Thus,
-- the vowel o is generally pronounced as oo – thus the o in “tromba” sounds like the oo in “boot”.
-- the letter j is generally pronounced as dz – thus “ampanjaka” is pronounced “ampandzaka”.

In addition:
-- following Jaovelo-Dzao (1996) the velar nasal n (as in “sing”) is written as ň (cf. Feeley-Harnik 1991; Sharp 1993; Velonandro, ed. 1983).

All Malagasy and French terms and passages in the text are italicized. A glossary of frequently used terms follows. All translations from the French are my own.
INTRODUCTION

August 17, 1992 – Ambatoharañana

Dark on a cloudy night. The typewriter, old and battered despite a fresh coat of silver spray paint, barely works. The ribbon I had bought in Ambilobe offers the possibility of black or red type, but I can't produce anything but a splotchy blend of the two. I will have to send the carbon. The proposal reads:

The Antankaraña are a Malagasy speaking group inhabiting a loosely bounded area in the north of Madagascar. Numbering about 40,000, they practice a mixed economy of wet and dry rice cultivation, fishing, contracted cotton and sugar cane production, cattle raising and, in larger centres, wage-labour. While participating in the political system of the Malagasy Republic, and subordinate to the state, the Antankaraña also retain and support a 'sacred' King whose authority, recognized to varying degrees throughout the region, lies in his role as living representative of a royal lineage dating back almost 400 years. The King's position is reaffirmed through a ritual cycle culminating once every five years, in a mast-raising ceremony, called Tsangantsainy, at the royal village of Ambatoharañana. In the years preceding the Tsangantsainy, ceremonial visits are made to royal tombs throughout the area in a way that recovers the sacred geography of the kingdom as it commemorates the history of the people.

Although the Tsangantsainy is said by some to have originated in the Seventeenth century, the ritual cycle associated with it bears certain undeniable markers of Nineteenth century Antankaraña relations with other groups. The ceremonial visit to the island of Nosy Mitsio, for example, is as much a reenactment of the Antankaraña royalty's flight from highland Malagasy invaders in the 1830s as it is an opportunity to visit the tombs of ancestors who died while in exile there. Furthermore, at the Tsangantsainy itself, both Antankaraña and French flags were once raised on the mast in commemoration of the 1841 treaty, established between the Antankaraña King Tsimiharo and
King Louis Philippe of France, which assured French military support in the recapturing of lost territory on the mainland. The juxtaposition of cooperation, with the French, and conflict, with highland invaders, is as apparent in the current manifestations of the ritual cycle as it is in the history of the events commemorated. The proposed research will explore the extent to which contemporary Antankarana identity is established, through the medium of ritual, in terms of these historically based relationships of cooperation and conflict. Attention will also be paid to contemporary Antankarana relations with other groups (i.e., highland people, French and other foreign officials, tourists, researchers, etc.) in order to show how current attitudes continue to reflect the history expressed through ritual.

I turn the lamp down, and crawl inside the mosquito net to sleep.

***

This dissertation focuses on ritual, identity and history in northern Madagascar. It discusses the significance of a local political system, and the rituals, identity and historical narratives associated with it, to the people living there. It draws from data collected over a combined 20 months of fieldwork (from June to November 1992, October 1993-November 1994, June 1996 and October-November 1997) in the north-western region of Madagascar's northernmost province of Antsiranana.

The Start

I first went to northern Madagascar in 1992 with the intention of studying spirit possession. Upon arriving there and traveling around for several weeks with my advisor Michael Lambek, however, I became much more interested in ritual. More specifically, and this is thanks entirely to the lucky timing of that first trip, I became interested in a particular cycle of rites and pilgrimages which, I was led to understand, celebrates both the tragic history and the present vitality of a local monarchical political system established in the area more than three centuries ago. As several stages of the cycle in question were set
to take place only a few months after the date of my intended departure, I resolved to stay, had my visa extended, and embarked on an additional 4 months of fieldwork.

From the very beginning, I questioned the people with whom I was living on an event called the *Tsangantsainy* — the culmination of the above mentioned cycle, occurring only once every 4 or 5 years, at which a mast (i.e., upon which flags are raised) is constructed and erected. Although I had seen a documentary film of the event (produced by Malgasy national television) and had read what little had been written on it (Vial 1954; Tsitindry 1987; Theodore 1987) I actually began with very little understanding of what the *Tsangantsainy* was all about. What I did know suggested that it would make for an interesting case in the study of the syncretic nature and adaptability of ritual practice in the face of colonization. Such a study, I thought, would provide insight into the significant role played by ritual in local responses to and remembrances of colonization. After all, here we have an elaborate ritual celebrating a local monarchy in the far north of Madagascar in which a *flagpole* is the focus of attention. Terence Ranger’s (1983) comments on how “tribal” rulers in Africa often adopted foreign symbols of power to legitimate their positions in the eyes of their constituents and gain the aura of “Kinglyness” in their dealings with the colonial administration seemed entirely appropriate; as did literature suggesting that resistance to colonial rule often took form in practices and symbols appropriated locally (for a recent example see Keesing 1994) from or through imitation (for a recent example see Stoller 1995) of the Other’s other. One need look no further, I figured, than the flags raised on the mast erected during the *Tsangantsainy* to note the global effects on local ‘tradition’.

In retrospect, five years later, I recognize how simple (and mistaken) my early line of reasoning was. Over time, the idea that the *Tsangantsainy* was and is simply a mimetic response to the imposition of foreign semiology and rule was largely discounted. Ultimately, what I had failed to fully appreciate (a failure documented in the above reprinted research proposal) is that the mast erected during the *Tsangantsainy* is much more than just a flagpole — that while it is true that the *Tsangantsainy* recalls the colonial era in Madagascar, it also serves to reconstitute a relationship that pre-dates the colonial era by centuries, and, as it turns out, has outlasted it by almost four decades now. Simply
put, any hypotheses which suggested explanations for the content of the event (i.e., the presence of the flagpole and flags especially) -- those which stressed the effects of foreign influence on ritual practice -- could not hope to account for its popularity in contemporary, post-colonial, Madagascar.

In those early stages, I also failed to appreciate the true significance of the ruler at the centre of the political system I had chosen to focus on. While the aura of "kingliness" in the cases described by Ranger dispersed not long after it had served its purpose (to facilitate administration and assist in the implementation of policy in nascent colonies), in northern Madagascar, the "King’s" ("roi" or "prince" as he sometimes refers to himself in French -- I henceforth refer to him as "Ampanjaka", a term translatable as "ruler" -- see chapter 2) "kingly" aura remains about him even today. What is more, while Ranger describes many African rulers as having "come more and more to occupy the ceremonial centre rather than the political or cultural centre of their societies" (1983:244), the Ampanjaka in northern Madagascar is currently very much at or near the center of all three -- not only is he the most significant living figure in the enactment of the Tsangantsainy, and thus very much at the ceremonial centre, he is also courted by local and national politicians, foreign development and conservation agencies and, of course, anthropologists and other researchers for his influence in "political" and "cultural" matters as well. It is his centrality in all of these realms which makes him such an effective spokesman for local interests on the global stage.

Unity and Diversity in Madagascar

Madagascar is an island. Bordered on the west by the Mozambique Channel (separating it by as little as 250 miles from the east coast of mainland Africa) and on all other coasts by the Indian Ocean, it is, in fact, the fourth largest island in the world. It has been called "the great red isle" (by European explorers) for its clay-tinged soil, "the spice isle" (by traders) for its exotic scents and produce, "Island of the Ancestors" (by the British Museum) for its ethnographic peculiarities, and, unforgottably (on a prized T-shirt of mine), the "Isle of Cocktails", presumably, for the pleasures it offers tourists. It, or
rather the scaled-down shape that it takes on a map, has also been proposed by the Malagasy state as a symbol of national pride — an outline of the island appears prominently on monuments commemorating independence from French colonial rule — implying the 'natural' unity of all within its boundaries.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the population of Madagascar, bounded as it is on all sides by water, has sometimes been imagined as being as unified as the island is unitary. No troublesome artificial boundaries (as in post-colonial Africa; see Nugent and Asiwajo eds 1996) to consider, the supposition might go, the borders of the Malagasy state are as ancient as the tectonic movements which separated the territory it occupies from mainland Africa. That a single language (though with striking regional variations) is currently spoken by virtually all of the island's 12 million plus inhabitants only serves to reinforce this conception. And yet, as Southall notes in his review of "common themes in Malagasy culture" (1986), there is great "diversity" in this seeming unity. "Ethnic" (and its many elaborations) is currently among the most frequently cited terms used in discussing the nature of history and identity in past and present Madagascar, and, when gazing pessimistically into the next millennium, the potential for conflict in the island's future.

This situation is certainly not unique to Madagascar. In a way that recalls issues raised in the debate over the effects of considering Africa as "invention" (see Gyekye [1995: xxiii] for an excellent overview of the debate), the Malagasy people are perhaps best characterized as simultaneously singular and multiple. Like (though on a lesser scale than) the Africa imagined by Kopytoff (Gyekye 1995: xxv), Madagascar is a place populated by groups which, although obviously distinguishable in terms of their particular histories, share certain "cultural patterns" which suggest some fundamental and primordial link which unites them. Hence, it is not so surprising that the collection that closed with Southall's above mentioned paper on what is common to Malagasy could open with a map clearly outlining the island's 'ethnic' or 'tribal' divisions.

Throughout my time in northern Madagascar, I witnessed this phenomenon frequently. While suggesting that indigenous northerners bore close relation to the island's southern or highland populations would have, in some contexts, been insulting, those wronged by the suggestion would nonetheless never deny that they were "Gasy" (i.e.,
Malagasy), and thus did share something in common with these other inhabitants of the island. While regional pride flourished, especially at events like the Tsangantsaina, periodic outpourings of nationalist sentiment were also apparent (on the annual commemoration of Madagascar's independence from French colonial rule, for example).

How might one consider this admittedly universal paradox in the particular context of contemporary Madagascar? One approach might be to consider the significant role played by the Malagasy government in promoting both unity and diversity — that is, the policies and rhetoric employed by the state in its efforts at advancing the image of a multicultural/multiethnic Madagascar. Malagachization, a policy adopted by the state after independence in the hopes of promoting nationalism through official valorization of the Malagasy language and Malagasy customs, has had significant effects. Sharp (1993) has nicely documented several cases from the north-western town of Ambanja where policies engendered by Malagachization (that granting official recognition to local ancestral voices, for example) have tended to promote factionalism and an increasing divide between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. As Sharp's work illustrates, the ubiquitous Malagasy term "fombandroaza"a" ("ancestral customs") can be called upon in two distinct (and sometimes contradictory) ways: generically (nationally?), to refer to a respect for tradition which all Malagasy supposedly share, and specifically (regionally?), to refer to the particular "customs" of particular "ancestors" and thus descent groups (or polities) distinguishable, one from another, in the nation.

While I will be touching on the ironies and paradoxes apparent in state efforts at promoting a 'unity in diversity' model of nationalism, it will not be my central focus here. That, as citizens of the Malagasy Republic, northerners may carry passports, pay taxes, sometimes receive (limited) benefits, and are subject to and punishable by state laws is significant enough; if in no other way, they recognize the state's place in their lives through many of their basic daily concerns. While it is true that few in rural areas are well informed of debates raging in the capital, and that, when referred to, the state is frequently linked (unfavourably) to hegemonic forces of the past, many in the north do, nonetheless, send their children to state-funded schools, vote in presidential elections and referenda and celebrate on the date of Madagascar's independence from French colonial rule. In this
dissertation, I am more interested in what distinguishes groups on the national level, and thus what it is that unites them locally. In order to explore this, I must look back in time. In northern Madagascar today, explanations of diversity are invariably conceived through reference to the past.

In thinking about the historical processes which have fostered diversity in Madagascar, and the fallacy of considering the place "A World Apart" (as National Geographic has) or a "Land out of Time" (as a recent collection of Malagasy music has called it), it is important to recognize two obvious and related facts: (a) that coasts cannot be imagined to be effective boundaries or deterrents to influence in a world with boats and people who know how to use them, and (b) that diversity is not merely the product of contact between 'indigenous' populations moving across landscapes or the inevitable result of fission and separation of descendant generations from their forebears. Broadly viewed, the human history of Madagascar is really a history of relatively recent arrivals. Unlike primatologists, zoologists and botanists working on the island, who refer to its floral and faunal diversity as a consequence of millions of years of isolation, anthropologists, economists, theologians and historians (among others) must view the island's social and cultural diversity as a consequence of a mere millennium of arrivals, settlements, subsequent arrivals and disruptions. No matter what theory purporting to account for the origins of the Malagasy population one subscribes to, or what date one cites when documenting the earliest human occupation of the island, no one could fail to recognize the significant effects of at least a thousand years of contact and change.

In Madagascar, first populated by sea-farers little more than a thousand years ago (Verin 1986), contact between 'indigenous' peoples (perhaps 'first arrivals' is a better way of putting it) and a variety of foreign (i.e., Arab, French, South Asian, East African, English, American, etc.) traders, slaves, nobility, arms-dealers, colonists, missionaries, conservation and aid workers, and even anthropologists has done as much to foster diversity as any 'internal' forces imaginable. The above mentioned unity-diversity paradox, then, is the product of time — the result of the historical processes by which groups (linked though distinct) have come to be organized, conceived of and perceived (by their members as well as by outsiders) as they are today. Much of this dissertation will
focus on these historical processes and the forms of organization, conceptions and perceptions resulting from them. Paramount (although not alone) among these processes, in northern Madagascar especially, are those linked to the arrivals of a variety of powerful outsiders — arrivals documented at the cores of locally potent historical narratives.

The Legacy of Arrivals in Northern Madagascar

A few important dates in the history of northern Madagascar. 1841: the year that the French claimed rights over much of the north and north-west of the island through treaties with two indigenous rulers — land which these rulers claimed as their own despite the fact that they no longer occupied them. 1885: the year in which, following almost a half century of dispute with the Merina of Madagascar's highlands (who claimed sovereignty over all of the island) over the validity of these and other claims, the French took official possession of the island's northernmost port of Diego-Suarez (Antsiranana). 1895: the year Madagascar was declared a colony of France. 1947: the year in which eighty to one hundred thousand Malagasy died carrying out and suffering the aftermath of an island wide insurrection against the French colonial administration. 1960: the year in which, following decades of political unrest and a national referendum, the population of the island opted for independence from French rule.

All of these dates are well known to any student of Malagasy history, and they appear as prominently in this dissertation as they would in any other historical account of Madagascar. That said, I must note that the events corresponding to these dates are not the only ones of importance — the (sometimes undatable) events preceding the nineteenth century are equally significant to the account I offer here. After all, in Madagascar, as Atkinson rightly notes was the case in Uganda, "however powerful the colonial experience was it did not occur in an historical vacuum, and it neither erased nor totally overwhelmed all that had gone before" (1994: 17). Recognizing that the 'indigenous' population of northern Madagascar had been subject to a stream of newcomers well before the arrival of the French, I consider it important to discuss the significance of pre-colonial hierarchies and political dynamics before discussing how the local polity I have chosen to highlight
was incorporated into the French colonial administration. I mean to call into question the notion that a sharp division between pre-colonial and colonial history, identity and models of social organization exists, and stress that it is only by searching beyond (before) the turn of the twentieth century that the "many patterns and processes of change that link and overlap [these] two periods" (Atkinson 1994:17) become evident. In northern Madagascar especially, the 300 year prelude to the "moment of colonization" is as significant to understanding the current situation as the 60 year dénouement.

Throughout this dissertation I will refer extensively to changes wrought and processes set into motion by two distinct arrivals in northern Madagascar. The first was that of a distinct branch of royalty. The second was that of the French. I focus on these two in particular in that it is they that are most evidently invoked in contemporary ritual practice associated with the Tsangantsainy. Other arrivals (that of other Arabs, Comorians, Africans, migrants from other parts of Madagascar, conservation and development organizations, etc.), although discussed in this dissertation, will not be the central focus here.

By a story I will be discussing fully in chapter 3, the "sacredness of rulers" first arrived in northern Madagascar at a time (long before the French) when internal disputes within a particular royal dynasty were forcing the fission and dispersal of its segments. The splinter which moved furthest north encountered a local population of autonomous but cooperative descent groups, which accepted, intermarried with and, ultimately, served them. The local population, the story goes, recognized the sacredness of the new arrivals and the significance of their ancestry.

While this and other stories of the encounter between the indigenous population of the north and the incoming royalty can reveal a good deal about the current relationship between commoners and royalty in northern Madagascar today, such stories must nonetheless be carefully scrutinized. They are, after all, generally recounted by the descendants of royalty and, as such, they bear the weight of bias. Unfortunately the needed counter-balance, stories recounting the indigenous side of the encounter, are unavailable -- or, at least, I have never encountered them. In lieu of objective accounts on one side or the other, then, I look to the practices associated with the polity that has
resulted from their pairing – the Tsangantsainy in particular – for what they may reveal of the inter-relationship between polity rulers and constituents. In a sense, the story of this pairing is one that is retold at every mast-raising.

The story of the second arrival -- that of the French -- and the incorporation of the authority of the traditional polity mentioned above into the colonial administration, will be in many ways familiar to historians of Africa. The French too had first arrived in Madagascar long before colonization. Initial attempts at establishing links with Malagasy groups in the eighteenth century, through their agents in bases on the East coast, failed, and it was not until the mid nineteenth century that they were able to establish any sort of long-lasting claim. It was largely from Nosy Be, an island off the north-west coast, that the French launched a fifty year campaign of interference which would result, eventually, in the colonization of the island. Their hold on Nosy Be was doubly defensible -- militarily, as islands are, and also in the realm of international affairs, by treaties made with local rulers, which granted them indisputable (by their estimation) rights. These treaties, including one established, in 1841, with a northern ruler named Tsimiharo, proved significant in later claims justifying French involvement in affairs on the island, and ultimately in their colonization of it. The social, political, ecological and economic effects of French colonization are undeniable. I discuss these effects extensively through the examination of syncretic ritual practice and the particular nature of contemporary identity politics in post-colonial Madagascar. It is in examining the legacy of colonization that ethnography can contribute to a retrospective understanding of the significance of the colonial era.

That said, I must remark, as Margaret Wiener has in her study of the colonization of Bali, on the tendency in anthropology to accredit colonizers with the "determining agency" in colonial encounters while "the colonized appear to have in one way or another either accepted the identities imposed upon them by their colonizers or resisted them" (1995:xii) -- the tendency, in other words, of portraying generic 'colonizers' as driving the bus and the generically 'colonized' as either passengers or the victims of its treads. The question of agency in colonial encounters -- of who acts (or has the power to do so) and with what intentions or motivations and in relation to what "structures" (as in Sahlins
must therefore be re-figured so as to account not only for the sort of resistance that goes unappreciated in traditional historical accounts of colonial encounters, but also for the variability in the experience of the colonized. Just as the category of colonizer might be seen as comprised of a variety of actors, each with their own (religious, political, economic, etc.) agendas, so too might be that of colonized. The colonized in Madagascar, after all, reacted, as individuals and collectives, in different ways to colonization and were affected by and contributed differently to the changes it wrought.

Three Words — History, Ritual and Identity

Much of this dissertation focuses on the significance of history and ritual (and the links between them) to considerations of identity in contemporary northern Madagascar. By way of introducing it, then, I offer brief discussions of the three terms I will be referring to throughout.

History

In her introduction to a recent collection of papers concerned alternately with the difficulties and rewards of historicizing anthropology and anthropologizing history, Ohnuiki-Tierney's accuses anthropologists past (i.e., pre 1960s) of buying into the colonial mentality that denied non-literate peoples their pasts (1990:2; cf. Wolf 1982) — of believing that before the arrival of Europeans, the societies they studied existed in a permanent (Lévi-Straussean) "cold" state of changeless continuity. Although certainly justified with reference to some cases, this would be a difficult criticism to levy against ethnographers, past and present, of Madagascar. Recognizing the importance of the past in the present, explorers, colonial administrators and anthropologists alike, for whatever their reasons, have left current students of Malagasy history and society a wealth of

1The "cold" societies described by Lévi-Strauss are not necessarily "historyless", but rather have a certain way of organizing conceptions of the events that make up history. Through its institutions, the "cold" society annuls "the possible effects of historical factors on their equilibrium and continuity in a quasi-automatic fashion" (Lévi- Strauss 1966:234).
information to draw upon. From the earliest studies of European navigators, explorers and traders, through the more systematic cataloguing frenzy of the colonial era, Malagasy people have been portrayed as anything but "historyless". Recent ethnographies by Astuti (1995), Bloch (1986), Kottak (1980), Wilson (1992), Feeley-Harnik (1991), Chazan-Gillig (1991) and Sharp (1993), among others, have all drawn effectively on this legacy in their discussions of current social organization in Madagascar.

It would be wrong to assume that the emphasis on the past in Malagasy ethnography is attributable only to the trendy theoretical inclinations of anthropologists working in Madagascar -- there is much more to it than that. Although wary of generalizations, I would argue that considerations of the past have been so pervasive in the ethnography of Malagasy groups because the past is such an all-pervasive part of the present throughout Madagascar. One need only consider the well-documented island-wide interest in ancestors to realize this true. More than just characters in seldom told stories, ancestors act, dance and sometimes speak in the present. Merina (of Madagascar's highlands) celebrate the dead by periodically removing, re-wrapping and re-"placing" the bodies of their ancestors in tombs (Bloch 1971); coastal Sakalava spirit mediums are possessed by long-dead royalty at large, widely attended ceremonies (Sharp 1993; Lambek 1998; Feeley-Harnik 1991); members of Tanala lineages call forth their ancestors through formalized recitations, offering them gifts in return for their benediction of annual rice plantings (Hanson 1993); etc. This, and other, Malagasy ethnography reflects the fact that in Madagascar the continuity of current social groupings (and their hierarchies) relies on the correct expression of the connections between the living and the dead. Attempting to study the present in Madagascar without reference to the past is futile.

In this dissertation I discuss the intersection of past and present in two distinct ways. First, I consider the events and processes of the past that have contributed significantly to the shaping of the current social, economic and political context of northern Madagascar. I do so with reference to both written and oral sources. Secondly, I examine how it is that people come to know what they do of the past in northern Madagascar. Here I describe practice (in ritual and non-ritual contexts) as an important conduit through which the past enters the present.
While debates in which Anthropology and History are invoked are among the most thought-provoking around, the opposing arguments which constitute them often spring from fundamentally incompatible understandings of what is significant to each. The debate over the viability of considering the past, metaphorically, as a "foreign country" where "they do things differently" nicely illustrates this. Some, Lowenthal especially, assert that, despite the tendency in popular and (some) academic discourse of presenting the past "in terms of the present", "we should be wary of anything from the past that appears familiar" (1996:209). Others, especially ethnographers who deal in the "present raw experience" (1996:211) which Lowenthal depicts as fated to distillation into manageable and familiar narratives by future hindsight, delight in present statements and practices which invoke the notion of continuity (in terms of the familiar and not the foreign) through time. In fact, Lowenthal's series of admonishments that:

Historical empathy, morally louche and mentally limp, is extolled by educators. Present-day aims and deeds are imputed to folk of earlier times. Heritage jettisons the past's cultural distance. Historic sites, museums, and costume romance cleave to the hoary dictum that human nature is constant, that people are essentially unchanged from age to age. The past is seen as another present (1996:209).

reads as though it could have been written (with neutral rather than negative connotations) by an anthropologist recording patterns of (European) historical reproduction. "Empathy" with ancestors, claims to "heritage", and representations of the sort one is likely to find at historic sites, in museum exhibits and during public performances are all the stuff of ethnography -- all are part of the cultural framework in which individuals and collectives make history. While Lowenthal's work rightly points out the fallacy in the adage that "history repeats itself", the fact is that it is the adage, and not arguments concerning the fallacy of it, that anthropologists are likely to encounter in conducting fieldwork.

The past is not something easily documented. As an object of inquiry, it can be frustrating to anthropologists conducting fieldwork. It is neither directly observable, nor
does it invite participation. It is instead something represented through media as diverse as oral or written texts (Whitehead 1995), memories (Antze and Lambek 1996), commemorative rites (Connerton 1989), landscapes (Schama 1995; Lowenthal 1984) or art (Kramer 1993; Stoller 1995). And so, when discussing the past in the present, the focus commonly shifts away from the past as thing in itself, and onto representations of it which frequently do invite participation and are wholly observable. As many anthropologists see it, the past is something “made” (Peel 1984; see also Carstens 1991) and “used” (Buckley 1990; J. Rappaport 1990; cf. Appadurai 1984) in the present, and it is the means of historical production that requires study. This is how I will be considering the past in the present in northern Madagascar – as something produced in certain culturally prescribed ways, and employed in the pursuit of certain ends. As such, even as I attempt to establish a chronologically ordered account of past events, I endeavor to explore the means by which certain versions of the information contained therein are communicated and the forces that affect the interpretation of that information.

Just as all anthropologists concern themselves with biases encountered in missionary or colonial accounts of the past (and thus scrutinize their own epistemological grounding), so too must they attend to how it is that their informants learn what they communicate regarding the past. They must ask how it is that the people they study, whose accounts they rightly take seriously, come to know what they do. As such, they are, like the prototypical philosopher of history described by R.G. Collingwood, concerned:

with [...] events not as things in themselves but as things known ... and [they must] ask not what kind of events they were and when and where they took place, but what it is about them that makes it possible for [people] to know them (1946:3).

Agreeing with Ortner’s assertion that "history is not simply something that happens to people, but something they make [...] within [...] the very powerful constraints of the system within which they are operating” (1984:159) I concern myself in this dissertation
with how history is made in northern Madagascar. I refer especially to certain features and practices -- things such as landmarks, dance, spirit possession, taboo and especially the ritual cycle associated with the *Tsangantsainy* -- which not only communicate information regarding the past, but also provide opportunities by which the living become associated with it through action (albeit action prescribed by the constraining "system" Ortner refers to).

Ultimately, I intend my consideration of the past in northern Madagascar to contribute to:

... a historical anthropology that tries to dissolve the division between synchrony and diachrony, ethnography and historiography; that refuses to separate culture from political economy, insisting instead on the simultaneity of the meaningful and the material in all things; that acknowledges -- no stresses -- the brute realities of colonialism and its aftermath, without assuming that they have robbed African peoples of their capacity to act in the world. This historical anthropology focuses centrally on the interplay of the global and the local, treating as problematic the shifting line between them. It pays particular attention to the processes by which transnational signs and practices are welded into the divers cultural configurations, into the contested realities and multiple subjectivities, of most late twentieth-century social scapes. In so doing, moreover, it seeks to disentangle the dialectics of continuity and change that characterize all social milieus -- and the intricate threads that join meaningful structures to creative action, authoritative institutions to the politics of difference and contestation (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xiv).

By focusing on the activities which render the past vital to the living, I attempt to show how some history-making practices are themselves the means by which individuals and collectives connect local and global, comment on change and assert continuity in one "late twentieth century social scape".
Ritual

Once every four or five years in northern Madagascar, two tall trees are cut, stripped and carried over dirt and asphalt roads from a forest south of the town of Ambilobe, 60 km northwards to the village of Ambatoharañana. There, amidst great ceremony, the pieces of wood are joined and erected as a mast. Lasting upwards of 15 days, and incorporating distinct stages of the wood's preparation, this event -- the Tsangantsainy (a term referring both to the whole period of celebration, and to its climax -- the actual raising of the mast) -- represents the culmination of a ritual cycle that both commemorates the past and ensures the future of the political system headed, in the present, by the Ampanjaka (ruler). If this dissertation has a centre-piece, the Tsangantsainy is it.

As hinted at above, my own interest in the Tsangantsainy was first piqued and then continuously fostered by the location in which I did most of my fieldwork. I lived in the village (Ambatoharañana) in which the culmination of the Tsangantsainy takes place, and was thus reminded of the mast's absence (in 1992), presence (in 1993-4) and absence again (in 1995) every time I crossed the plaza at the centre of the village on my way to visit the southern end. The centrality of the mast, and more specifically of the rite in which it is periodically raised, was further embedded in my thinking by the comments of those with whom I lived. "Will you be staying long enough for the Tsangantsainy?" and "Will you be back for the next one?" were two of the questions most frequently asked of me. Inquiries of my own regarding fomba (customs) and fanompoana (royal service) were often answered with reference to practices I had witnessed (or was going to witness) at the most recent enactment of the Tsangantsainy. That the Tsangantsainy and related events occur on a cyclical basis meant that, if nothing else, they were either still fresh in people's memory or being eagerly anticipated.

Stating this, though, may not be enough for some. In a region characterized by economic instability, political upheaval and reportedly catastrophic environmental degradation, why should I concern myself with ritual? What contribution does it make to
understanding the current situation in northern Madagascar? The answers to these questions, and concerns regarding the significance of ritual in post-colonial Africa generally, are well proposed by the Comaroffs in *Modernity and its Malcontents* (cited above). They note the paradoxes apparent in late 20th century African communities — where "modernity" and "rationalization" seem to have ushered in increasing concern with "tradition" and "irrational" acts of magic and witchcraft, and "culture" has become an object of commodification — and call us to consider ritual "a vital element in the processes that make and remake social facts and collective identities" (1993:xvi). In northern Madagascar, ritual is very much part of the 'real world' -- it is not the sole occupant of a symbol-rich and (to the uninitiated) indecipherable and enchanted realm of its own. Its inherent practices and symbolism, although ostensibly formalized, can be understood, appreciated, discussed and potentially altered by practitioners and participants in profane terms. In northern Madagascar, in fact, as Turner suggests is generally the case, interpretation and analysis of the many symbols apparent in ritual cannot take place without reference to the "human interests, purposes, ends and means" (Turner 1967:20) associated with them; ritual cannot be analysed without reference to the 'real world' or, as Bloch (1986) effectively demonstrates, to 'real history' either.

In stating this, I do not mean to downplay the perceived sacredness of ritual practice in northern Madagascar -- it is, in fact, the aura of sacredness which imbues ritual there with its power. I mean only to suggest that ritual and the 'real world' are not mutually exclusive and that, in northern Madagascar, the sacredness inherent in one is, in fact, an important resource referred to and drawn upon in the other. In chapter 2, and again in the concluding chapter of this dissertation, I will be arguing that the position of the *Ampanjaka* as a significant player in the profane world of politicians and NGO's is thanks largely to continuing local recognition of his sacredness at events like the *Tsangantsainy*.
Identity

In chapter 8 I will ask the question which some might suggest I should try to answer here in the introduction: who are the ‘Antankaraña’ -- the "people of the rocks" who are described (in ethnographic literature, travel writing, colonial archives, popular discourse and the research proposal reprinted above) as inhabiting the northernmost region of Madagascar? I have opted to hold off because too often, I think, collective identity is taken for granted in ethnography, and ethnonyms are assumed rather than explored. The material covered in the chapters leading up to the posing of this question will provide invaluable support to the answer I attempt. I here introduce some of the issues I will broach throughout.

Much has been written of the "invention" and "creation" of identity in Africa (see, for example, Ranger 1983; Vail 1989). This work generally stresses the significant effects of processes set in motion at the inception of colonization on the ways in which colonized peoples construct group identity. As such, it often focuses on past misinterpretations of local social formations by colonial regimes, the resulting policies of colonial administration and consequent modes of identity reckoning in the present (see Eggert [1986] on "Mahafaly as Misnomer" for an example of the genre applied in Madagascar). In its most extreme form, evident in Terence Ranger's contribution to The Invention of Tradition (1983), the "creation of tribalism" paradigm suggests that colonization and the institutions it carried with it incited a revolution in the way Africans identified themselves and were identified by others. In a retrospective account of his own work, Ranger writes that:

The colonial period in Africa [...] was not only marked by the importation of European neo-traditional inventions of identity -- the regiment, the boarding school, the refuedalised country house -- and the inclusion of Africans within them as subordinates, but also by systematic inventions of African traditions -- ethnicity, customary law, 'traditional' religion. Before colonialism Africa was characterised by pluralism, flexibility, multiple
identity; after it African identities of 'tribe', gender and generation were all bounded by the rigidities of invented tradition (1993:63 my emphasis).

By this thinking, the multiple identities of pre-colonial times were replaced by overarching tribal ones, and 'tribes', rendered primordial to their inventors by notions of 'tradition' but only newly paramount to those who comprised them, became the unit of African social organization in the colonial (and consequently, the ethnographic) imagination. As influential as Ranger's earliest work on the subject has been, however, the "invention" paradigm has not been embraced by all. Ranger recognizes this, and has duly offered a reformulation in which, among other things, "the violent and rapid change" (Chanock 1985:10 cited in Ranger 1993:69) of the pre-colonial nineteenth century is newly appreciated. It is with reference to this reformulation, and the decade of writings that have inspired it, that I will be considering the case of northern Madagascar.

In northern Madagascar today, one is likely to hear the French word "tribus" – the French for "tribe" -- in any number of contexts. Invariably, as Domenichini (1989:16) notes, use of the term invokes the notion of the "18 tribus de Madagascar" -- a shorthand for the idea that the island's population is divisible into discrete and bounded units, classifiable now, as in the writings of pre-colonial explorers and colonial administrator-ethnographers, in terms of particular customs (fomba), ancestry (razaña), and even superficial criteria such as skin tone and 'typical' hairstyle. The idea connotated by the term is, unsurprisingly, largely attributable to the past inclusions of local populations into imposed over-arching systems of classification and rule -- that of the highland Merina empire of the nineteenth century first (Esoavelomandroso 1989), and that of the French colonial administration second. It has been further bolstered over the years through the deployment of rhetoric in a number of quests for political advantage. Following the revolt of 1947, for example, the French administration discouraged nationalism by encouraging regionalism in the north and elsewhere -- suggesting that counter-colonial political movements were a highland plot and would lead eventually to the re-establishment of the Merina monarchy, and thus the re-subjugation of the northern population to Merina rule. More recently, national politicians have sought support for their platforms and policies by
invoking the long-standing tension between coastal and highland people, and by consulting with and seeking the support of the same local rulers (or their descendants) employed by the French decades earlier. Even as late as 1997, suggestions were made by some national politicians that the Malagasy republic do away with its current six provinces division in favour of a system of administration which would see the country divided along ethnic/tribal lines.

All that said, it would be wrong to presume that various representations of tribal or ethnic divisions in Madagascar reflect anything but the intentions of their respective producers. It would be wrong, in other words, to think that actual divisions exist just because politicians, historians, and administrators say they do. Recent ethnography has pointed out the inadequacy of models suggesting that the population of Madagascar is somehow divisible into roughly commensurate units. Astuti's recent work on the performative nature of Vezo identity on Madagascar's south-west coast (1995a;1995b), for example, calls us to follow the step we have already taken away from "tribes" and "tribalism" with another which leads us away from "ethnic groups" and "ethnicity" -- to recognize the possibility, at least, that the latter, like the former, are externally imposed and not necessarily appreciated internally (cf. Jenkins 1994). Astuti's work demonstrates the problem of privileging universalizing classificatory models over local and relative alternatives. And she is not alone. Both Lambek (1996) and Sharp (1993) have raised important questions regarding the "boundedness" (Lambek 1996:259) of groups in Madagascar, and Linnekin and Poyer (whose work in the Pacific Astutti effectively cites) refer to "ethnicity" as "a western ethno-theory" that "may ignore significant distinctions recognized by local people themselves"(1990:10). More generally, Banks, pushing the point a step further, has defined "ethnicity" as "a collection of rather simplistic and obvious statements about boundaries, otherness, goals and achievements, being and identity, descent and classification, that has been constructed as much by the anthropologist as by the subject"(1996:190).

Such critique implies that in discussing "ethnic groups" of the present world order, as in considering "tribes" of the past, anthropologists must be wary of a trio of related pitfalls -- the tendency to reify groups through the assumption of boundaries, the
temptation of classifying and comparing units that aren't necessarily commensurable and
the failure to fully appreciate the historical processes underlying identity formation. Such
wariness is, of course, not a bad thing. It must not, however, prevent the exploration of
"ethnicity" and "tribalism" when such terms (or ideas commonly associated with them) are
invoked emically -- when reification, classification, comparison and notions of
immutability take place and/or are voiced locally, and are thus the subject matter of
ethnography and not things wrongly assumed prior to its undertaking.2

The question proposed above -- "Who are the Antankaraña?" -- stems from my
own curiosity. "Antankaraña" know quite well who they are, and regardless of what I say
on the matter, people in northern Madagascar have used, now use and will surely continue
to use the term "Antankaraña" in many different ways. And there lies a central dilemma of
this, or any anthropological consideration of group identity -- how to speak or write of the
complexity of a thing when the terms we choose so often refer to things other than 'the
thing' anthropologists imagine? How to bridge the divide separating the groups we
imagine and name from the groups that the individual subjects of ethnography know?
What is the point of asking a question like "Who are the Antankaraña?" when the likeliest
answer is that there is no answer other than "the Antankaraña"?

One approach to these questions, well proposed by Larson (1996), is to consider
the ethnonyms so often referred to as attributable to "tribes", "ethnic groups" or the
subjects of ethnography as just what they are -- words; terms; units of vocabulary in a
language whose grammar sometimes portrays the world as divided into groups
comparable to others of similar type. Larson rightly notes that "identity names such as
ethnonyms possess phenomenal power -- inherent in their nature as single-word signifiers
of complex and heterogeneous significations -- to mask both the multidimensionality and
the very nature of the identities they denote" (1996:545). Although Larson's work here
deals predominantly with the "semantic fields" of ethnonyms through the past, there is no
reason why his approach cannot be adopted in an examination of the present. By
considering how terms referring to social groupings are used, avoided and debated, under

2For thoughts on a similar dilemma regarding the multiple uses of the term "culture", see
Boddy and Lambek (1997).
a variety of present-day circumstances, we may at least come to some understanding of why it is that people refer to them at all in claiming or attributing identity. The realization we are most likely to come to in looking at these terms, of course, is that they are by no means the only ones of significance to the individuals we work with. That is, that Ranger's assertion that, in the nineteenth century, "most Africans moved in and out of multiple identities, defining themselves at one moment as subject to this chief, at another moment as a member of that cult, at another moment as a part of this clan, and at yet another moment as an initiate in that professional guild" (1983:248) might be extended to include "Africans" of the late twentieth century as well.

In northern Madagascar today, as in the nineteenth century I would hypothesize following Ranger, identity is never singular -- individuals express affiliation (through words, practice and the respect of certain constraints on practice) to a great variety of groupings. Terms denoting distinct families, cooperative associations, descent groups, religious affiliations and nationalities abound. In this dissertation I attempt to portray at least some of this complexity. I must note, however, that I will be focusing most of my attention on only one of the many affiliations the people I lived with hold -- that which has them refer to themselves as "Antankaraña". I do so primarily because it is this term which was and is most frequently invoked with reference to the Tsangantsainy and the political system with which the ritual is associated. I approach the ethnonym "Antankaraña" as a polyvalent symbol which actors refer to in different ways and with different goals. The question "Who are Antankaraña?" then is necessarily preceded by the more manageable "Who uses the term 'Antankaraña' in reference to themselves, in what contexts and to what perceived ends?"

**History, Ritual and Identity in Northern Madagascar**

The dissertation is divided into two parts. In Part One, I introduce the settings in which I carried out fieldwork (Chapter 1), the political system which I refer to as the Antankaraña polity (Chapter 2) and the history of the region in which it exists (Chapters
These chapters provide much of the background necessary to understanding the material and discussions that follow. Part Two explores how history (Chapter 6), ritual (Chapter 7) and identity (Chapter 8) are constructed by the people who recognize the importance of the settings, political system and narratives outlined in Part One.

Although I do not consider myself bedridden by the "epistemological hysteria concerning how one can know that anything one says about other forms of life is as a matter of fact so" (Geertz 1988:71) diagnosed by Geertz, I am nonetheless concerned with many of the issues raised in debate of the past decades over questions of representation in ethnography. To portray this concern (with no intention of letting it dominate my work), I have decided to include edited excerpts from my field journals at various points through the dissertation. All have been altered somewhat (in tense especially) to make them more readable, and all are dated and marked with the location in which they were written. My intention in including these excerpts, quite simply, is to periodically remind the reader of my presence in the research presented here -- both as author of the text that they are reading, and as researcher gleaning "data" from his experiences. These excerpts are intentionally anecdotal, and they were written originally with what I use them for in mind.

In northern Madagascar stories are valued not just for the information conveyed in them, but for the way in which they connect their audience to that information. They are remembered, largely, because they are memorable. That said, I think it unfortunate that anthropologists, who must recognize this basic tenet of story-telling given that so much of their work is based on the anecdotal accounts of others (is life-history not a string of anecdotes?), are so wary of employing personal narratives of their own which help (I have found) connect readers (non-anthropologists especially) to the information they are attempting to convey. Just as preface narratives that recount the ethnographer's frustration and fascination with their subject of choice (as in Lambek 1981, Boddy 1989, Stoller 1995 for example) effectively foreshadow the reader's explorations of it, so too can anecdotes allow the reader entry into the world described by an ethnographic account. Where they are not able to identify with the basic universal concerns recounted therein, they are offered a glimpse of what it is like to encounter the relatively 'strange' from a perspective (presumably) similar to their own.
Personal narratives are also important to this dissertation because who I was (and was perceived as) had a great influence on what I learned and how I learned it through my time in the region. In a sense, mine was only one of the more recent in the string of arrivals introduced above, and as with all of those others, interpretations of and reactions to it were invariably informed by precedents set long ago. This meant that I, as well as other foreign researchers who have worked with the Antankaraña, was often classified as French — i.e., as a descendent of the nineteenth and twentieth century French officers and administrators who had formed treaties and alliances with a number of local rulers. Not that people failed to understand that I was in fact a native English speaker, living in Canada — such specifications were just of little significance. To many I was a white foreigner akin to white foreigners of the past and was thus classified as vazaha just as the French had been for so many years before. As troubling as this label was at times, I must admit that it had certain advantages as well. In being vazaha, I was able to do and see things that many Malagasy researchers (those from the island's highlands in particular) would have been restricted access to. What is more, my status as a foreigner interested in local culture meant that I was always kept informed of upcoming events, and was frequently invited to ceremonies or on official visits that many others would not have been. This was not simply because as a foreigner I was associated with past authority figures nor, in my opinion, can it be linked to the dependence dynamic which Mannoni (1964) discusses in his work on the psychology of colonization in Madagascar. Instead, the sometimes special treatment accorded me recalled relations of the past which, in the thoughts of many in the north today, were empowering locally. In a nation frequently perceived to be controlled by the descendants of the highland Malagasy people who had attempted to subjugate the north in the nineteenth century, who better to remember and think fondly of than the descendants of the colonial power with whom Antankaraña of the past had been allied? Who better to allow into the heart of local ancestral custom than representatives of the force that is said to have helped preserve the institutions to which it is tied? While it is perhaps unsurprising to many familiar with Madagascar that archetypal relations of conflict between coastal and highland elites are frequently invoked in the north of the island for a variety of reasons, that the cooperative ones which had existed between
a local elite and *vazaha* are recalled in much the same *purposeful* way is interesting and perhaps unique on the island; especially now, in the late 1990's, that so much foreign (i.e., conservation, development, investment, research, etc.) interest is focused on the region.
CHAPTER 1

Establishing the Settings

In this chapter I introduce some of the many settings in which I carried out fieldwork in Madagascar. Although I spent the majority of my time there in the village of Ambatoharañana, I traveled frequently, and will thus be referring to a broad spectrum of urban and rural contexts throughout this dissertation. The fact that the sometimes limited time spent in each of these settings was so productive is thanks largely to the family with whom I shared fictive kin ties — the people who put me up (and put up with me) when I was visiting each of the places I describe.

Although I slept in a small hut of my own in Ambatoharañana, I ate all of my meals in the larger cement floored house of the woman, Karima, whose family I most frequently associated with. Her uncles and aunts, brothers, sisters and cousins and, especially, her 10 children constitute the bulk of those with whom I hold close relations of fictive kinship. Inasmuch as I considered myself and was considered their kin, of course. I was also then included in the wider kin networks to which they belonged. I should point out from the beginning that my adoption into this family (who sometimes refer to themselves as a collective as "Morafeno" -- "easily full" -- in reference to the effect of their great number on a small room) is not unprecedented, nor was it perceived locally as being all that unusual. Certainly all of the people of the village knew I was a student and understood that I had come to learn about local customs (fomba), history (tantara) and lifestyle (fihenana), and I was often the subject of gossip and teasing for my outside ways, but the bond I shared with members of the Morafeno family was and is really no different from the sorts of fictive kin bonds which frequently develop between unrelated individuals in the area. Although the relationship was never marked by means of a formal ceremony (fhatidra), such practices are rarely pursued when other, informal, means of marking the link are available. Commonly, individuals come to recognize relations of fictive kinship through the use of particular (and reciprocal) kin terminology when referring to one
another. Thus, my relationship with this family began in my earliest weeks of fieldwork when I relied heavily on, and was thus termed a "younger brother" (mandry) of, Lipo (short for Louis-Philippe) -- a man who was teaching me Malagasy, helping me translate tape recordings, and generally looking out for my well-being. From there, as familiarity and friendship grew, his mother's brothers (zama) began referring to me as nephew, his brothers and sisters took to calling me by the appropriate age-dependent terms (zoky if I was older than them, mandry if they were older than me), and his mother and father (separated but still in frequent contact at that point) took to calling me by the term for son. In all cases, I reciprocated with appropriate terms, and offered the sorts of greetings required of someone of my standing to them. Other sorts of reciprocity existed too. For my part, I offered assistance requested of me (generally in teaching English, providing labor, giving loans of money and equipment, contributing to the weekly food budget, offering medical assistance where I could, etc.) and in return I was provided the hospitality and support that anyone in the area might realistically expect from kin.

I have decided, then, to describe each of the fieldwork settings I outline here with reference to the households in which I most often stayed when I visited them. That these households were all occupied by members of the Morafeno family indicates that my research is based as much in an extra-local network of kin as it is in a single village. While I don't claim that the experiences and lives of the individuals in these particular households are any more or less typical of the village, town or city in which they live than the experiences and lives of any of their neighbors, I do hope that in referring to them, I can evoke something of the ambience (to borrow a French expression frequently used by northern Malagasy speakers) of these settings. I have also opted to present these places in reverse order to what is perhaps expected in such an introduction. Rather than describe the transition from city to town to village that corresponds to my own movement upon arriving in the North (as in Srimivas 1976), I describe the movement from village to plantation to town to city to capital in imitation of the movements that members of the family I lived with, and certainly many others in the region, have made over the past few years. I begin with the setting that I came to know best -- the village in which I spent most of my time.
Figure 1 – Map of the Region
March 10, 1994 — Ambatoharaiana

Vacation time in town means that the house and boutique here are overrun with kids — and while Karima's away, I'm meant to be watching over them. It is flattering, I suppose, to be trusted with such a responsibility, but I can't help but think my time might be better spent in pursuit of some bit of knowledge at the base of a cool mango tree than playing peace-maker in this tin-roofed oven.

Nono, Karima's youngest son, sitting on a bench opposite me, intent on a serious, adult, conversation, asks me what I will end up doing when I'm back in Canada. Kala (12), Karima's niece, and Stella (10), a grand-daughter, sit just outside the door arguing over who's got a bigger forehead — each thrust and parry buckling the siding of the house and sending the boutique into shudders. Nono, struggling to hear my reluctant answer over the noise, can stand it no longer. He goes out, yells at them, and dances back in, hard feet on the red cement floor like brushes on a cymbal, and retakes his position opposite me. I light a cigarette (one of the daily 5 I have rationed myself to) and smile, hoping he's forgotten the topic of conversation. He hasn't.

Nono's question is a good one, and I think about it while he looks for something to throw at the chicken trying to sneak in the doorway. What is there to do? He suggests that I might want to become a commando like Jean-Claude Van Damme, or, echoing the joking sentiments of some others in the village, the Prime Minister of Canada. I counter by saying that he should become President of Madagascar, and he snickers and sprays the room with spittle and an imaginary uzi, scaring off the chicken who's making yet another attempt to get in — he'd rather be a commando.

Nono is fairly privileged among his age set in the village. Not only does he have boasting rights over the wondrous things he's seen, heard and tasted in the town of Ambilobe, and the city of Diego (where few of his contemporaries here have ever been), he also has greater expectations for himself and his future. Like all of his siblings, he has been subjected to a series of lectures on the value of hard work and individualism by a proudly half-French father. "Don't just sit around with your camarades under the mango trees ... do something". "Learn a language". "Plant something". "Read something". "There's money to be made and a future to be won, and being lazy, drinking, and chasing girls isn't going to help any". Nono plans to
follow in his older brother Jacques' footsteps. When he is old enough, he will go to Tana (Madagascar's capital) to study electronics. He certainly doesn't plan on spending any more than his vacations here in Ambatoharañana — this place, he tells me, has no ambience.

Kala and Stella return just in time to interrupt Nono's second question (Do they have cigarettes in Canada?). Nono, they've decided, has a forehead much larger than either of them, and they're only too happy to tell him. He's not amused, and tears out after them again, screaming. The chicken hops up to the doorway and I know not to hesitate.

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Ambatoharañana

The village of Ambatoharañana lies approximately 6km off the north-west coast (see figure 1) of the northern province of Antsiranana. Its name, as with the names of many villages throughout Madagascar, refers to a particular feature of the land on which it was first founded. "Hamba-" meaning "at the stones" and "harana" referring to the golden color of ripening corn, the place is named for the rocks which cover the dry reddish-brown land on which the village was first established. Today the village is inhabited by more than 1000 people, although that number fluctuates considerably depending on the time of year. During the months leading up to the rice harvest (late April to late June), the village is all but abandoned as whole families move out to their fields (anywhere from 3 to 6 km away) to protect their budding crops from devastation by wild pigs and birds. They stay through the harvest, retaining close links to those inhabiting the fields around them (often kin), making only occasional trips back to the village for supplies (matches, cooking oil, gasoline to start fires with, etc.) or on occasions

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1 This first site of the village is actually not the same location of Ambatoharañana today. The original "Ambatoharañana" — the place with the yellowish rocks — is actually located some kilometres from the current site, and is visited once every four or five years by the current Ampanjaka and many followers on the way to visit the cave tombs of past Ampanjaka.
of religious importance (Muslim services on the third, seventh and fortieth days following a death for example).

Complaints about the lack of adequate drinking water after months of no rain (especially in October, November and December) in Ambatoharañana are offset, seasonally, by comments about the luck of living in a place built on sand. Other villages in the area, where water is perhaps easier to come by, are generally plagued by mud and a glut of thick-growing weeds during the wet season (asara). Aside from the ubiquitous mango, and the occasional papaya tree or scattering of corn stalks rising from within fenced-off private gardens, there is relatively little vegetation in Ambatoharañana during all but the wettest time of the year.

As mentioned in the introduction, I came to live in Ambatoharañana not for its flora, but for its importance as a social and political center in the area. The village was first established at the turn of the century when officials of the then new French colonial administration encouraged a local Ampanjaka (ruler), who had been living in exile on a small island off the coast since the mid 19th century, to settle his capital (doany) there. The French had established a post (posty) on the site, and wanted the Ampanjaka, with whom they had had largely positive relations since long before colonization, close by to help in ‘pacifying’ (and corralling into service) the local population (see chapter 4 for a complete retelling of these events). While the post didn't last long (the local administrative centre was moved to Ambilobe, a town on the road leading south from the well established port of Diego-Suarez), the village did. A great many of the descendants of that original settler-ruler still live there -- the Morafeno family (mentioned above) among them. Karima's father (Tsimihafy) was the youngest son of this past Ampanjaka. Thus, my brothers, male cousins, nephews and uncles are all considered andriana (royal men) and my sisters, female cousins, nieces and aunts are all ndrambahy (andriana + vavy -- "royal women"). I will be discussing the significance of their being royalty, in terms of my research, later in this chapter.

The division between these andriana and ndrambahy and all of those who are not considered (or choose not to consider themselves) royalty is evident in the layout of the village. Entering on the bumpy dirt road cum wagon path from the south, one first
encounters clusters of houses, bordering both sides of the main north-south thoroughfare, belonging to commoners. The houses vary in size and age, but virtually all of them are owned by individuals (or more often than not the descendants of individuals) who arrived with or some time after the first Ampanjaka and his family at the turn of the century.

About two hundred metres on, heading due north, you come to a large and relatively open area with one road running westward (to the coast) out of it, and another (a wagon-trail) running north-east. This space marks the rough boundary between the commoners in the southern end of the village and the royalty in the north, although this division is not so marked in daily life as it might appear on a village map. Relations between inhabitants of the northern and southern ends are alternately as cordial and strained as those between immediate neighbors within the bounds of either end. Children from the southern end cross the clearing daily (on their way to school in the northern end); marriage between young men and women of both ends is common, and informal visits between in-laws and friends, as well as formal visits at births, deaths and marriages (or other such occasions) are frequent. What is more, and this is significant given the tendency to equate royalty with great wealth, there is little in their status as royalty or non-royalty which affects their standard of living -- houses and fields look much the same on either side of the dividing line. Given that descent is traced bilaterally and exogamous marriage is the general rule for royalty, it would be difficult to find anyone born and still living in Ambatoharañana who is not related (affinally or consanguinely) to royalty. Suffice it to say that every adult in the village knows, and to some degree socializes with every other. Individuals who shun each other (and there are of course many examples of this) do so by choice, and not because avoidance is prescribed.

In the center of the clearing mentioned above is the largest (completed) structure in Ambatoharañana -- the zomba ("palace") of the Ampanjaka ("ruler"). Although the current Ampanjaka lives in the nearby town of Ambilobe, he stays in the zomba whenever he is in Ambatoharañana and uses it to receive his many visitors on occasions such as the Tsangantsainy. The building is large (its single story covering almost 2000 square feet)
and made even more conspicuous by the large empty space that surrounds it. It was first built (in 1913) and later restored (in the 1950s) with financial assistance provided by the French, and until repainted weeks before the Tsangantsainy in 1993, small tricolours (the blue, white and red French flag) and sickle moons and stars (potent local symbols of royalty and Islam) decorated the space above each of its four doorways. Until fairly recently interior rooms of the zomba had also been decorated with borders comprised of the three colors of the French flag and photographs and drawings of past Ampanjaka, many portraying their interactions with French dignitaries in the 1950s. When not occupied by the Ampanjaka, the building is locked up, and the cool cement porch which rings it converts to a playground for village boys and girls. The north-facing door of the zomba looks out onto a large open plaza, near the centre of which the mast is erected during the Tsangantsainy.

Just north of the zomba, across the open plaza, is another "palace", although this one is no longer referred to as such. Originally constructed in much the same style as the first (the one just described), this second one has never been renovated and thus exhibits the full wear of its 70 years. Until recently the second zomba had been occupied by Said Abdourahimo Soltoany (henceforth Dadilahy Said – "Grandfather Said" – as he is affectionately known in Ambatoharainana), the oldest living member of his generation of royal men and the youngest (and last-living) son of the past Ampanjaka for whom it had been built following a dispute (in the 1920s) over succession in which the son of a deceased Ampanjaka refused to vacate the original zomba.3 When Dadilahy Said's father died, having reigned 10 years as Ampanjaka, his rival was proclaimed his successor and the first zomba became the "official" one again. It has been ever since. It is here, in the middle room of this house that village girls and boys learn to read from the Koran from a teacher (fondy) supported by their parents.

No more than 20 metres east of this second zomba are the foundations and crumbling stone walls of a large mosque (maskeriny) that has stood incomplete and largely

2While not so marked in Ambatoharainana, the privileges of royalty (especially in terms of access to education and thus certain types of employment) are evident through time. I will be discussing the nature of these privileges in chapter 5.

3Dadilahy Said died in February 1996.
unused since 1954. Stories vary as to how and why it is that the structure was never finished -- some say the money (coming originally from the Middle East) was mismanaged locally, while others claim most of it was skimmed by bureaucrats in the capital long before it even arrived. Regardless, the unfinished ruins are now the domain of grazing goats and wayward chickens. The current Ampanjaka is seeking the means to complete it and in 1997 the possibilities of this happening look as promising and dismal as ever. The mosque is used as it was intended to be only once a year at Ambatoharana’s ziarah (‘visititation’ in Arabic) -- a festival in which Muslims from throughout north and north-western Madagascar congregate in the village in order to visit the tombs of past Muslim Ampanjaka. Since the conversion of a mid-nineteenth century Ampanjaka, and his acceptance of support and teachers (fondy) from the Arabic stronghold of Zanzibar, Islam has been the foreign religion of choice of many in the north -- especially royalty. From the turn of this century, Ampanjaka (and others who follow Islam) have received Muslim and not traditional burials still practiced in other parts of the north and north-west of the island.

North, west and north-west of the second zomba and unfinished mosque are the huts and houses of the remaining half of the village's population. Most of the men here trace their descent back at least a hundred years, to the Ampanjaka (Tsialana II) who had first settled in the spot. Larger houses are generally occupied by royal men, their wives and young children, however it is not unusual for unmarried women (ndrambahavy) and their children (and occasional lovers) to occupy houses of their own as well. Given that post-marital residence is most frequently patrilocal, these women are usually divorced or separated and having left the villages of their husband’s patrilineal kin have returned to live alongside their own. Smaller huts (mine among them) are generally occupied by single men or young couples who haven’t yet the means to build with cement and tin as their parents have. It is in this northern half of the village that Karima lived.

Karima was born in Ambatoharana and raised nearby. After she had left to marry in her early twenties she didn’t expect she would be back for anything more than occasional visits. Her return in her late 40s, 10 years ago, was prescribed by concerned children and family members after she was selected to hold the title of Ndriambavibe
("great royal woman") -- a status (and many say burden), held by a single living woman of royal descent, akin to that of the *Ampanjaka*. Given the nature of the role she was meant to play (to be described in the next chapter), she was advised by her family that the village would be a more appropriate place to live than the town of Ambilobe had been. In the village, it was thought, she would, if nothing else, have her brothers to look out for her interests and fields. With her own 11 children old enough to fend for themselves in Ambilobe, Diego-Suarez (the capital city of Madagascar's northernmost province) and Tana (the capital city of Madagascar), she has welcomed numerous other children (her own grandchildren and nieces among them) into her home and raises them as a parent would. Only one of her own children, Lipo (the man, mentioned above, who assisted me in my first months in the village) lived in Ambato'hara’ana on a permanent basis in 1992-93.

Karima's husband, Armand, who proudly identified himself as *café-au-lait* (in recognition of his *métissage* -- his father was a French administrator from further south on the West coast) -- came to Ambato'hara’ana occasionally to visit with his wife and in-laws. He had worked a long time as a senior mechanic at SIRAMA (the plantation and sugar refinery described in the next section), and since retiring from there has been pursuing a number of different livelihoods in the region. It is due to his heritage that his and Karima's children all have French, Christian first names. Armand is a staunch Catholic who recites a brief grace before every meal and attends mass whenever he is near a church. Several of his children have followed his example, and consider themselves primarily Catholic rather than Muslim (as their mother's side would have them be), although, as is the case with many others in Ambato'hara’ana and neighboring villages, they might actually practice both as well as the "ancestral customs" (*fomboana* or *fomba* or *fomba* or *fomba*) contested by some Christian missionaries and advocates of Muslim orthodoxy. For many in the Morafeno family, and in Ambato'hara’ana generally, being Christian or Muslim depends entirely on whether you're closer to a church or a mosque. From my experience in the area, expressions of religious intolerance generally emanate from foreigners.

As mentioned earlier I lived in a small house of my own in the village. Constructed of wood and thatch gathered locally, it was the sort of hut young men
commonly make for themselves when it is time to establish a place of their own, or when newly married. When young brides go to live in the house of their new husbands (most often in another village), they are given the chairs, bed, and/or mattress (along with jewelry, perfume and clothing) to furnish it. Upon entering such a union, a woman's duties are to take care of the household and help in taking in the rice crop from his field, while he, in turn, is meant to supply money for provisions, and occasional gifts (gold jewelry, sarongs and imported clothing especially) and help her (or perhaps her kin) in reaping her own crop. Divorce is common, and many young women and mothers in Ambatoharanana have already been married (at least once), and having found it not to their liking, have returned to the village they had grown up in.

Karima's house, the one in which I ate, was larger and far more valuable than mine. It had raised cement floors, tin siding and a tin roof, and was internally divided into four separate rooms, one for eating, another for receiving guests, a third in which Karima slept and kept her valuables, and a fourth housing a small shop (botiky -- from the French boutique) from which she (or whichever of her children or grandchildren were on duty) sold cooking oil, laundry soap, matches, pens, razor blades, cigarettes, snuff and other necessities of village life. Dusk there brought the familiar sound of young children mumbling their parents' requests for an 1/8th litre of oil, a box of matches or a couple of cigarettes. Holding out grubby bills, they accepted candies as change along with Karima's taunts and croons. Unlike the five other such shops in the village, Karima's did not sell bottled beer or locally-produced rum, nor was it adjoined by a "bar" in which drinkers could sit. Those who would imbibe, Karima would say, could go next-door to her sister-in-law's place. Her objections were not based on religious grounds -- she feared only that her generous spirit and privileged position among local royalty would make her easy prey for villagers seeking to run long tabs. Her sister-in-law, as Muslim as Karima is, had no qualms about refusing service.

Competition among botiky is not so fierce as one might imagine. Although all proprietors claim to sell the same things, and all charge the same prices for them, the actual stock of goods in the shops at any one time are such that the shortages of one are generally offset by the surplus of another. Thus, if Karima was all out of your brand of
cigarettes, chances are that her sister-in-law was not. Karima purchased her supplies during frequent trips to Ambilobe (the nearest center to buy such goods), and transported them back by the bush taxi or tractor (depending on the season) which carried passengers and cargo between Ambilobe and the densely populated fishing villages on the coast. The prices in her botiky, though higher than in Ambilobe, were reasonable given the sometimes exorbitant freight rates charged by the notorious drivers who transport the stuff.

The botiky was only a sideline for Karima; a way to earn a little extra money to occasionally purchase fresh fish for the noon-time meal and provide the school scribblers and pens for the children she raised. As with virtually every other adult in the village, another main focus was the annual rice crop. Rice is the staple foodstuff in virtually every meal. When plentiful, adults may eat 3 to 4 cups (uncooked) of it per day — freshly cooked with fish broth and greens, beans, or squash each noon and nighttime, leftovers (ankera) scraped from the previous evening's pot every morning. When harder to come by, especially during the months before the harvest is taken in, consumption is reduced and supplemented with other, and to some less desirable, staples like manioc or green banana. As I was frequently reminded, though, as great as rice is on a plate, getting it there is at no stage simple. Especially in and around Ambatoharañana.

The land surrounding Ambatoharañana is dry and supports only one crop of rice per year. In other well-watered villages in the region land is considerably more productive, and it is not unusual for people from Ambatoharañana to retain connections to it (through fictive and/or affinal kin ties) as a way of supplementing their own local production. Karima, like her brothers and sisters, holds rights to land in the area based on the fact that she is a member of the royal family (the land she now farms was given her in 1991 by a very old royal man who had claimed large expanses of land in the area decades ago). This is not to say that only royalty hold rights over the land surrounding Ambatoharañana. Newcomers (especially over the past 50 years) were welcomed in the village and encouraged to clear and farm what sections of the vast surrounding forest they could. Their descendants (most living in the southern half of the village) still work that land, although they are sometimes less respectful of the restrictive taboos and obligations than their immigrant ancestors had been. Today, disputes over land-ownership are
common, and the meaning of the generosity of the past is constantly negotiated in the face of an ever depleting local land base, the prohibitive and enforced measures of national and international conservation organizations (the Departement des Eaux et Forets and the World Wide Fund for Nature — formerly the World Wildlife Fund, henceforth WWF — especially) and recent state-sponsored attempts to have all plots titled to their proper owners. The respective rights of original inhabitants of the village and ‘visitors’ have probably never been more contested than they are today (see Gezon 1995). Even disputes over land among co-members of particular families with equal claims to ownership are common. Where such disputes (sometimes referred to as "ady an tran" — "a fight within the house" — with obvious negative connotations) arise more precise justifications (such as whether land has been inherited through the mother or the father) for claims and counter-claims are sought and trotted out for a council of villagers to pass judgment on.

For Karima, the botiky, frequent trips to Ambilobe and wavering health keep her away from her fields most of the time. She only makes the 5km trek when help, or more often than not a baby-sitter, is sorely needed. Her land, then, is farmed by her younger brother and her son and their respective spouses. They do the majority of required work, claiming half of the land’s production as compensation, and bring in her crop alongside their own. Were these close relatives not able to do this, she would have certainly been able to find another member of the family who would be willing to make the same sort sharecropping arrangement with her. Young men often enter such partnerships before they have attained or cleared land of their own as a way of getting started. In past years, when the crop has been particularly good, Karima has called on extended family and affines to assist in the reaping of it (tambiro), promising delicacies like rice cooked in coconut, fried chicken, beans cooked in oil and enough rum to speed things along, as compensation for a day’s work. When not so good, the crop is taken in with little fanfare and alternate sources of rice and/or money are sought.

Much of the rice Karima harvests is stored and consumed by members of and visitors to her household throughout the year. Any surplus is either sold immediately after harvest, if money is gravely needed, or stored and sold later in the year when it can be
worth a great deal more\textsuperscript{4}. When sold in bulk, the rice is husked by a machine run by a local plantation, and then sold by the kilogram in the market in Ambilobe. Otherwise, it may be husked by hand (usually by women) and sold by the \textit{kapohaka} (the measure of a condensed milk can -- about one cup). Quite frequently, married and unmarried young women (Karima's two nieces included) husk and clean rice and take it by the sackful to prosperous fishing villages on the coast where it can be sold for twice the price it might fetch in Ambatoharaina\textsuperscript{5}. The money earned from such ventures is their own, and most spend it on things for themselves rather than on household necessities. The price per \textit{kapohaka} of rice fluctuates considerably (depending largely on the season and the quality of the year's crop) -- between 1992 and 1995 (a period characterized by a very high rate of inflation throughout the island), the price went as low as 100 Malagasy francs (the price of two boxes of matches in 1992) and as high as 500 Malagasy francs.

Although rice is of great importance to all of the people living in Ambatoharaina, rice production is not the only measure of individual wealth. Historically, inhabitants of the North have been pastoralists more than agriculturalists (Raveloharison 1993), and land in the region has been known as much for its grazing potential as for its fertility. In fact, a number of Sakalava migrants from the Ambanja area (150 km south of Ambatoharaina) who had moved north and asked the \textit{Ambanja} to settle there (with their cattle), had come specifically in search of grazing land. Cattle pens, thus, dot the rural landscape, and but for the occasional depletion of their numbers by disease or movement to more fertile grazing lands up North, cattle are rarely out of sight or earshot anywhere around Ambatoharaina\textsuperscript{5}. Oxen pull loaded carts along the rough wagon paths between villages and plows through rice fields. Cows provide milk during the rainy season. The meat of either is eaten only rarely, on special occasions.

To fully appreciate the significance of cattle, it is important to recognize that not only is an individual's wealth often figured in terms of head of cattle he or she owns, but their generosity and loyalty are also measurable in terms of the cattle they give away or

\textsuperscript{4}In 1993, rice was selling for 2500 Malagasy francs per \textit{daba} (a measure of about 20 litres) immediately following the harvest (in June) and 7-8000 Malagasy francs per \textit{daba} by the following January.

\textsuperscript{5}Current efforts by the Malagasy State and \textit{Vétérinaires sans Frontières} at inoculating cattle have been well received in Ambatoharaina.
sacrifice. Particularly important occasions (life cycle rites, Muslim ceremonies, recognition of the fulfillment of a pledge, etc.) are virtually always accompanied by the killing of cattle. In such cases, cattle are both a sacrifice and a means to feed the many gathered to participate in the event, and the size and success of the event is often communicated to those who did not attend in terms of the number of cattle slaughtered. Thus, the statement "narrow auomy zahay" -- "we killed a cow" -- is one generally made with pride by the sponsors of an event upon its successful completion.

Although few people from Ambatoharana travel to the nearest large town of Ambilobe with great frequency (Karima and other botify owners are obvious exceptions), villagers do move around a great deal. In addition to the time spent away from Ambatoharana at their rice fields, they often travel to other villages (up to 50 km away) on foot to visit family, attend Muslim or spirit possession ceremonies or assist in life cycle rites (like the first cutting of a child's hair). When the distance to such events is too great for a large contingent, only a few able men and/or women make the trek, carrying with them a collection of rice or money to be given to the sponsors on behalf of all of those who were not able to attend. During these visits (which can last several days depending on the particular event and the time of year), they are put up by fictive or consanguinial kin. When events of this sort are held in Ambatoharana, individuals and representatives from all over the region come, and are provided for by the local sponsor.

Young men and women will walk up to 30 km to attend traditional boxing matches (morengy) and dances (baly) in other villages. These events, which feature live music, alcohol and all night dancing, provide many the opportunity to meet potential marriage partners, and are decried by some older people as a contributing factor to the fact that few young people are willing to enter marriages that their families arrange for them. Young people, says one of Karima's brothers, are more interested in the rythme Americain -- "the American rhythm [of life]" -- than in fombandrazania -- "ancestral

6Such events and ceremonies can vary greatly in size. One occasion (marking the fortieth day following the death of one of Karima's older brothers) on which I kept records reveals the incredible cost of the larger of these. In two days, 2 cows, 300 kg of rice, and 70 kg of sugar (for the coffee and cakes that always accompany such Muslim events) were consumed. The cost of the event (without cattle and rice -- both of which were provided by members of the family but not paid for) was over 220,000 francs ($70 U.S.
customs”. The perceived corrosive effects of changing times evident in such reflections is equally apparent in older people's nostalgia for the way things used to be. It used to be, I was frequently told, that everyone in the village would cook and eat together underneath the mango trees that are now only used in such a capacity on special occasions. There were no individual kitchens as there are now, and houses were places to sleep at night, and not places to lock through the day. All that is left now of this ethos of communal living, they would argue, are the invitations one is likely to receive to come in and eat when visiting a neighbor, and even that isn't so certain any more. "People always used to say 'us' [atsika] and 'ours' [ny atsika]", one of Karima's older kin noted when I brought the issue up, "but now it's all about 'me' [izaho] and 'mine' [nakay]."

I should point out here that I have purposely been quite selective in what I have presented of life in Ambatoharañana so as to allow the reader a glimpse of the nature of village life in the area I worked in. Many of the things I have discussed here of the socio-economic organization of Ambatoharañana are also apparent in other villages throughout the region. Through the rest of the dissertation I will be exploring some of the things which make Ambatoharañana so unique as a social and ceremonial centre in the area. Before that, though, I move on to another setting in the area in which I spent time -- the plantation and town of SIRAMA.

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June 29, 1994 — SIRAMA (Ambolikatakata)

SIRAMA is just what Ambatoharañana is not. Suffocating. Loud. Busy. Dust and diesel fumes trailing after bush taxis careening around and around and around and around the oval track in front of the hospital in search of those last few (call them the 33rd and 34th) paying passengers to Ambilobe. The drivers, like all drivers, just too cool. Scowling through some wailing Swedish pop princess, gogo balls swaying time under the rear-view mirror. "I saw the sign and it opened up my

[at the time), most of which was collected from among members of the Morafeno family and other families in Ambatoharañana.}
mind ... I saw the sign”. I answer in French hoping to sound forceful and rude. *No, I don’t need a ride tonight. Yes, I will tell you when I need one.*

Acting as nurse-maid in the midst of all this is getting a little stale. Although I had wanted to visit Lipo in the hospital after his motorcycle accident on my way to Nosy Mitsio (a small island off the coast), I didn’t plan on it going on this long. I had agreed to spend my first night here sleeping on the (thankfully) cool cement floor alongside Lipo’s bed in case he needs anything — the onus in hospitals is always on the patient’s family to provide for the patient’s basic needs. Five days later, I’m still here. Tonton Asany has been grudgingly sending over meals twice a day (as required), and I have managed to get out for the occasional walk and outside conversation ... but really ... how much gin rummy can any one person be expected to take? Sitting out front on the hospital stoop after dinner is all there is to keep me sane until I get word from the port that a crossing to Nosy Mitsio is feasible.

It’s been strange spending this time here. Aside from the traffic worries, garbage and blaring music at all hours, the most shocking thing about this place is the incredible variety of people living here. Antemoro, Antanroy, Merina, Betsimisaraka, Betsileo and certainly Antankaraña and other Sakalava, all of the *ethnies* or *tribus* portrayed in those ethnic maps of the island are represented. Even here on the stoop out front of the hospital, I can hear the unfamiliar accents of a young couple behind me discussing what it is that I (the *vaçaha* — foreigner) must be doing here. A doctor visiting from the military hospital in Diego?, a tourist?, or a foreign *coopérant* working for the company? I try to imagine the anonymity as comforting — a nice change from the dissection of every action I take and refrain from in Ambatoharaña — but the bush taxi comes again, and this time I’m impelled to answer his honks, with great satisfaction, in Malagasy. *No, I don’t need a ride tonight. Yes, I will tell you when I need one.*

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About 25 km south-west of Ambatoharaiana is a small town known largely by the name of the sugar plantation, refinery and distillery of which it is a product. The plantation was first established in the region in the early 1950s with the cooperation of an Antankaraña Ampanjaka who at that time also acted as a local administrator in the French colonial administration. Since the mid 1970s it has existed as a state owned and operated concern called SIRAMA. The land taken up in SIRAMA's cane fields is some of the most fertile in the area thanks to irrigation works running off of the Mahavavy river which runs through it. Of the plantation's 15,000 hectares, 8,000 of them are in production each year.

Not far from SIRAMA's central town (Ambolikatakata -- "at the base of the banana trees") is Port St.Louis, embarking point for ships carrying the refinery's production overseas, and also the place from which fishing boats and sailing canoes make the crossing to the island of Nosy Mitsio. Although sugar had been a major export in the past, SIRAMA's declining production (due to reduced yields of cane and chronic technological underdevelopment) over recent decades has been directed more often than not at internal rather than external markets. A commonly expressed statistic (the original source or accuracy of which I can't be sure of) is that the refinery that had once produced 60,000 tons of sugar annually in the 1950's currently produces little more than 30,000 tons. What is more, discontents claim, the quality of the product has taken a nose-dive. Certainly, none of the various grades of rum produced at SIRAMA's distillery would be deemed palatable in markets outside of Madagascar. The raunchiest of the stuff is sold out the back door by the litre, and ends up in shops like Karima's sister-in-law's one in Ambatoharaiana.

If paths and tractor trails are dry, the walk from Ambatoharaiana to SIRAMA takes no more than four hours -- longer if you're carrying an ailing family member for treatment at the company hospital there. If the way is muddy, as it is through much of the year, the trip is hardly worth contemplating. Approaching SIRAMA from the north, the first thing you're likely to notice are the seeming anomalies in the plantation's outlying areas: clusters of houses remarkable for their unusual construction, pigs instead of goats.
lying lazily in the shade, people speaking the same language in foreign tones, their sarongs tied altogether differently -- anomalies explicable by the large migrant population in the area. SIRAMA has, since its inception, required and encouraged large numbers of migrant laborers to come and work seasonally cutting cane in the fields at harvest time. Over the years, many of these seasonal migrants have settled, some only returning to the places they came from upon death. Migrant villages, thus, dot the rural landscape, and the Antandroy and Antemoro (from the south of Madagascar) people who live in them retain many of the practices and subsistence patterns of their ancestors. Intermarriage between members of these migrant groups and Antankaraña is rare and seems to happen only where there exist the possibilities for extensive interaction between young men and women of each group -- specifically poly-ethnic environments like SIRAMA, Ambilobe and Diego. In Ambatoharanana, a place where the term "Antemorolahy" ("male Antemoro") gets hurled back and forth by children and adolescents as an insult connoting savagery, marriage with such a partner would certainly be looked down upon.

Housing for those who have the right to live in and around the plantation town is provided by SIRAMA, and its range in quality corresponds to the company's labour hierarchy. As such, like the work force, neighborhoods are largely segregated along ethnic lines. A few large villas exist within a guarded compound. These had once been the homes of the French administrators of the plantation, but are now occupied by the well-educated Malagasy who have taken over their positions. A great number of detached single family houses also exist in compounds off the main road which runs from the refinery to the port. These accommodate lower level administrators of the company and some of the highly skilled mechanics and foremen of the refinery and distillery. On the edges of the cane are smaller single family bungalows (generally housing much more than that) designated to refinery and distillery staff, tractor drivers, and a variety of other menial laborers who work year-round for and draw salaries from the company. Further afield, as mentioned above, are whole villages (some permanently occupied, others seasonally abandoned) occupied by cane cutters (men and women, generally Antandroy, Antemoro and Tsimihety) and their families. The center of the sprawling settlement, the area which contains the hospital, the major market, Catholic church, a number of large
primary and secondary schools, and the highest density of bars and cigarette stands, is where Karima's younger brother Asany lives.

Asany and his wife (his second) support their five children and a variety of nieces and nephews. Although his occupation is highly thought of (he is an ambulance driver for the hospital), Asany's salary alone is not enough to keep the family afloat. The cost of living at SIRAMA is considerably higher than it is in Ambatoharañana (the cost of rice can be anywhere from 30 to 50% higher per kapohaka), and given the electricity, bars, shops and video parlors, there is much more to spend disposable income on there than in the village. Things have been particularly tough since 1993 when, following the devaluation of the Malagasy franc on the world monetary market, the price of imported goods and gasoline (but not salaries) doubled virtually overnight. To make ends meet, Asany retains close ties to his land around Ambatoharañana, and collects at least some of its production (as his wife collects rice from her land near a village north of Ambatoharañana) for the family to consume throughout the year. Asany frequently complains about all of the family members who come through SIRAMA either as patients in the hospital (whose admittance he is expected to mastermind through his connections) or on their way to other places. They are invariably in search of a bed, a meal or a drive someplace. Little do they know, he rails, that earning a wage leaves him much worse off than he might have been had he stayed in the village.

Asany, like many others from Ambatoharañana and villages surrounding it who now work at SIRAMA, is proud of being Antankaraña, and very aware of his family's involvement in the first founding of the plantation. He is president of a local association of Antankaraña, and in that capacity, helps organize contributions intended to assist in the carrying out of large scale ritual events associated with the Ampanjaka. In recent years, his participation has been instrumental in the carrying out of the annual joro (invocation/prayer) by the Ampanjaka which precedes the cane harvest (lacopy -- from the French "la coupe"). At this event, the connection between the plantation and local royalty is visibly restated with the living Ampanjaka invoking his ancestors and asking them to ensure a good harvest. The plantation, in turn, supports the Ampanjaka by providing much needed labor and machinery in the weeks of organization preceding large events like
the Tsangantsainy or the annual ziara in Ambatoharaiana. Members of other ethnic
groups, from other parts of Madagascar, working full-time at SIRAMA have their own,
similar, associations, although members of these focus most frequently on organizing the
means by which the dead bodies of their co-members can be delivered to the tombs in
which they are meant to rest, sometimes thousands of kilometres away.

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April 28, 1994 — Ambilobe

Ambilobe is too hot.

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Ambilobe

About 20 km south-east of SIRAMA (and 30 km directly south of
Ambatoharaiana) lies the largest local town of Ambilobe. The name of the place refers to
a large plantation that had once existed there ("ambilo" for plantation, the suffix "be"
connoting the great size of it), but it has not always been known as that. The place is said
to have been first occupied centuries before the French established an administrative
center there when an 18th century Antankaraña Ampanjaka established his capital (doany)
there on the advice of a prophetess (moasy). At the time of its founding, the place was
optimistically called Mahavaño — "that which makes prosper" — though the tensions of
the time are evident in the name given to the large river that ran alongside the settlement.
"Mahavavy" is translatable as "that which makes hesitate" — a reference to the waterway's
intended effect on enemies attacking the settlement from the south. It was at Mahavaño
that, by some accounts (Tsitindry 1987), the first Tsangantsainy (mast-raising ceremony)
took place.

In 1994, a bush-taxi ride from SIRAMA to Ambilobe cost 2000 Malagasy francs
(the price of a full pack of cigarettes at that time). The ride is quick given that the cement
road which separates the two places is one of the few passable ones in the area. Climbing out the back of the truck in Matiakoho (the "dead chicken" end of town named, some suggested, for the carnage left by maniacal bush taxi drivers) is another thing. The dust and heat hit first. The winds which cool movement in Ambatoharañana, SIRAMA and Diego are absent and the pervasive stench of gasoline, rotting kitchen scraps, and the odd dead chicken stifle all the more.

Moving out of the area, through one of Ambilobe’s two large markets, the first thoroughfare you come to is the national two-lane highway which runs through town. Addresses here are coveted as commercial space. Two gas stations, a post office, a dozen shops owned by merchants of South Asian (Karany) or Chinese (Chinois) origin, distribution center for Three Horses Beer and a number of the bars that serve it, the Golden Night Disco and a large Catholic church all crowd the ditches of the road. On Tuesdays trucks and cars inch through the bustle of market day crowds doing the weekly shop. Bush taxis proceed as on any other day of the week.

Ambilobe currently houses the office of the local deputé of the Malagasy national assembly, a gendarmerie, and the house and office of the currently ruling Antankaraña Ampanjaka. Its importance as a national administrative center was established with the first French post there in the early part of the century, and it has only grown in significance with the building of the highway and the arrival of the nearby plantation in the 1950s. Its importance as a center of local political power was only reestablished in the late 1930s when a member of the royal family already working for the colonial administration there took on the role of Ampanjaka. Rather than move to Ambatoharañana and the zomba, he stayed in Ambilobe, retained his job with the French, and fulfilled the role expected of him only at key times during visits back to the royal village. Ampanjaka since him have all lived and worked (for the French or the Malagasy Republic) in Ambilobe.

Fifty metres down a side-road from the current Ampanjaka’s house (called zomba here too), live Karima’s two older sisters, Bebe and Mamany Nadia (mother of Nadia), a niece, Zoky Mariamo, and the flock of children they collectively watch over during the school year. The 14 of them occupy 4 rooms in two separate houses and dominate the courtyard that they are meant to share with their neighbors. Bebe, Karima’s oldest sister
(by the same father but not the same mother), is in her 70s and is the only one to command a room of her own. She locks the noise of the courtyard out at noontime and dusk, and performs two of the 5 daily prayers she wishes she had more time for. The kids outside giggle and say that all the standing, crouching, kneeling and bowing is good for her bones -- Muslim calisthenics. Symbols of Islam infuse these children's lives -- from the hats they wear to the funerals they attend -- but town kids are far less interested than their village counterparts in learning to read from the Koran. They are in Ambilobe, after all, to pursue education at the feet of the Malagasy State or the Catholic sisters.

Mamany Nadia, at 60 Karima's senior by only a few years, has a bed of her own in a room she shares with 35 year old Mariamo. The two of them rise early every morning to prepare the little cakes or fried bananas that they will sell to travelers and townspeople along the side of the main road. When flour can be had by the bakery in town, Mamany Nadia buys baguettes and sells them by the 1/4 piece, with or without margarine. Mariamo supplements the little money she receives from her daughter's father by sewing children's clothes and Muslim hats for sale to family and friends, here and in Ambatoharana. Of the three women, only Mariamo has a child of her own. The kids who live with them are their nieces, nephews and grand children -- children of the extended family who live in Ambilobe in order to go to school there. The parents pay their inscription fees and send rice and/or money when they can to help the Ambilobe household out. The kids contribute to the household in their own way, some spending their off hours circling the town with the morning's unsold cakes and bananas in search of customers, others reluctantly pounding and cleaning the 12 kapohaka (condensed-milk cans) of rice that need to be cooked at every meal.

Connections between town and village are ever apparent. Inhabitants of each travel to the other frequently. Mamany Nadia and Mariamo supplement their earnings on the main road with the rice from their fields near Ambatoharana. Each year, the two of them return to the village for at least a month at harvest time, leaving Bebe alone to watch out for all of the kids. Village botiky proprietors, like Karima, make the trip in to Ambilobe at least once every two or three weeks to replenish their stocks. Town family members, likewise, make the trip back to Ambatoharana to visit, attend ceremonies, and
take in their share of a rice crop to which they retain some claim. Children make the trip back and forth several times a year at vacation time. The connection is not just one marked by moving people though. Goods alone often make the trip back and forth -- rice and other food-stuffs from village parents to the town kin watching over their children, and bread, cigarettes and medicine from town-folk back to the villagers requesting them. Words and messages too travel fast over the space between them, bringing news of a death, birth or gossip-worthy incident from one place to the other at the speed of a bush taxi. Notepaper and envelopes are among the necessities that both Karima's botiky and every shop in Ambilobe carry.

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July 16, 1994 — Diego

Amid pleasant chat from around the table, it occurs to me that I should try to remember all that has happened. Cocktails on the patio with appropriate small-talk topics, nodding heads and no more than 3 second intervals of silence, the collective move into the dining room; the obvious centrality of the consul's directions in all of it. The order. The structure. With the forks, spoons and knives lined up before me like musical notes, however, and a discussion about canned olives and how nice Ottawa must be this time of year, I'm too busy adjusting to think about ritual. The servant approaches with a bowl of rice and I scan my setting for the most appropriate utensil. He serves a tiny mound of the sweet smelling stuff on my plate, and indicates, with a derisive glance at the dessert spoon I've selected, that I might consider using a fork to eat it with.

I tell it all to Marie-Reine, sitting out front of her house (no more than 200 metres down the road from the consulate) enjoying her first post-siesta cigarette of the afternoon. She had been proud that I, her younger brother, was invited to lunch at the French consul's residence, and had even insisted on ironing my shirt for the occasion. Now, though, with sleep still in her eyes, she's only mildly interested.

I had first met the consul at a ceremony in Ambatoharanana, and at his suggestion had visited him at his office here in Diego. Although the archives we had
hoped to find in the basement of the consulate turned out to be non-existent, he has
given me a letter to take to the main French embassy in Tana. He too, it seems,
having only just arrived from his last posting in Morocco, is quite interested in the
history of relations between the French colonial administration and Antanarana
_Ampanjaka_ of the past. Something of a distraction, I would think, from the daily
routine of approving visas and dealing with the problems of the sizable community of
French nationals living in Madagascar's north.

Marie-Reine, like many other descendants (children and grandchildren) of
former French administrators, holds the right to dual citizenship — she is both
Malagasy (from her mother's side) and French (from her father's). She often
reminisces about her trip to France ten years ago (her then fiancé and now husband
Caid sprung for the exorbitant airfare), and the pictures of her sitting by a fireplace in
her father's sister's Parisian apartment are proudly displayed in her photo-album.

As the street comes to life again and the stoop fills with children intent on a
game of hopscotch, Marie asks if I will cook something Canadian for dinner tonight. I
suggest spaghetti and meatballs, and she's intrigued. She showers and changes into
something continental, and we hop in her little 4 wheel drive Lada and head away
from the bay and into the poor and crowded southern end of the city where all the
market bargains are to be had.

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**Diego (Antsiranana)**

Although most adults of Ambaroharañana make it to Ambilobe with some
frequency, few regularly make it the 150 km north to Diego-Suarez (now Antsiranana),
the capital city of Madagascar's northern province of the same name. The city was first
named for two Portuguese explorers, and is purported to have been the site of a 17th
century utopian community of Portuguese and Italian pirates, called Libertalia, which
survived by plundering ships running the circuit between Europe and the Near-East. Since
the Malagasy State's efforts at Malagasizing the names of the island's major cities, it has
been known on maps and airplane schedules as Antsiranana. Most people still call the
place "Diego", however, and among the kids of Bebe's courtyard in Ambilobe, the even shorter abbreviation "D-S" has become synonymous with everything hip in the world.

The bush taxi trip from Ambilobe takes less than three hours now that the highway has been repaved. As in the colonial era, development money is spent mostly on the development of an infrastructure by which goods from the fertile north can be trucked south to the capital. The port at Diego, located within the largest naturally protected bay in the Indian ocean, is now nowhere near as busy as it had been when the French navy was stationed there. This generation of the city's prostitutes have had to make do with the container ships, cruise-liners and tankers that occasionally pull in and drop anchor. In the earliest years of colonization (and even before), the bay here was considered one of the most attractive features of Madagascar's north. It was meant to be (and for some years was) a hub of French naval power and exportation.

Karima's eldest daughter, Marie-Reine, lives on the first floor of a two story cement building in one of Diego's better neighborhoods. Although nothing like the grand villas occupied by the city's merchant and foreign elites, her home is comfortable and safe, and she lives a life there that her nieces and nephews, brothers and sisters, and aunts and uncles in Ambatoharana, SIRAMA and Ambilobe could only dream of. She has a television and a stereo, a refrigerator and a food processor, running water and electricity, and the hired help to assist in taking care of it all. She smokes Good Look cigarettes bought by the carton and nonchalantly wears her sunglasses back on her head when she enters a dark room. She has been to France. I had once asked her the riddle that the girls in Bebe's courtyard in Ambilobe were forever putting to me — what would you rather lose, your spoon or your spouse? Marie-Reine answered without a blink (as the riddle would have her do) that she'd rather lose her husband. Without a spoon, she says, how are you supposed to eat? That said, and although her entrepreneurial spirit is formidable, she acknowledges that she owes much of her good fortune to having found herself an equally savvy partner.

Marie-Reine is married to Caid, the son of a wealthy Réunionais merchant of South Asian origin from Ambilobe. He operates Ambilobe's two gas stations and is slowly getting into the trucking business as well. Unlike his wife and her family (and all those
other pseudo-Muslims in Ambatoharana he loves to trash) he is up every morning when the chickens make noise (*ma'ienakoho*) and off to the mosque for prayers. He takes the five pillars seriously, and at nightfall throughout Ramadan, he is joined by others of the Reunionais and South Asian Muslim set in partaking of the sweet and spicy dishes that are Marie-Reine's forte. Malagasy and Comorian Muslims of Diego have their own mosques, and mark Ramadan in their own way. Every year, there are a number of *ziara* (visits to the tombs of past Muslim teachers) here and although attendance is not restricted anyone, the general rule seems to be that each keep to their own. As in Ambilobe, relations between the relatively wealthy merchant elite (made up mostly of the descendants of Reunionais, South Asian and Chinese traders attracted to Madagascar through this century) and the mass of Diego's Malagasy population are strained in mind if not in fact. Caid was exceptional in having married a Malagasy woman, and an Antankaraña princess (he often teased) to boot.

Marie-Reine and Caid have two children who go to school at Diego's *Lycée Francaise* (the French high school where they are taught a French curriculum by ex-pats and *coopérants* on exchange), do no household chores, and know what macaroni and cheese is. Babou wants to be an airline pilot. Samia knows all of the characters on Beverly Hills 90210. They speak French around the house and with their friends, but invariably drop into Malagasy when they've got some complaining to do. These two of Karima's grandchildren are truly of a different world than any of her others, and class differences in the north are nowhere more apparent than at family get-togethers.

Marie-Reine too is different. Although she accepts her younger siblings into her house, and will gladly give them a meal and let them stay over night, she has refused all requests to raise any of their children in her comfortable surroundings. She is very generous with the family, but in other ways. Instead, she cares for several children of certain members of Ambilobe's merchant elite who are sent away to better (and more expensive) schools of the big city. These parents pay for her services, something her own family could never do. Marie-Reine sees her family frequently, but as many of them are uncomfortable in her comfortable front room, and cringe at Caid's persistent teasing.
encounters usually take place on their turf -- in the Ambilobe courtyard and Ambatoharaniana.

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February 12, 1994 -- Tana (67 Hectares)

Liza came first, then Suzette, then Jacques, then me. The room we're in is barely big enough for one. Dinner is ground beef and tomato paste in oil with rice. Jacques should be studying as Liza does her sewing exercises, but he doesn't. He sits and moons over the plaintive cries of Mily Clement's synthesizer coming out of the imported disco-light cassette player. Everyone knows the song, but both Liza and Suzette prefer Roxette, Vanessa Williams or Bryan Adams to Ambilobe's favorite pop star of the moment. Still, all mouth the words.

"Mahavaavy Mahavavy Mahavavy teñandrano
Mivalaña ambany tanana
Atsimo tanana ny Ambilobe
Latsaka avaratra Ledama
Mahavavy lohandrano
Mangomaaaa!
Mangoméééé!"

"Mahavavy, Mahavavy, Mahavavy the river
Flows under the town
South of the town of Ambilobe
Flows north of Ledama
Mahavavy, the head of water
I miss you!
I miss you!"

When the song finishes, Jacques rewinds the tape and plays it again. Liza groans.
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Tana (Antananarivo)

Only a handful of people born in Ambatoharaiana have traveled as far as Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo. Even fewer have actually lived there for any period of time. Tana, as the place is generally called, is located at the heart of the highlands of the island and has, since the early 19th century, been both the locus and, for some, symbol of state power -- first as the place of residence of a line of 18th and 19th century highland (Merina) rulers who gained control over and exacted tribute from much of the island's population, and then as capital of the French colony of Madagascar. The flight from Diego takes no more than an hour, though it is prohibitively expensive to most. The drive, when the national highway is not flooded out, takes at least three days, and although cheaper, can still cost up to 100 000 Malagasy francs -- equivalent to the monthly salary of a menial labourer at SIRAMA. Thanks to Marie-Reine, Karima's other daughters, Liza and Suzette, and son, Jacques, all sought and found occasions (free rides with acquaintances in the trucking business) when they traveled back and forth. I write of them and their experiences in Tana in the past tense because all three of them have left the place since their time there together in 1994.

For a matter of months Liza, Suzette and Jacques occupied a small room in a student/migrant ghetto of a Tana neighborhood called 67 Hectares. Their reasons for being there at the time reveal, generally, some of what it is about the place that attracts so many from other parts of the island to join the millions already living in cramped conditions. Liza was in Tana studying to become a seamstress. Jacques was there to learn electronics repair. With such training, the two of them hoped, they would be able to return to the North to pursue careers in their chosen fields in Ambilobe. Tana is the centre for this kind of technical training. Unlike her brother and sister, Suzette was not in Tana for her education, but rather for love. She had followed her boyfriend there, himself a student like Liza and Jacques, from Ambilobe. Aside from hanging out with Liza, Jacques and their few acquaintances from the Ambilobe region, and visiting her boyfriend
regularly, Suzette, possessing the same entrepreneurial spirit as Marie-Reine, spent much of her time searching out deals on furniture, pirated cassettes, clothing, tourist wares, woven cloth, shoes, and embroideries. All of these goods are available for sale at Tana's open-air Friday market at prices much better than could be had in Diego or Ambilobe, and Suzette capitalized every time she made the trip back to the North. Just as it is an educational center, Tana is also an important center of production and trade. What is not produced there is brought in from other parts of the island or from overseas. You can get just about anything you want there given enough looking.

While these three of Karima's children only lived in Tana for a short time, there were then and are now a number of others from the north living there. These were generally fairly well educated men from Diego or Ambilobe, who had found well paying jobs in the public or private sectors there. They were individuals from whom Liza, Suzette and Jacques could seek assistance if they needed anything. Not so apparent in Tana are migrants from the North of the desperate sort one is likely to encounter from other parts of the island -- migrants living on the margins of city life, who have come in search of any kind of work. These migrants, like many of their brethren working on the plantation at SIRAMA, often come out of desperation, and not necessarily by choice as Northerners do. A week in Tana is enough time to reveal just how wealthy (relatively speaking) most in the north are.

Although these three of Karima's children, like others who frequently make the trip to the national capital, sometimes referred to their lives in the big city with some bravado when talking to friends and family in the north, there is no doubt as to where and what they considered their home or "ancestral land" (taminandraana) to be while they were actually living there. They were Antankaraña, albeit of a different sort than their kin in Ambatoharaana. In Tana, calling upon the term usually meant referring to land and space more as a symbol than a locus of production. Although they received a sack of rice from Karima after harvest, their connection to the fields that produced it was at that time far different from that of their kin in Ambilobe and SIRAMA. None among Liza, Suzette and Jacques actually worked the land around Ambatoharaana as Asany (in SIRAMA) and Mamany Nadia (in Ambilobe) do, nor, I suspect, would they ever want to. Being in Tana
for them (as for many in their situation now) was a temporary thing. Thanks to the relatively privileged background which enabled their survival there, they were in Tana to improve their opportunities at home. There was never any question of any of them staying, and Jacques repeatedly fought against his sisters teasing him about the possibility of finding a Merina wife and settling down there.

Liza, Suzette and Jacques were at times uneasy living in Tana. Separated from family and friends and living in such difficult and expensive conditions, they sought and found refuge most often in the company of other northerners. Their discomfort with the place spilled out into their reflections on the ethnic group which dominates the city. The Merina, they claimed, are cheap and dirty; they eat pork and speak, “like birds”, in the high tones of an unfamiliar dialect. Sentiments regarding the Merina which, although commonly expressed throughout the north (and coastal Madagascar generally), take on profound meaning to those northerners who live among them. In Tana, cramped surroundings and circumstance conspired to keep prejudice to a whisper, and Liza, Suzette and Jacques could never openly express their feelings and provoke neighbors in the way that their cousins in Ambatoharañana do to provoke young Merina men who pass through village selling clothes and other highland wares off the backs of their bicycles.

As mentioned above, Liza, Suzette and Jacques have all since left Tana. Neither Liza nor Jacques completed the programs they had enrolled in there, and are left now with few prospects and parents shaking their heads in the fear that they’ve wasted a lot of money that might have been otherwise spent. Suzette, having profited from her sales, has opted to continue her education in Diego.

Fieldwork and royalty

In one sense, the precedent for my relationship with the Antankaraña royal family was established midway through the last century. As a white foreigner -- a vazaha – I was frequently identified with the French who had (most memorably) established relations with the Antankaraña royal family by way of a treaty in 1841. The fact that I was Canadian (and an anglophone at that) was of little importance. The 1841 alliance, which is today
frequently referred to as a *fotidra* (a blood-partnership which renders unrelated individuals, and their descendents, related as kin), was even called upon occasionally by friends and strangers to justify or explain away my presence there. Many Antankaraña hadn't forgotten about the *fotidra*, and my participation in and observation of events associated with the *Ampanjaka*, his ancestors and the political system they represent was to some an indication that the (generic) *vazaha* hadn't either. My association with royalty, therefore, was perfectly natural, and more importantly, very helpful to my research goals. The fact is (as indicated in the introduction) that I had set out from the beginning to make the rituals and history associated, ultimately, with royalty my focus -- to have worked anywhere but Ambatoharañana would have been a mistake. In working there, though, was I not exposed to only one side of the equation? Was I not restricted access to the bulk of "commoners" who regularly participate in the events with which I was interested? Not really. The fact is that I met and spoke with many of the "commoners" who lived outside of Ambatoharañana -- most frequently on those occasions (to be described in chapters 6 and 7) when all gathered to express their common relationship with the *Ampanjaka*, his ancestors and the political system they represent. I also made a point of traveling to villages distant from Ambatoharañana frequently to gauge what I could of the *Ampanjaka*'s popular support distant from the cradle of his power (I discuss this further in the next chapter). My association with the royal family, did not spare me from any dissentious commentary either. In fact, knowing who I was and what I was doing, malcontents sometimes sought me out (largely because I was an outsider) to express their dissatisfaction -- sometimes out of genuine concern that I not fall into the very trap that I myself feared I might. For the purpose of this thesis, and with the intent of not betraying any confidences, I will discuss such dissent in very general terms.

If my research is limited, it is so in another way. While I frequently had conversations with migrants from outside of the region, and drew what I could from those conversations, I never carried out fieldwork amongst them. As indicated above, even my time in SIRAMA, Ambilobe and Diego (poly-ethnic settings all) was spent predominantly with "Antankaraña" -- people I had met through the family, been introduced to at large gatherings of those loyal to the *Ampanjaka*, or, in some cases, those who sought me out
knowing my particular interests. What this means is that the many non-Antankaraña who inhabit the region are peripheral to this study. They certainly do not figure as prominently (and provocatively) as in Sharp's (1993) ethnography of the nearby town of Ambanja. I hope to focus my future research in the area on just those people who have been left out here.
CHAPTER 2

The Antankaraña Polity

According to Dadilahy Said, the eldest member of his generation of royalty in Ambatoharañana and former occupant of the second zomba described in the previous chapter, the term "Antankaraña" first became attributable to his ancestors when a past ruler established his capital (doany) on the plains aside a limestone massif called Ankaraña. "We are all Sakalava", he had said, referring to the broadly encompassing ethnonym which applies to much of the indigenous population of western Madagascar, "it is only when our ancestors arrived at the Ankaraña massif ... that we became Antankaraña." In Dadilahy Said's retrospective account, the term "Antankaraña" originated with the arrival of royalty at a particular location and has since been applied both to the political system with which that royalty is associated and to the individuals who recognize their centrality to it.

By noting that Antankaraña are, in fact, "all Sakalava", Dadilahy Said reveals something important about the political landscape of north and north-western Madagascar. There, as Fortes and Evans-Pritchard indicate is the case elsewhere in Africa, "the designation of autonomous political groups is always to some extent an arbitrary matter" (1969:22). The political system I describe here is based on a model of "divine kingship" (Feeley Harnik 1978) associated with the Sakalava throughout coastal Madagascar; a model that spread through the pairings between one line of royalty and a variety of indigenous groups across the island. These pairings have produced polities that, while structurally similar, appear today in very different forms given the variability of each’s development over the past 300 years.

If, as Baré suggests, "the key to understanding Sakalava conceptions of power lies in the opposition between the dead and the living" (Baré1980:239 cited in Sharp 1997:294), then one might expect that Antankaraña "conceptions of power" would be somewhat different from comparable others in north and north-western Madagascar. Unlike some branches of Sakalava royalty -- such as the Southern Bemihisatra line of the
Analalava region described by Feeley-Harnik (1991; 1986; 1978), the Northern
Bemihisatra line of Nosy Be described by Baré (1980) and the Bemazava line of the
Sambirano Valley described by Sharp (1993; 1997) -- Antankarana royalty of the past
embraced Islam, and have, for the past hundred years, foregone many of the elaborate
funerary practices which serve to mark the opposition between life and death in other
Sakalava polities. While the bodies of deceased rulers among other groups are carefully
attended to over a matter of weeks, and pieces of them (i.e., particular bones) are set aside
as "relics" for use on future ceremonial occasions (Sharp 1997: 282-283; Baré 1980: 240),
the bodies of Antankarana rulers are buried almost immediately (no more than two days)
after death in accordance with Muslim doctrine. This fundamental difference in practice
suggests myriad other differences. Consider, for example, that categorical 'slaves' of
royalty -- whose duties in other polities revolve largely around the care and protection of
the bodies and tombs of deceased rulers (Feeley-Harnik 1991) -- are today of little
significance to the Antankarana polity. Certainly, Antankarana rulers of the past were
served by slaves, but they are now said to be "lany taranaka" -- "out of descendants"
(more likely, many speculate, they and their descendants intermarried with their masters).
Consider also that the spirits of recently deceased (Muslim) Antankarana rulers do not
appear in spirit-mediums the way past rulers of other related polities do, and that
Antankarana rulers are entombed in a Muslim cemetery (zombavola) near
Ambatoharanana, and not in an isolated and guarded compound (mahabo) of the sort
Similarly, the bathing of royal relics which represents an important ritual practice
associated with royalty elsewhere on the west coast (as in Chazan-Gillig 1991) does not
occur in the far north; as mentioned above, no such relics exist. This is not to say that the
Antankarana polity has become ritually impoverished thanks to its rulers' attendance to
Muslim doctrine (I will be exploring how this is decidedly not the case in chapter 7), but
only that it is an intriguing and unique case among related others in Madagascar. The first
step in portraying this uniqueness is to describe the structure of the political system in
question.
"Fanjakana" is the term that most use in referring to the whole system I will describe here. In his expansive study of Sakalava ritual practice, Jaovelo-Dzao (1996:370) notes that the term applies equally to state and local systems of government. Significantly, with regard to the local system, it may also refer to the body of ancestors who have ruled through the past. In this sense, when used locally in the north, the term incorporates Antankaraña into the geographically dispersed phylum of related Sakalava political systems along the west coast (cf. Feeley-Harnik 1978: 405). The term may also suggests something of a politico-religious minefield to those who recognize it -- fanjakana is frequently termed "difficult" (sarotro) or "sacred" (masiňy) and thus something that must be respected (maňaja). That the term can also be used to refer to the reign of a particular ruler of the past or present is an indication of who the most significant (living) person in the fanjakana is.

In this chapter, I introduce the fanjakana as it existed in northern Madagascar in the early 1990's. Paying special attention to the relationship between the Ampanjaka -- "ruler" (a word related to fanjakana) -- at its center and the people (and their representatives) who I refer to as its constituents, I introduce a number of points which will be expanded on in later sections. While the distinction between royalty and commoners is a significant one generally, I focus here more on the links between rulers, officials and constituents of the polity. Although the rulers I discuss are always royalty, and the officials always commoners, the constituents of the polity are both, and, ideally, all constituents (be they royalty or commoners) interact with rulers and officials in the same way. Towards the end of this dissertation, I will discuss the contexts in which distinguishing sets of constituents, one from another, is important. I begin with the Ampanjaka.

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1 Jaovelo-Dzao defines "fanjakana" as: 1) modern governmental power, 2) monarchical political structure, 3) any political order, 4) royal spirit mediums, and 5) royal spirits who appear in spirit mediums (tromba) (1996:370).
I remove my sandals and enter the palace (*zomba*) through its north door. The room I enter, no more than 15x20 feet is crowded with at least 25 other early visitors to the *Ampanjaka*. Its sparse furnishings (a couple of vinyl armchairs, big double bed, and a round coffee table upon which the *Ampanjaka*‘s briefcase sits open) have been pushed to the walls to allow the group its needed space. Bent low with a hand outstretched to steer through the crouched and half-kneeling bodies, I start towards one of the few open spaces left on the mats laid out across the floor. Although language is still a major problem after only a month’s immersion, I have at least mastered this form of negotiation. Not even halfway across the room, however, the *Ampanjaka* remarks my arrival with a yelp, and gestures that I sit in the arm-chair opposite his. I comply, reluctantly.

As if following some stage direction, half of the men seated on the west side of the room rise just as I sit, and make their way out of the door I had come in. A few of the younger ones whisper or nod me a greeting as they leave. The *Ampanjaka*, a man no more than 40 years old, today wearing a colorful cloth around his waist and an orange T-shirt imprinted with fluorescent lyrics of the Beatles song “Help”, nods to them as they leave. Over the next half hour, men and women come and go (men from the north door, women from the south), spending their few minutes in the room offering respectful greetings (*magnamia senga*) and, when provoked, small talk. None, at this early hour, come with problems or disputes that need resolving. Such matters, the *Ampanjaka* tells me when I ask in French, will come later in the day. By 9AM (an hour into my visit) only the *Ampanjaka* and I are left. I ask him, now seated on the armrest of his own chair looking out towards Dadilahy Said’s house across the plaza, if I’ve missed something. No, he answers, people just came to visit. He rarely comes to Ambato-hara-nana these days, he explains, so when he does the whole family makes a point of greeting him each morning of his stay. Feeling awkward at the silence, and suddenly aware that in remaining behind while everyone else has left I must be overstaying my own welcome, I make a move to leave. He stops me with an incredulous look.
"You must profit from my presence." he tells me in French.

I spend the better part of the next two days seated in that spot.

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The Ampanjaka

While the current Ampanjaka sometimes calls himself "roi" or "prince" when explaining his role to foreign visitors, accepting this translation without question can be misleading. As Hocart (1970:86) suggests, a translation of this sort would be ultimately arbitrary; it calls us to imagine a monarchical political system that while including some comparable symbols and institutions, is really quite unlike that at hand. Like the term fanjakana, Ampanjaka is etymologically linked to the verb manjaka ("to rule" or "to govern") -- the prefix amp- added to the verb transforms it into a noun indicating an occupation or identity. Thus, just as an ampañaraka is one who follows (from the verb mañaraka -- "to follow"), the Ampanjaka is one who rules. As it is used with reference to the Antankarana political system, the term refers to just one person. In other related polities, the Sakalava-Bemazava of the Sambirano valley, for example, the term is used as the term andriana is used by Antankarana -- to refer to all male members of the royal family. In these systems, the main or "great" ruler is called "Ampanjakabe" (the suffix "be" denoting primacy). This terminological distinction is an important one that reveals a distinctive feature of the Antankarana system: There is only one Antankarana "ruler", not many. In the Antankarana system, authority is very centralized, and ideally, rivals have no claim to be "rulers" -- they are merely royalty. In order to describe the significance of the Ampanjaka in the polity, I begin with reference to the process by which he is selected.

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2 The distinctive uses of the term "Ampanjaka" are merely one of the more superficial differences between Antankarana and other Sakalava polities. Many of these differences can be indexed along dynastic lines - Antankarana royalty are members of a different line (the Zafinifotsy -- "grandchildren of silver") than those described by Feeley-Harnik, Sharp and Baré.
At the death of one *Ampanjaka*, a successor is chosen from among a group of living male royalty by key male members of the royal family in conjunction with important commoner officials (to be discussed shortly) of the polity. Sometimes, a particular individual is selected as a front-runner by the previous *Ampanjaka* before his death. There is meant to be no campaigning for the position (see below), nor is there an interview process. This does not, however, necessarily preclude more subtle forms of competition among potential candidates. As an *Ampanjaka* ages, potential candidates may be aware that they are being sized up by the selectors and thus conduct themselves appropriately - I was told that it is ultimately the impressions of the candidates held by the selectors (gained in part through the observations of their conduct at events such as the *Tsangantsainy*) that are referred to in deliberations at this point in the selection procedure. Spirits of past non-Muslim *Ampanjaka*, offering advice through the dreams of constituents or while possessing spirit mediums, may also contribute throughout this selection process, although the involvement of spirits and mediums is less codified here than it is in the selection procedure of rulers elsewhere in Africa (Lan 1985, for example)\(^3\). Selectors are ideally free to choose whichever candidate they wish, even if that means disregarding the selection made by the previous *Ampanjaka*.

The name of the one candidate selected through this procedure is then presented (along with those of other possible candidates) to a larger gathering of officials and constituents of the polity (on the occasion of the previous *Ampanjaka*’s *arbainy* - a Muslim ceremony marking the fortieth day following a death), and the decision is ultimately theirs to make. This large gathering of people may be informed that one candidate is preferred among the group, but they are not told which one. The decision the large group comes to is meant to jibe with the smaller one\(^4\). When the one candidate is acclaimed, he is retrieved from wherever he is and carried on a palaquin (a seat mounted

\(^3\) In describing the procedure by which Shona chiefs are selected, Lan stresses that it is chiefs of the past (i.e., spirits communicating through mediums) that select their successors (1985:57). These selections are not unquestionable - they must be approved and accepted by the people. If an unpopular chief is selected, people will question the credibility of the spirit medium who put forth the selection. In this case, then, ancestors too must be aware of the need for popularity and will choose prudently lest their mediums (and thus their means of embodiment) be driven away.
on two long poles — of the sort used during the colonial era to carry administrators on
tour) to the mast raised at the previous Tsangantsainy. There he is publicly legitimated by
being carried around the mast eight times (itself a significant gesture which will be
repeated at every occurrence of the Tsangantsainy throughout his reign as Ampanjaka).

Who are these candidates, then, and by what criteria are they considered
appropriate? Descent is an obvious factor in determining who may fulfill the role of
Ampanjaka: the candidates must be andriana ("royal men") first and foremost. While
there are examples from the past which indicate a preference for the selection of the first
son of the previous Ampanjaka, there are enough examples where this has not been the
case to disprove a general rule of patrilineal primogeniture. Usually it is enough to be a
"child of [royal] man" (zanaka'lahy) closely related to the deceased Ampanjaka. Even
that rule, however, is not absolute — the "children of [royal] women" (zanaka'bavy) have
also ruled in the past. In fact, in the minds of some, Antankarana rulers of the past 150
years have all been the "children of women" given that they are all, ultimately, descended
from an early nineteenth century zanaka'bavy who usurped the role from a zanaka'lahy
(see chapter 3).

Judging by the reminiscences of key participants in the process by which the
current Ampanjaka was selected (in 1982), appropriate ancestry is not the sole
consideration in choosing candidates. As in the case described by Baré (1980:261),
certain personality traits were also deemed important. The Ampanjaka is meant to be
kind, just and generous. In addition, certain skills are thought necessary. Consider that of
the four candidates for the position in 1982, two were school teachers, and two were
gendarmes. All were relatively well educated, all spoke French, all had worked in public
institutions and all were seen as being knowledgeable of the wider (especially national)
contexts in which the Antankaraña polity exists. Judging by the many well-respected
royal men of Ambatoharaiana (knowing far more of ancestral customs — fombandrazana

4Baré (1980:260-1) notes the same lack of dissent among officials of the northern Bemihisatra polity of
Nosy Be when they are asked to approve of new Ampanjaka.
5Sharp (1997:286) notes that in a similar selection process among the related Bemazava of the Sambirano
valley, the last of these characteristics — i.e., being knowledgeable of national affairs — was especially
valued in the candidate who was eventually selected there.
-- than they do of the French language or national politics) who were not considered potential successors to the role, there is no doubt that the particular candidates were selected with an understanding of the polity's position in wider (national and international) spheres. As Ampanjaka had done in the past, the candidate selected in 1982 would be expected not only to fulfill his role as "ruler" (to be discussed shortly), but also to act as representative of his constituents' interests in extra-local contexts.

When asked in 1994 why it was that the current Ampanjaka was selected, many stated that his youth, strength and dynamism were particularly favorable characteristics. Interestingly, alongside such pragmatic justifications, another story has arisen and gained some credence. It is said that on the date of the current Ampanjaka's birth (in the early 1950's) an important meeting of several Sakalava Ampanjaka was taking place in the town of Ambanja (the home-town of the current Ampanjaka's mother). When the then Antankarana Ampanjaka learned of the new arrival, he announced to the others at the meeting that his successor had been born. Whether this was just a passing comment or was in fact a serious proclamation is uncertain -- the point is that running counter to the notion that the selection procedure is a somewhat democratic process which encourages populist rulers is a strong current suggesting the important role of fate and pre-determination.

Alongside the male Ampanjaka is a female equivalent, called Ndrambavibe -- literally translatable as "great royal woman", but sometimes translated, again arbitrarily, as "queen" (reine) or "princess" (princesse). The Ndrambavibe is not the wife of the Ampanjaka. She is rather a member of the same royal family as he, and, like him, is

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6When this story is told today, the similarly dynamic dispositions of that forward seeing Ampanjaka and the current one are always mentioned. The Ampanjaka who reigned between them (Tsimiharo II -- the son of Mohamady Tsalalana III and paternal uncle of the current Ampanjaka) is generally squeezed out of the narrative.

7The existence of such a position is somewhat of an anomaly in the spectrum of Sakalava polities in the North and North-West of Madagascar. Although many of these have had female Ampanjaka in the past, no other exhibits the gender-specific dual roles evident in the Antankarana polity. The origin of the position of Ndrambavibe is an interesting one which reflects the earlier mentioned distinction between Antankarana and other related polities. An important female Zafinimena Ampanjaka, named Kipa, was visiting Ambatoharana and asked the titles of all the women gathered to meet her. "We are all ndrambavy -- royal women" they answered. Kipa was shocked and directed them to select one to be called "Ndrambavibe"-- "great" (paramount) ndrambavy. It is unclear as to when this exchange took place, only that it was a relatively recent occurrence.
selected from among other viable candidates to hold the role. I use the word "equivalent" carefully in comparing Ndrambavibe and Ampanjaka in that although she is at times referred to as "Ampanjaka mañangy" -- "woman ruler" -- and shares many of the taboos that govern the male Ampanjaka's relations with others, she does not share certain key aspects of the male Ampanjaka's role. She does not, for example, recite invocations (joro) requesting the benediction of the ancestors, nor is she as involved in the preparations for and enactment of the Tsangantsainy and other large-scale ritual events as her male counterpart. She also does not act with the same air of authority in arenas beyond the local. The reader might recall from chapter 1 that the current Ndrambavibe (the woman with whom I ate my meals) spends most of her time in Ambatoharañana and travels only infrequently to purchase stock for her botiky in Ambilobe or to visit her eldest daughter in Diego. She does not make frequent trips to Tana or to conferences overseas as the male Ampanjaka does and holds no official title with the Malagasy state nor were her predecessors employed by the French colonial administration. The best indication that her position is not entirely equivalent to that of the male Ampanjaka is that, upon meeting, it is she who must give him a respectful greeting and make subservient gestures and not vice-versa. While constituents of the polity still pay her respect, it is the same respect that any high ranking member of the royal family would expect to receive. To clarify the distinction in their positions, one older woman pointed out that when selected, the Ndrambavibe walks to where she is publicly recognized -- she is not carried as the Ampanjaka is.

As had been the case with the Ampanjaka, the criteria upon which the selection of a Ndrambavibe (after the previous one has died) is based reveal a lot of what is expected of the title's holder. I was told by those involved in the process leading to her selection in 1991 that she was deemed more appropriate than several other candidates for reasons very different from those cited as important in the selection of the Ampanjaka. Unlike her male counterpart, she was not young, nor did she speak French or have experience in dealing with public officials and institutions. She was, however, widely recognized as a good and compassionate mother to her own children and those she had raised for others. And this, it seems, was the deciding factor. While the Ampanjaka selected in 1982 was deemed
appropriate (at least partly) as spokesman of Antankarana interests in national and international contexts, the particular Ndrambavibe was chosen in 1991 in recognition of her role, as it was described to me by Dadilahy Said, as caretaker of women in the polity. As had been the case in the selection of the Ampanjaka, her knowledge of the actual customs (fomba) of the role she was to take, it seems, was unimportant. Once again, this is a selection process where personal(ity) characteristics of the candidates seem to weigh more heavily than birthright or exclusive knowledge of custom.

The simple fact is that both the Ndrambavibe and the Ampanjaka must be popular choices -- as I will be suggesting throughout the remainder of this chapter, their legitimacy depends ultimately on the people's acceptance and continual support of them. Selecting an unpopular (although perhaps very knowledgeable) candidate -- someone with a "bad mind" (ratsy faňahy) or "stingy" (matity) nature for example -- to fulfill either role would jeopardize the whole structure of the polity. Previous conduct is considered, and any hint of scandal in a candidate's past can preclude them. This is not so much because of what a scandal might reveal of the candidate's character (although this is doubtless a consideration), but because a previously tarnished Ampanjaka will draw more critics than an un tarnished one. When the Ampanjaka is derided, the fanjakana (in all of its many meanings) is threatened.

Some might wonder whether the candidates I have discussed above campaigned for the positions they came to hold. Surely the privileges of "rule" are actively sought by interested parties? Although it is true that some individuals (in both the distant and recent past) have coveted the roles of Ampanjaka and Ndrambavibe, there is no indication that their campaigns have ever been successful. In fact, judging by stories of the distant and reminiscences of the recent past, actively seeking to rule seems a surefire way of ensuring that one will never be chosen to do so. As people describe it, both the current Ampanjaka and Ndrambavibe, who seem quite comfortable with their roles now, were reluctant to take on their duties when initially informed that they had been selected. Both were wary of the responsibilities and restrictive taboos that the new roles brought with them. Both, I

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8One of the candidates considered alongside the current Ampanjaka in 1981 was rejected, ultimately, because of his earlier involvement in a scandal in Ambilobe.
was told by those closer to the scene, cried upon learning of their being selected, and viewed the position as more of a burden than a privilege.

The *Ampanjaka* and the polity

While "kings" and "princes" are imagined to occupy the pinnacle of their own hierarchical pyramids, the *Ampanjaka* figures more at the center of the Antankaraña polity. I use the term "center" here not to suggest the familiar pebble-in-a-pond image of authority emanating from a single source and spreading out in widening concentric circles of diminishing influence, but rather to stress that the living *Ampanjaka* is the key or "pivotal" (Feeley-Harnik 1978) individual in the polity upon whose shoulders the needs and influence of living constituents and his own ancestors simultaneously weigh. In discussing the selection procedure above I have already introduced the importance of the will of the living constituents of the polity. In the following section I introduce the will of the ancestors. I begin with reference to some relevant literature.

In a paper on a Sakalava "divine kingship" related to the Antankaraña, Feeley-Harnik suggests (1978:404) that "the focus of the Sakalava monarchy is on the spiritual relationship between the royal ancestors and the people" and that "the living monarch is the pivot" between the two. With reference to the Antankaraña case in particular, Vial emphasizes the "sacred" nature of the *Ampanjaka's* position. The *Ampanjaka*, he writes, "is sacred to his subjects; he embodies in their eyes not just the whole royal lineage, but the entire people" (1954:12). Vial describes the *Ampanjaka's* power as being primarily "religious" -- as representative of both the ancestral royal lineage and the Antankaraña people, he is the only one to act as mediator between the two. He does so on the one side by overseeing the proper execution of customs directed at ensuring the continued remembrance of his ancestors, and on the other by reciting invocations on behalf of the polity's constituents. Waast too stresses royalty's significant place in Antankaraña cosmology. He writes that "the dynasty ... and its living representative, the Prince [i.e., *Ampanjaka*] is responsible for social order ... the royal ancestors are considered to be the
supreme mediators with God who is himself efficacious through *tsiny*, the spirits that govern the forces of nature* (1973:54; cf. Dzaovelo-Jao 1996)*.  

As Vial had suggested was the case 40 years ago, the current Antankaraña *Ampanjaka* continues in his role as mediator between his ancestors and the living constituents of the polity. To some extent, controls on his power are exercised on both sides. As representative of a dynasty with whom he is in frequent dialogue, directly and indirectly through spirits (*tromba*), invocations (*joro*) and dreams (*nofy*), he is subject to the scrutiny of his ancestors. While such critique is limited by the media through which it is expressed (i.e., *tromba* ceremonies, dreams, ritual occasions etc.) it is nonetheless powerful, and more significantly, at times can be quite influential. As influential, at other times, are the opinions and needs of the polity's constituents, for despite the possibility that speaking against him could bring sickness and death to a malcontent, dissatisfaction with the *Ampanjaka*'s rule may be, and is at times, expressed by them even if only in subtle and hidden ways. Individuals can, for example, opt not to participate in the events (like the *Tsangantsainy*) which periodically re-establish the centrality of a particular *Ampanjaka* in the polity. Without their participation, the grandeur of these events is diminished, and the *Ampanjaka* is faced with a potentially destructive cycle, in which lack of grandeur leads to less support which leads to even less grandeur and so on – a cycle that could theoretically spell the end of his reign.

By way of exploring the relationships which exist between the *Ampanjaka* and the two bodies he relates to, I here introduce two terms by which he is sometimes referred. At some times he is called *rey'amanandreny* (“father and mother”) and at others *tompon'drazaňa* (“owner or master of ancestors”). When considered in the light of local idioms of parenting and ownership respectively, these terms reveal a great deal of the nature of the *Ampanjaka*'s position in the polity.

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9 These interpretations reflect a theme common in discussions of chiefship or kingship in Africa: that the ruler (chief/king) mediates between society and the forces of nature (Beidelman 1966; Evans-Pritchard 1962; Packard 1981).
Ampanjaka as father and mother (rey'amanendreny)

When discussing the position of the Ampanjaka vis à vis the constituents of the polity, I often heard it said that the Ampanjaka's main responsibility is to 'raise' (mitariny) his people (vahoaka). The term used to express this idea, "mitariny", is the same one used to describe a parent's (or other care-giver's) relationship with his or her child. In the same vein the Ampanjaka is sometimes referred to, in conversation and in formal rhetoric, as rey'amanendreny (father and mother). The obvious implication is that the reciprocal roles played by Ampanjaka and the constituents of the polity is to some degree comparable to that between parent and child. The Ampanjaka, like parent to child, is at once care-giver, sponsor, and adjudicator of disputes. As care-giver, he feeds people individually (in his home in Ambilobe) and en masse (at large events such as the Tsangantsairny), and provides a sort of social welfare to those unable to provide for themselves.\(^{10}\) As sponsor he provides land to the people, ensures its productivity for them and organizes and sees through large ritual events in which they participate. As adjudicator he hears cases (most often regarding land disputes or accusations of sorcery) and passes judgment on them -- his word is final. In return, constituents of the polity respond with the respect of a child to parent -- supporting him with their own production.

The same sort of comparison applies to the Ndrambavibe's relationship to the polity's constituents. Recall (from above) that what most recommended the current Ndrambavibe to the job was her experience as a mother (to ten of her own and numerous other children). Other candidates had no such experience or 'motherly' demeanor felt necessary for the proper fulfillment of the role. In practice, her relationship with constituents of the polity bears a definite resemblance to that of parent (mother) to child. She, like the Ampanjaka, may act as care-giver (providing for visitors and those unable to care for themselves), and she may give advice to other women on family matters (i.e., strategies for dealing with wayward children, selection of marriage partners etc.). For

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\(^{10}\) The several I know of suffering from mental illness -- considered veryjery (crazy) by most.
their part, constituents of the polity are meant to support her with annual donations of rice and money.\textsuperscript{11}

Of the many taboos (fady) associated with both \textit{Ampanjaka} and \textit{Ndrambavibe}, one is particularly relevant to this analogy: that against referring to either through teknonymy. Other adults are generally, and respectfully, referred to by names denoting a relationship with a member of a descendant generation. A man referred to as Seja in his adolescence, for example, is respectfully called \textit{babany Salima} ("father of Salima") later in life. Such teknonymy does not apply to the \textit{Ampanjaka} or \textit{Ndrambavibe}. The \textit{Ampanjaka} is the \textit{Ampanjaka} to all -- he is no-one's mother's brother (\textit{zama}), grandfather (\textit{dadilahy}), or even father (\textit{baba}). In the same way, no-one may refer to the \textit{Ndrambavibe} as \textit{dady} (grandmother), \textit{angovavy} (father's sister) or \textit{mama} (mother). Nephews and nieces, grandchildren and even children all greet them as any other member of the polity would. Where a father would expect to hear "\textit{koezy baba}" ("\textit{koezy}" being a respectful greeting) from his children upon meeting them, the \textit{Ampanjaka} is offered "\textit{andriamananaňany}" (a greeting reserved for him alone) from his own. Similarly, the \textit{Ndrambavibe} is more likely to hear "\textit{koezy topoko andriana}" than "\textit{koezy mama}" every morning. Although the children of the \textit{Ampanjaka} or \textit{Ndrambavibe} are by no means considered illegitimate as a result of these taboos, the required relinquishments are not always easily achieved. Certain of the current \textit{Ndrambavibe}'s children, for example, forlornly describe the loss they felt at no longer being able to call their mother 'mother'.

While not as well respected in daily life as some others, these taboos are important\textsuperscript{12}. It is not all that surprising that a symbolic relinquishment of previously held parental roles would be necessary if the \textit{Ampanjaka} and \textit{Ndrambavibe} are to take on similar ones in relation to polity constituents. The taboos I have just discussed might be seen as fulfilling this function. Viewed along these lines, these and other taboos which seem on the surface to isolate these figures from others (another being that they must eat

\textsuperscript{11}Bloch's comment that in Madagascar's highlands "since all hierarchical relationships are merged into the one idiom of filiation, it is natural for political superiors to bless their subjects in the way that grandparents or parents might bless their offspring" (1986:41) seems related to this.

\textsuperscript{12}I have often heard the \textit{Ndrambavibe} referred to by her youngest grandchildren as "grandmother" (\textit{dady}), but never in official greeting.
and sleep alone) may in fact be seen as serving the opposite purpose. By removing them, at least nominally, from the sphere of ordinary domestic relations, these taboos allow them to fulfill their parental roles in relation to constituents of the polity.

Ampanjaka as "owner" or "master" of the ancestors (tompon'drazana)\(^{13}\)

Although I had often listened, feeling awkward, as others in Ambatoharañana described how I had learned more of Antankarañña customs (fomba) and history (tantara) than they themselves knew, it was not until my parents visited from Canada, six months into my second period of fieldwork, that I was told that I was a tompon'tanana -- an "owner" or "master" of the village I was living in. It was, in fact, more part of an admonishment than a compliment. Even though I had assured my adopted family in Ambatoharañana that my blood parents were used to a rural lifestyle, certain among them felt that I was neglecting my responsibilities by not overseeing their every move. I was taken aside by an uncle at one point and told that it was my duty, as tompon'tanana, to guide them through even the simplest tasks during their stay in Ambatoharañana. While true that my parents were not the average visitors to the village -- they spoke no Malagasy nor were they familiar with the intricacies of village life -- the role expected of me was not so unusual. Visitors to a village, and even passers-through, are expected to seek the assistance of tompon'tanana when in need.

Although the term tompon'tanana, when literally translated, suggested that I was an "owner" or "master" of the village, what it actually meant in the case I describe was that I was knowledgeable of the particular village in which I lived in a way that only an inhabitant could be. Among other things, I knew the locations of a variety of wells and bathing locations (and the relative quality of water to be found at each), the particular children who could be counted on for a cup of fresh-roasted cashews, the women who

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\(^{13}\) Feeley-Harnik states that the root word *tompo* "is widely used to indicate possession seniority, responsibility or authority, as in the phrases tomponsary (ritual, economic and political master of the land, first settler), tompon' ny asa (person in charge of the work), or tompoko (sir, madam, literally my master), a respectful term of formal address" (1986:162).
regularly prepared rice cakes in the morning, and the houses one might visit in search of a few eggs for a noon-time meal. What I "owned", really, was a relationship to and knowledge of the village that no outsider (especially my parents) could. I could therefore negotiate on their behalf. With no intention of trivializing the perceived sacredness of the Ampanjaka's position, this too, I would suggest, is how the Ampanjaka, as tompon'drazaña (translatable as "owner" or "master of ancestors"), might be seen in relation to his royal ancestors. What he "owns" is an exclusive relationship with them. The major difference between myself (as tompon 'tanana) and the Ampanjaka (as tompon'drazaña), of course, is that while the relationship I held with the village was virtually the same as that held by all of Ambatoharanana's other inhabitants, the Ampanjaka is alone in his relationship with his ancestors. Before I can discuss this sort of exclusivity (i.e., in relation to the dead), I must first describe how the Ampanjaka is rendered exclusive among the living.

The exclusivity of the Ampanjaka among the living is marked in a number of ways. It is, for example, immediately noticeable when observing his interactions with constituents. Waast writes that "there is a strict etiquette in approaching him, and no-one may touch him [...] without putting the social and natural orders in peril" (1973:54). When visited, he is offered a specific greeting – "andrianmanaňahy" 14 -- accompanied by a slight bow (always from a seated position) with arms outstretched, hands forming a cup 15. The conversations that follow are generally carried out in low tones, the visitor often keeping his/her head bowed throughout. When speaking, the Ampanjaka is never interrupted, though some older men I observed in conversation with him responded koezy topoko (a respectful "yes master") repeatedly throughout his speaking. His hand is never taken at the moment of greeting nor is his body touched or even approached that closely throughout the interaction. Before leaving, the visitor must respectfully "ask for the road"

14I have heard two different interpretations of this greeting. The first is that it comes from the phrase andriana mananaňahy -- the royal man who possesses (i.e. owns) us. The other is andriana mananyh zahay -- the royal man who misses/lacks us.

15This gesture, which is performed following an invocation to royal ancestors, mimes the act of scooping water over one's body when bathing. As such it indicates that visitors are receiving blessing, and to a degree even purification, from the Ampanjaka. It is not to be confused with the open hands gesture that accompanies Muslim invocations.
(mangataka lalana), a request which (as noted in my above journal entry) is not always met with a positive response. I should note parenthetically here that the speech and actions of the Ampanjaka are not always governed by the sorts of rigid conventions described above. When acting in his role as representative of the Antankaraña community to outside (foreign or Malagasy) interests, for example, he may and frequently does adopt conventional conversational practice and shake hands with others.

Throughout an interaction between Ampanjaka and visitor, or in any context for that matter, a particular vocabulary is required in referring to the Ampanjaka -- or more specifically in referring to anything associated with his body. His movements, actions and activities all require particular verbs. He does not "go" (mandeha) for example, but is "moved" (mamindra). The same lexical exclusivity applies to what he consumes; what he eats is not "food" (sakafo, aniña) but "that which makes strong" (mahatanjaka). Similarly, and this is an especially interesting point that will be taken up in greater detail in the final section of the thesis, something associated with the Ampanjaka is never "finished" or "accomplished" (vita, nefa) -- it only "grows" (tombo). In all cases, the Ampanjaka is set apart, in action and body, from all other living members of the polity.

The exclusivity of the Ampanjaka apparent in his daily interactions with the living is yet further marked in his dealings with the dead. As "ancestre physique" -- "a living ancestor" as the current Ampanjaka described himself to me -- he alone has the particular relationship with his (royal) ancestors that makes him tompon'drazaina. While other members of the royal family are recognized as sharing the same genealogical relationship with past royalty (as descendants), only the Ampanjaka acts as their representative to the living. In fact, he is seen as ruling in conjunction with them. Any appeal to his authority is as much an appeal to that of his ancestors, and any forsaking of it is punishable by potentially fatal ancestral force. This is not to imply that he is somehow superhuman; while he is "sacred" (masiñy), the Ampanjaka is not seen as capable, for example, of some of the supernatural feats that prophetesses (moasy) of the past have been. Nor is it to suggest that the Ampanjaka is the sole avenue of communication to his ancestors -- I will later discuss how, through spirit mediums possessed by ancestral royalty, the living Ampanjaka in fact often relies on others as mediators of his communication with his
ancestors. It is only to point out that the living Ampanjaka is unique, as tompon'drazaña, in that he is the living embodiment of "the sacredness of rulers" and thus, in a sense, of the continuing negotiation process between living commoners and dead rulers.

In describing the exclusivity of the Ampanjaka so extensively, I am perhaps doing myself (and the interpretation of the Antankaraña polity that I'm trying to get across) a disservice. I make it difficult to imagine how, as I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, the Ampanjaka's rule is ultimately dependent upon the will of the people. Surely any individual whose position grants him exclusive negotiating rights between the living and the dead and a special vocabulary unto himself is incontestable? I argue the opposite; that it is in fact this exclusivity that makes him so dependent on the will of the people. His role as representative of both living and dead puts him in a precarious position. In serving as representative of a royal lineage, he must ensure the continuing participation of people in the rites at which ancestors are invoked and remembered. Without the willing cooperation (i.e. participation) of the people, events like the Tsangantsainy could not take place. On the other side, as representative of the people, he must ensure the benediction of his ancestors – ancestors who may strive to direct his actions and influence his decisions through mediated contact with him. Ultimately, the Ampanjaka might be described as embodying the axis along which the give and take, push and pull relationship between ancestral rulers and the living constituents of the polity proceeds.

The Ampanjaka and the land

In addition to being mediator between royal ancestors and living constituents of the polity, the Ampanjaka also plays an important role in mediating constituents' relationships with the land. At one point in his discussion of Antankaraña political structure, Vial describes the Ampanjaka as "maître de la terre" -- "master of the land" (1954:12). Although what he meant by the statement is that the Ampanjaka may stay where he pleases when traveling, one might interpret it in a somewhat broader way. Waast (1973), reflecting on the title, does just that:
The Prince [i.e. Ampanjaka] is [...] master of the land and beaches: or better yet of the spreading of men on the land, of their installation in each place, which is granted by his authority and sanctioned by the receipt of their first fruits (of agriculture: rice; of hunting: turtles), and allows the king to be at home everywhere (1973:54 my emphasis).

Although the heterogeneity of the region's population today means that not all inhabitants recognize the Ampanjaka's position as "master of the land and beaches", the connection Waast writes of is nonetheless significant to many, and the current Ampanjaka still collects the "first fruits" that are his due. His ties to the land, and its production, are especially evident every few years when he tours it for up to a month (dorodoro), accepting sacks of rice and money from constituents as he moves from village to village. Unlike the rice and cattle individuals contribute on occasions such as the Tsangantsainy (which are nominally for the Ampanjaka but actually get consumed by co-celebrants over the course of the event) the donations offered on such a tour are for him alone. While these donations recall a time told of (if not remembered) when the Ampanjaka was supported entirely by the people, today these "first fruits" are not enough to sustain him and his family.

Since the first establishment of official relations with the French, the Ampanjaka has drawn steady support from external sources — first in the form of a monthly stipend from the French, then in the form of a salary first from the colonial administration and now from the Malagasy state16. The current Ampanjaka also supplements this salary with profits garnered from a bush-taxi service running between Ambilobe and Diego, and the Ndrambavibe (as mentioned in Chapter 1) runs a small store in Ambatoharana to keep herself afloat. Some traditionalists express their dismay at the Ampanjaka and Ndrambavibe's efforts at supporting themselves. They claim that anything these two want should be supplied by constituents of the polity given that selling things makes one "cheap" or "stingy" (matity), and the Ampanjaka and Ndrambavibe are meant (ideally) to be generous with what they have. Countering those of this opinion are others who have
applauded the *Ampanjaka*’s efforts at supporting himself. Some even went so far as to suggest that such forward thinking and entrepreneurial spirit are just the sorts of things that will ensure the continuity of the polity in a changing world.

Waast further credits the *Ampanjaka* with the responsibility "for social order and harmony between man and nature" (1973:54). In addition to overseeing the distribution of land, the *Ampanjaka* is also charged with ensuring respect of the taboos (*fady*) which govern people’s actions on it17. I should stress though that as (if not more) important as the *Ampanjaka*’s ties to the land are his ties to the people who occupy it. Here, as Feeley-Harnik notes is the case elsewhere, “[r]oyalty’s greatest wealth is people” (1991:60) and not land.

**Officials of the polity**

There are three categories of individuals who mediate the relationship between the *Ampanjaka* and the constituents of the polity. *Manantany*, a term translated by some (in an expanded form -- *manaña tany*) as "owners of the land" or (with less concern for etymology and in imitation of the terminology of the state) as "prime-minister", is the first of these. They are few in number (there were 5 *manantany* in 1994), and are descended from the indigenous populations who occupied the north at the time of royalty’s first arrival there18. The much more numerous *fahatelo* and *ranga* also inherit their positions (usually father to son, though there are some cases where a daughter has inherited the role from her father), though they are more likely to represent particular villages rather than whole regions as *manantany* do. Any relatively large Antankarana village has one, if not two or three, *ranga* or *fahatelo*. What differentiates members of these three categories from each other (in terms of descent, duties and locality, for example) is less important

16Undoubtedly, pre-nineteenth century *Ampanjaka* also received support from external sources (from their dealings with traders, for example), but never as a salary or monthly stipend as they later received from the French.
17Lisa Gezon’s (1995) recent work in the region offers great insight into this dynamic.
18Gluckman notes that the “separation of secular ‘authority’ from priestly office in connection with the Earth held by autochtones is frequent in Africa” (1965:127). What differs in the case described here is that the position of *manantany* is itself more secular than it is “priestly”.
than what they share in common -- none are andriana or ndrambavvy. The role they play in the polity is largely a symbolic, mediatory one -- they represent the Ampanjaka to constituents, and represent the constituents to the Ampanjaka. At large ceremonies, where the Ampanjaka receives a steady stream of visitors, for example, a rangahy (if not many) stays with him to act as mediator of the visiting process. After visitors have expressed the appropriate respectful greeting to the Ampanjaka, it is the rangahy, and not the Ampanjaka himself, who asks them their news (kabaro), and it is he who accepts the small gifts of money they bring. (Money accepted on these occasions is given over to the Ampanjaka immediately. Some of the money collected may then be returned to officials, as a gift [velomanompo] not a salary, after the successful completion of an event.)

In their first capacity, as representatives of the Ampanjaka to the constituents, they periodically meet with the Ampanjaka (when passing through Ambilobe or Ambatohařana or when called there) and carry any information regarding upcoming ceremonies (dates, places, etc.) back to their home villages where they call a meeting and spread the word. In their second capacity, as representative of the constituents to the Ampanjaka, they present particular cases (land disputes, accusations of sorcery, etc.) in need of adjudication to him on behalf of complainants.

In addition to these manantany, rangahy and fahatelo, are other officials who assist in the operation of the polity. These, called anadoany ("from the capital"), are members of the royal family who live in villages far from Ambatohařana or Ambilobe. They fulfill much the same rolls as rangahy and fahatelo, although all recognize that they are in fact royalty. That they participate in the functioning of the polity to the extent that they do is an indication of their loyalty to the Ampanjaka. Through their willing involvement in preparing for events like the Tsangantsainy, for example, they recognize the legitimacy of the current ruler. By serving as any other polity-constituent would, they show themselves to be supporters and not rivals. They also, like the officials described above and members of the royal family living in and around Ambatohařana, must approve of the Ampanjaka or Ndrambavibe chosen to replace deceased ones.

It is worth noting that at any given time there may be other, untitled, individuals who contribute to the functioning of the polity as well. We might call them the
Ampanjaka’s “close advisors”. The few who I came to know were middle-aged and well educated male members of the royal family. As will be noted in Chapter 7, these advisors were especially active in the planning of large ritual events like the Tsangantsainy.

Thus far, I have described the position of the Ampanjaka as it exists in theory. I have described how he, as parent to the polity's constituents and "master" or "owner" of his own ancestors, mediates the relationship between living and dead. I now turn to a consideration of the Ampanjaka's position as I observed it most frequently. It was his role as "protector" and organizer of Antankaraña customs that I was most often exposed to. I pick up where I left off — in the Ampanjaka's visiting room in Ambatoharañana.

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September 6, 1992 — Ambatoharañana (continued)

By 5PM, I'm bored. Although I've managed to fill more of my notebook in a few hot hours than I have all week (each visitor to the Ampanjaka warranting a fresh page and a flurry of scribbling) I'm not sure what I'll do with it all. A sample:

10:30 AM — Four young guys in grubby blue overalls drop in for some trembo (palm wine). The Ampanjaka had requested that SIRAMA (the local State run sugar plantation, refinery and distillery) send them to clean up the plaza just north of the zomba this weekend as the ziara (a Muslim festival in which visits are made to the tombs of past Muslim Ampanjaka) is approaching fast. At the Ampanjaka's suggestion, I agree to join them in a drink scooped by the cup from a plastic orange bucket. The smell of the wine in the heat of the tin-roofed zomba is a little more than raunchy, and I have to hold my breath in order to take a sip. The Ampanjaka tells me he doesn't drink trembo. I don't blame him.

11:20 AM — A man carrying a worn basket enters the room and sits cross-legged on the floor in front of the Ampanjaka. He holds his tattered hat top down in front of him as he bows from the waist and offers a respectful greeting. He extends the basket to within the Ampanjaka's grasp, telling him it contains the property of a
recently deceased spirit medium, and waits as the *Ampanjaka* unpacks it piece by piece. A white plate (*leka leka*), several glasses, a small chunk of white clay (*tany fotsy*) and two very ragged white cloths. The goods are in a sense being returned to the *Ampanjaka* (in his role if not his person) in that they were first given to the dead medium by his uncle and predecessor, the *Ampanjaka* Tsimiharo II. Ideally, the *Ampanjaka* tells me later, all of a spirit's possessions are meant to be returned to him or to the *Ndrambavibe* upon the death of its medium.

3:30 PM — On its way to the coastal village of Ambavanankarana, a tractor from Ambilobe stops briefly to unload passengers and cargo under the mango tree south of the *zomba*. As it idles and the mechanic collects the fares of descending passengers, the *Ampanjaka* calls the driver in for a lecture. He opens by reminding the driver that the road he's just traveled is in such good repair (?) thanks to yet another favor he had called on SIRAMA for. The concrete slabs which rendered a previously impassable river bed passable were another of the plantation's contributions in preparation for the coming *ziara*. The fact that tractors can now cross and take paying passengers and cargo to an otherwise unreachable coast is only a side effect, albeit a fortuitous one for the driver. The *Ampanjaka* suggests that by way of reciprocating, the driver should use his tractor to help collect the piles of dead-wood required to cook the cakes, rice and beef broth for the upcoming *ziara*. Plenty of it will be needed if advance estimates of attendance are even half right.

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Throughout that day, as with many others like it, people visited the *Ampanjaka*. Some were members of the royal family, others not; some were themselves permanent inhabitants of Ambatoharanana, others had traveled in from neighboring villages upon hearing of the *Ampanjaka*'s arrival. Almost all brought money either as individuals, or, for those who had come some distance, as representatives of particular families or villages. No accounts were kept, but the amounts handed over were relatively small, and all were
received with the same graciousness by the *Ampanjaka*\(^\text{19}\). Although the *Ampanjaka*’s role as mediator between his own ancestors and the living constituents of the polity was somewhat evident, what was most striking on that day was the predominance of his role as organizer of the upcoming *ziara*. No individual left the room without having heard of, discussed, or helped plan for it. Most who had come to visit from outside Ambatoharañana left with envelopes, containing details of the upcoming event, addressed to significant individuals in the villages they would pass on their way home.

I should say that my goal in interviewing the *Ampanjaka* at such an early stage in my fieldwork was to try to achieve some understanding of his role. At one point I asked the most direct (and blunt) question I could think of—*"What do you do as *Ampanjaka*?"

His first answer, I imagined at the time, appeared far too simple. I had expected that he would forefront his role as mediator of disputes or as living representative of a line of Antankaraña rulers. He told me instead that his primary duty as *Ampanjaka* was "to protect Antankaraña customs (*fomba*) and to oversee their proper execution". He even suggested, with a gesture, that I write the phrase down. I did so, and urged him to continue with more directed questioning. It was only then that he discussed his role as intermediary between ancestors and the living, referring to himself as "*ancestre physique*". It is this identity as the living representative of previous *Ampanjaka*, he told me, that makes him such an effective teacher and guide to the population. After still more requests for elaboration, he went on to describe his role as the highest arbiter of disputes. Having passed through lower (village-based) judiciary levels, if not through official channels of the Malagasy State, matters are brought to him as a last resort and are subject to his interpretation and unappealable judgment. But still, as the day wore on and more people entered, sat and left with envelopes and news of the upcoming *ziara*, he kept coming back to his role as "protector of customs". The implication was that what I was witnessing on that day was, in fact, just what his job entailed.

\(^{19}\) The amount of money given per individual on the day I describe here was about the same as what they would give to a collection for the family of a recently deceased individual (or other occasion where such a collection might be expected) — anywhere from 500 to 2500 Malagasy francs per adult. A pack of manufactured cigarettes cost 1500 Malagasy francs in Ambatoharañana at that time. On the day described here there was no *rangahy* on hand to accept these contributions, so contributors presented what they brought by placing it in their hats and holding it out for the *Ampanjaka* to take.
Although I would be wary of describing the Antankaraña polity as entirely analogous to Geertz's *Negara* (1986), a nineteenth century Balinese "theater state" described as focused entirely on its own reproduction through ritual, there are certain similarities between the two that warrant consideration. Geertz claims that the *Negara* acted not as a government concerned with day to day issues and the problems of the people who recognized it (such duties were carried out on the peripheries), but rather as a mobilizer of the resources, human and material, needed to carry out the large scale dramatizations which were its focus (1986:13). Like the rulers of the *Negara*, the Antankaraña *Ampanjaka* is at times most significant in his role as organizer of the very events that reinforce his position as ruler. His focus on the *ziara* on the day I describe is perhaps more understandable given that the attendance of any event is in some way a measure of his popularity. Although the *ziara* that did take place in Ambatohaña two weeks later was nominally a Muslim ceremony (*fomba silamo*), it was also considered a rite of the *Ampanjaka* (asa *ny Ampanjaka*). Through the actual night of its occurrence, songs (in Malagasy) dedicated to the *Ampanjaka*’s ancestors, and the raucous dancing which generally accompanies them, could be heard from beneath the mango trees outside of the *zomba* in addition to the spoken and sung praise of Allah emanating from the village’s unfinished mosque. The *ziara* in September 1992 was, as any ritual associated with the *Ampanjaka* would be, an opportunity for constituents of the Antankaraña polity to express their allegiance – not just to the *Ampanjaka*, but to the royal ancestors and polity he represents. The popular attendance of the rite was, to an extent, a manifestation of the *Ampanjaka*’s influence. Not only did constituents attend, they also supplied the labour, cattle, rice and donations of money necessary for the proper execution of the event. To reiterate the point made earlier, without their support or participation, the *Ampanjaka* would have no-one to oversee the proper execution of ancestral customs for.

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20Similar, though strictly Muslim, *ziara* take place every year in a variety of locations in the north. The Muslim communities in Diego, Ambilobe and Ambanja all sponsor annual *ziara* where the tombs of certain prominent local Islamic teachers (*fondy*) are visited.
Constituents

Who are the people, then, who recognize the authority of the *Ampanjaka*, and why do they do so? In *A Green Estate*, Feeley-Harnik notes how "royal followers explain that they continue to serve ancestors because the French and Malagasy governments refused them permission to carry out services when they were required in the past" (1991:5). In the case she describes, people served ancestral royalty in order to bring closure to a process set in motion by the death of an *Ampanjaka* at the height of the colonial era; they served to restore a sense of local "independence". The Antankaraña case is different in several ways. As noted in the introduction to this chapter the very notion of "serving the ancestors" is less pronounced for many Antankaraña -- the deaths of rulers, and subsequent care for their tombs and relics, are not the primary foci of ritual practice as they are in the case described by Feeley-Harnik. What is more, the "intimate enmity" which Feeley-Harnik describes as having existed between the Malagasy and the French in western Madagascar, did not develop (for constituents of the Antankaraña polity anyway) in the North -- if anything, rhetoric deployed by recent Antankaraña *Ampanjaka* would seem to suggest that intimacy alone best characterizes his ancestors' relations with the French through the past 150 years. Why then do people still "serve" Antankaraña royalty? Before answering that, I must delineate who these people are, and how it is that their service is constituted.

Much of what I have stated of the position and influence of the *Ampanjaka* and the significance of the polity he rules in the north is based on accounts told, theories proffered and events documented during my fieldwork in the village of Ambatoharanana. As mentioned earlier, this village is considered the "capital" (*doany*) of the Antankaraña polity. It is the location of the *Ampanjaka*'s palace (*zomba*), and is the village in which the *Ndrambavibe* and a large number of *andriana* and *ndrambavy* live. It is also the village in which the culmination of the *Tsangantsainy* takes place once every 4-5 years. Although living amongst royalty had definite advantages given my interest in the polity and the rites associated with it, it had its disadvantages as well. What I missed, and what Gezon (1995)
has captured in her description of a "commoner" village north of Ambatoharañana, was
the reality of life on the peripheries of the polity. By this I do not mean to imply that there
are territorial boundaries beyond which the polity goes unrecognized (though, to an
extent, this may be true); the peripheries I am referring to are more peripheries of
influence.

Midway through my second period of fieldwork (in May 1994), I convinced a
younger brother, Abdou, to join me in walking the 160 kilometers from Ambatoharañana
to Diego-Suarez (the capital of the province and largest city in the north). The two of us,
carrying little more than a change of clothes and a letter of introduction dictated by the
Ndrambavibe, set off on what I hoped at the time would be a discovery of the "real"
Antankaraña people who some had told me I was likely to find in the more isolated parts
of the north. I was also curious as to what was so "real" about these people, and how far
the "official" approval of such a significant figure in the polity as the Ndrambavibe would
get us. My curiosity (and hunger as it turned out) was abated differently in each of the
many villages we stopped in to request food and/or lodging during our walk. We were
certainly never rejected in such requests -- the basic rule of unconditional hospitality I had
been told of (and experienced elsewhere) was in effect -- but, to put it quite bluntly, some
nights we ate chicken (a foodstuff generally reserved for special guests and important
occasions) and others we ate vary meky (rice with no side dish). The reactions inspired by
the stated purpose of the trip (to learn stories of the past and understandings of the polity's
significance today) were variable. In some villages, we had a strong sense of the
Ampanjaka's influence. People recalled the last time they had been to Ambatoharañana,
and spoke gladly of the contributions they had made to the carrying out of the
Tsangantsainy that had taken place only six months earlier. The older men of these
villages gathered together and sat around with us for hours discussing the many things we
sought information on. In other villages we were met with little of the same enthusiasm.
Some of the questions we asked (especially those regarding contributions of cattle and rice
to the Tsangantsainy) were viewed skeptically, and Abdou even suggested that some
villagers might have thought we were on tour to check-up on them. Despite the
hospitality shown us, it was obvious that in these villages the Ampanjaka's influence was
less profound, and that our visit to them bordered on intrusion. I am not of course even mentioning here villages of a third sort which we only passed through (maybe just asking directions or for water) — villages that had virtually no connection to the polity, where residents had only settled relatively recently.

The fact that inhabitants of Ambatoharana were so conscious of their connection to the Ampanjaka (as kin or simply inhabitants of his "capital") is not surprising. The land upon which many residents of that and neighboring villages grew their crops was given to them (or to their ancestors) by Ampanjaka of the past. That the Ampanjaka's influence is less evident in a commoner village of the sort described by Gezon is also not so shocking. Although she recounts a story she was told of how the first inhabitants of the village she worked in were given the land they now farmed by a past Ampanjaka, it seems that the disputes arising over land-tenure there recently had little to do with this primordial transaction. Not only was the Ampanjaka not involved in disputes as a rival claimant, he was also rarely consulted as an adjudicator. To those at the peripheries, then, the Ampanjaka's roles as adjudicator of disputes and "master of the land" were practically insignificant.

Where the Ampanjaka's power was evident (at the peripheries especially) was in his ability to organize, garner support for and mobilize people to participate in events such as the ziara and the Tsangantsainy. (Many from the village in which Gezon carried out much of her fieldwork, for example, traveled to Ambatoharana to attend both of these as well as a number of other events associated with local royalty). The relationship between constituents and the ampanajaka, is therefore one which is constituted largely on occasions provided by ritual; and it is on these occasions that constituents serve.

Feeley-Harnik has written extensively on Sakalava notions of work and service (1991;1978;1986). With reference to how these are significant to the enactment of ritual associated with royalty, she notes that:

Consensus, not coercion, is expected to govern the ritual division of labor. As the cow submits soundlessly to slaughter, as the royal flesh melts from royal corpse of its own accord, so Sakalava are expected to participate
voluntarily in royal work, with a glad heart, in harmony with others
(1986:164-165).

Among Antankarana too, as noted above, the ideas of willingness and harmony are important to conceptions of royal service. As I will be discussing in chapter 7, different categories of constituents contribute particular sorts of service in carrying out the preparations for the Tsangantsainy. What is more, they do so willingly, or so they imply in the way they talk about this service.

It should be noted here, as indicated in the above journal extract, that the Ampanjaka is able to extract service in other ways too. In preparing for the zira, for example, he was supported by the management of the local sugar plantation (SIRAMA) who offered use of a tractor to clear the plaza in front of the zomba and supplied and transported the concrete slabs which made a nearby river passable for the many expected celebrants. When the zira did take place, SIRAMA also supplied a large cistern for water and provided a generator necessary to light the village through the night. Less forthcoming with assistance, though called upon just the same, were the tractor and bush-taxi drivers who regularly passed through Ambatoharanana on their way to make deliveries and carry passengers to the coast. As the Ampanjaka had demanded, they used their vehicles to transport needed firewood to the village.

And what if service is not provided? Feeley-Harnik suggests one possible answer in stating that while "Sakalava should be willing to work, ... they are also obliged" (1986:165) and that "the sanction behind the obligation to be willing is the fatal and inescapable wrath of the royal ancestors". While it is true that many Antankarana fear the wrath of royal ancestors, and I heard the sort of "true stories" concerning those unfortunates punished by the ancestors for their reluctance that Feeley-Harnik indicates are important catalysts to service, the fact is that in the region today, some, even those whose parents and grandparents recognize(-ed) the validity of the polity and the Ampanjaka, seem entirely willing to risk balk ing at such obligations. To these, threats of retribution from royal ancestors have little coercive power, and in dealing with them it is necessary for the Ampanjaka to resort to other forms of pressure. Recently, for example,
he has ordered a boycott against a bush-taxi driver who has been particularly uncooperative. In a sense, though, the most powerful way in which the *Ampanjaka* can ensure that people will serve at the rituals in which he and his ancestry are celebrated, is to ensure that these events are well organized. Food and drink must be plentiful; water must be available; the road must be passable, etc. While some will doubtless participate and serve to their death regardless, others (younger, urban dwellers especially) have to be wooed through effective marketing. Here we see, as in the early nineteenth century in the case described by Feeley-Harnik, that there has been an "increasing emphasis on the friendship between rulers and their followers rather than a relationship governed by force" (1991:101).

That ritual events associated with the polity generally occur in Ambatoharañana or other locations where temporary "capitals" (*doany*) have been established, and thus draw "followers" to their "ruler", is important. Unlike the movements of the *Ampanjaka* on tour (as described above), this movement of constituents from the peripheries of royal influence to the core from which it emanates serves to periodically re-establish the centrality (literally) of royalty in the region. These occasions also provide opportunities to plan future ones. At Ambatoharañana's *ziara* in 1992, for example, a large meeting was held outside of the zomba where *manantany*, *rangahy*, *fahatelo* and significant (male) members of the royal family discussed the timing for further upcoming events. Again, I must return to the first answer I was offered when I asked him what it was he did as *Ampanjaka*: "protect Antankaraña customs and oversee their proper execution".

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September 22, 1994 — Ambatoharañana

The day starts on a cynical note. On my way to Antsaravibe to hear the touring President's speech, I run into Moussa coming the other way. Don't bother going, he tells me, the President is on his way to Ambatoharañana to meet with the *Ampanjaka*. He spent all night dancing at a local *baly* with Antsaravibe's little old ladies. Man of the people, I say.
"Politiky", answers Moussa, shaking his head, "... and it's not even election time."

Sitting in wait out front of Dadilahy Said's house with Moussa and all the uncles, I learn that no President of the Republic has ever made an official visit to Ambatoharaña. Of course, Ampanjaka of the past have met with Presidents, but never here; always at the seat of local state power in Ambilobe, and never at the seat of local royal power in Ambatoharaña. This meeting, then will be a significant one. The Ampanjaka has had Malagasy flags put on the columns out front of the zomba. Dadilahy Said says that both Malagasy and Antakaraña flags could have been raised on the flagpole erected at the last Tsangantsainy had the ropes not been mistakenly removed.

The first jeeps pull up to where we are sitting. Their occupants ease out and wander over to us. They look like commandos — not the professionally trained kind, but the Van Damme/Schwarzenegger rip-off version you see in Ambilobe's video parlor — some carrying rifles others with handguns tucked in the smalls of their backs. A few nods and words with Moussa before they realize they're at the wrong house and hop back in their jeeps to drive the 20 yards south to the other zomba. They park just as the remaining Land Cruisers arrive — 23 vehicles in total.

An assistant to the President comes back to us and suggests the "olo mavinty" ("big people") of the village line up to shake the President's hand as he makes his way to his meeting with the Ampanjaka. He asks if there are any customs that need to be followed in greeting the Ampanjaka. Dadilahy Said explains the greeting to him, and says that all entrants to the zomba will have to take their shoes off first. We get up and I'm not sure what to do, but with a nod of his head, Dadilahy Said indicates that I should join him and the other old men in the line-up. The assistant thinks better and leads me away so I can be drilled by the commandos. While everyone else is shaking hands with the President and his aides are untying laces and hopping around trying to get their shoes off, I'm stuck going through my "I'm a student from Canada"-"it's cold over there"-"of course I eat rice" shtick.

The meeting lasts no more than 20 minutes, and when the two of them walk out and shake hands for the official videographer, I ask one of my new commando buddies if I can take a picture of the scene as a "souvenir". No. The convoy departs.
A little pissed at being shunned through the whole thing I complain to anyone willing to hear for the next half hour. Mama Dinand laughs at me and says they probably thought I was an assassin. Zama ny Sona, the first in line to have shaken the President's hand, puts it all in perspective by asking a question too serious to be cynical.

"Which one was the President?"

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The *Ampanjaka*, the state and interested foreigners

As the above journal extract indicates, the polity I have just described is of significance to more than just its title-holders and constituents. It represents an important source of support to a variety of outsiders with interests in the region as well. Throughout my time there, politicians, entrepreneurs, and representatives of conservation and development organizations all approached the *Ampanjaka* in the hopes of garnering his support for their projects and campaigns. Although he does hold a position in local state government, it was not his approval as an official that these interested parties were after. That these encounters frequently took place in the visiting room of the *Ampanjaka*’s Ambilobe *zomba* is an indication of the sort of influence being sought. That they frequently ended with the *Ampanjaka* inviting his guest to attend an upcoming ceremony in which his position as local "ruler" would be bolstered by the participation of thousands of followers, is an indication of the *Ampanjaka*’s savvy. He is as aware of the symbolic value of a "traditional ruler's" support as they are of the need to garner it.

In the same way that many traditionalists asserted that the *Ampanjaka* is not meant to become involved in business ventures, so too was it suggested that he should avoid things *polity* (a term, from the French "*politiques*", generally used to refer to underhanded and manipulative dealings thought characteristic of state institutions) -- he is meant not to concern himself with national politics especially. Running counter to this ideal is the actual history of relations between *Ampanjaka* of the past and the political
 systems under which the Antankaraña polity has been periodically (and now permanently) subsumed. In fact, it is arguable that politiki has been an especially effective tool employed by past Ampanjaka intent on ensuring the continuity of the polity and their central status in it. The fact is that in addition to the "inside" or local sanctions on his authority, the Ampanjaka is also subject to certain powerful external (i.e., national and international) forces as well. And despite the discomfort of some with the idea, part of the Ampanjaka’s job in contemporary Madagascar is to manage the relationship of those forces as a way of ensuring the viability of the polity in changing times.

As noted above, the Ampanjaka has received external support since the signing of the 1841 treaty with the French. The current Ampanjaka was a gendarme when he took power, but it was decided (by polity officials and advisors) that this was an inappropriate job for someone of his position. It was said that as a gendarme he would be in contact with unsavory (or "dirty" -- maloto) matters and characters, and, interestingly, that he would be forced to do what an Ampanjaka is never meant to: lock people up. It was also deemed inappropriate in that protocol would demand that he, the Ampanjaka, the individual who ideally gives respectful greetings to no other living person, would be required to salute his superiors. Recognizing these concerns, the local administration gladly created a job more suited to him. He was appointed, and has acted since as a representative of the population ("ministre de la population" as the Ampanjaka explains it). As one of his benefits, he has been given an office in Ambilobe's main governmental building.

When I interviewed the Ampanjaka’s counterpart in Ambilobe, the appointed local representative (prefet) of the Malagasy state, the relationship between the two political domains became somewhat clearer. The prefet suggested that the role he played and that played by the Ampanjaka were complementary rather than conflicting. He painted a division of judiciary labour, for example, whereby state officials decide on matters for which laws are enforceable by state institutions and the Ampanjaka is granted authority over matters deemed unresolvable by such means. Thus, accusations of murder are brought to the state, accusations of sorcery are brought to the Ampanjaka. The problem,
of course, is that the boundary between the two is not as discreet as the prefet suggests — murderers are sometimes sorcerers and vice versa.

The prefet was equally frank in describing the other sort of relationship which exists between state officials and the Ampanjaka. Significantly, this second type generally involves elected, and not appointed, officials. Courted for his influence by possible allies or publicly derided by opponents, the Ampanjaka is an important figure come election time. Local and presidential candidates can bolster local support through him and he is thus treated very carefully. Once again, this is nothing new. Since the first free elections in Madagascar (the referendum of 1958, for example, in which the Malagasy public was allowed a role in determining the future of the then still French colony), Ampanjaka have played this sort of role. It is not surprising then that, as discussed in the above journal extract, President Albert Zafy made a detour to Ambatoharana on a tour through the north with the sole intent of meeting with the Ampanjaka on his own turf. The gesture was a significant and revealing one — unlike other politicians who have met with the Ampanjaka in larger centers like Ambilobe, Diego or Tana, Zafy traveled through the bush to the very seat of the Ampanjaka's authority.

The courtship is not so one-sided though. Just as the prefet and other representatives of the state are invited to and do attend events which legitimate the Ampanjaka's position in his own political domain, so too does the Ampanjaka attend events which celebrate the state. On the annual celebration of Madagascar's independence from French colonial rule, for example, the Ampanjaka joins other local officials in watching the parade from the best seats in Ambilobe (on the town's main platform), dressed in a modified gendarme's uniform (and not the one associated with his role as Ampanjaka), and well within the gaze of television cameras and newspaper photographers.

To understand how and why it is that a relationship between the Ampanjaka and the Malagasy State exists at all in contemporary Madagascar, it may be more fruitful to look at the policies of the State than the ultimately indeterminable inclinations of particular Ampanjaka of the past. I point here specifically to the policies associated with what has been called "Malagachization" — a concept which has constituted a major part of state
ideology since the early 1970s. The thinking behind the first implementation of Malagachization was quite simple: in order to offset the lingering effects of the colonial era, and to foster a new and strictly Malagasy nationalism, certain changes had to be made. First, the curriculum of publicly educated students was made to include only Malagasy (i.e. and not French) language training. Little matter that the 'official' language taught was actually the highland (Merina) dialect of Malagasy and as foreign to many in the north as French, or that those with the means were still able to learn French privately, the point was that French education was to be replaced by Malagasy. Corresponding changes in core history and social-sciences courses followed.

Along with this restructuring of the educational system came a change in thinking about local traditions. Rather than smother local practices which recognized local ancestors, the State made efforts to promote them. The thinking was that a respect for fombandrazana ("ancestral customs") was something that all Malagasy shared in common. Thus, in encouraging the continuing respect for local fombandrazana, the state intended to encourage thoughts of pan-Malagasy forms of social, religious and even political organization. Whether successful or not (there are arguments to be made on either side of the issue based on different definitions of success), one result of this new stance is certainly evident today -- as a policy, it empowered a great many previously powerless people. In her study of spirit possession in the north-western town of Ambanja, Sharp notes how tromba (the spirits of local ancestral royalty) have been respected and attended to by local representatives of the state. Thus, tromba spirits and those individuals who consider themselves their descendants have been granted a voice they had not previously had -- a voice that is meant to evoke nationalist sentiment, but seems more often than not to speak out on behalf of local concerns. As Sharp succinctly notes, "Malagachization ... ultimately [...] elevates local authority over that of the state" (1993:170).

As in the case Sharp describes, the irony inherent in the relationship between the Antankaraïa polity and the Malagasy state is self-evident. While the state condones and to some degree encourages the existence of the Antankaraïa polity as part of its continuing policy of Malagachization, to a great many Antankaraïa, the polity actually represents the opposite of what the state would seem to hope for. For many, the polity and
the rites in which it is celebrated, are central loci of resistance. As I will point out further in chapters 5 and 7, the current state is often linked with the 19th century highland (Merina) power which sought to dominate all Madagascar. The widely attended events most commonly associated with the polity are commemorations of that era in which Antankaraña resisted incorporation into a centrally organized Malagasy state (that of the Merina empire). In effect, the very institutions and customs (*jomba*) which are meant, in the eyes of the state, to tie Antankaraña to all other Malagasy on the island are in fact the institutions and customs which are perceived locally as being what makes them fundamentally different. I will further explore these issues in Chapter 8 when I discuss the nature of Antankaraña identity in contemporary Madagascar.

In addition to his dealings with the state, the *Ampanjaka* also acts as representative of local interests to foreign investors, governments and non-governmental organizations. During the time of my fieldwork (from 1992-96) his involvement with the World Wide Fund for Nature and its Malagasy counterpart organizations was particularly pronounced (see Gezon 1997). Between 1992 and 1996, he participated in several conferences sponsored by the WWF (one of which took him to Uganda), welcomed Prince Philip of Great Britain (on a goodwill tour of Madagascar for the WWF) as a guest in his *zomba* and appeared in a Jacques Cousteau TV special and coffee table book documenting (among other things) the natural wonders of Ankaraña. In 1996, he signed a statute (written, with the cooperation of key advisors, in Malagasy and in French) outlining certain declarations concerning "La Communauté Traditionelle Antakarana" vis-à-vis organizations such as the WWF. What it states is fairly simple: Any groups planning conservation work or development projects in the region must approach the "traditional community of Antakarana" to seek authorization. And, although not legally bound to do so, most groups, recognizing the *Ampanjaka*’s influential position in the region, do just that. Thus, when an ongoing USAID funded development project (the A.J.D.S.E.C.A. – *Association des Jeunes pour le Développement Socio-Economique et Culturel de l'Ankarana*) was instituted in Ambilobe, it noted "Roi Tsimiharo III" (i.e., the current

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21The very terms "*jomba*" and "*jombandrazañia*" are remarkably polyvalent. They are employed and deployed in many ways and with myriad intentions, and warrant the sort of critical consideration that
Ampanjaka) as a member of its board under the title "Directeur Spirituel". It seems likely that the Ampanjaka's position as an important representative of local interests will only solidify further in future years — especially given the amount of conservation and development work under way in and being planned for the region.

Keesing (1989) and others have given "kastom".
CHAPTER 3

First Arrivals

August 2, 1992 — Ambilobe

"Alors .. Monsieur André!" yells the slight man on the verandah I mean to pass.

He's wearing a pale green leisure suit with no shirt, brown leather loafers and a tweed hat, and I can't imagine who he is and how or why he knows my name. Seeing that he has my attention, he calls to me

"Entrée ..." and shuffles through the darkness of the doorway and into the building.

I enter what looked from the outside to be a small shop, but is actually an office. His office. Sitting behind the desk typing, he acknowledges me with a nodding head, finishes a sentence he must have only just begun, and then stands to greet me as though I were his next appointment. He is Maitre Jacky, the man Michael and I were told about and meant to see but couldn't find. The man one young university student in Diego suggested we consult for the "real story" of the Antankarana.

We speak in French; he barricaded behind the stacks of cheap Malagasy paper and file folders that clutter his desk, me facing him and the large poster of Albert Zafy, a candidate in the upcoming presidential election, that looms over his head. He talks about himself; his education in France, his relationship to the royal family (he is an uncle of the current Ampanjaka), and his hopes to publish a monthly magazine, complete with glossy pictures, he hints indicating my camera, devoted to Antankarana customs (fomba) and history (tantara). I ask his opinion on an important upcoming nation-wide referendum. In response, he pulls a file from one of the stacks on his desk and flipping through the newspaper articles he's collected there, explains to me that the Third Republic is an inevitability. People will opt for drastic change and vote "yes" to the new constitution, he claims, and support Albert Zafy in the upcoming presidential elections as well. What's more, he suggests,
Didier Ratsiraka, the Malagasy Republic's president of the past 16 years (and some would say architect of its economic downfall), will step down peacefully. Knowing only that talking politics mightn't be the best way of getting started on my first notebook, I change the subject.

When I ask him a point of clarification on the genealogy of past Antankarana rulers, he rattles off a list of names and dates by heart. I ask him to repeat it, and scribble furiously. He suggests that I find the book he has written. I should be able to get it from one of the shopkeepers in town. We part, after an hour, and I promise to visit again the following morning.

I spend the rest of the afternoon in search of Maitre Jacky's book, finally borrowing it from the Indian shop-keeper who had earlier sold me pens, notebooks and a bucket. A cardboard cover and deteriorated glue binding hint at a local publisher. It is entitled L'Histoire des Antankaranà.

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The account of the past I offer through the next three chapters is not entitled "History of the Antankarana" (as a translation of the title of Maitre Jacky's above mentioned book would read) for two reasons. First the use of the word "history" (as it is narrowly defined) is problematic given the material that follows. While "history", or more precisely "histoire", is a term sometimes used to refer to representations of the past in northern Madagascar (as it is in the title of Maitre Jacky's book), it is far from the only one I will be discussing here. It logically follows, I suppose, that the second reason for not entitling this section "History of the Antankarana" concerns the use of the term "Antankarana". Although the 18 tribes (tribus) of Madagascar's colonial past (of which "the Antankarana" is one) are often referred to, in more than just colonial discourse, as bounded units each having their own "history", the actual boundaries separating each's history from the other are often difficult to discern. Individuals who identify themselves as Antankarana today regularly refer to, commemorate and sometimes even re-enact events of a past that is not exclusively theirs. The term "Antankarana" itself, literally translatable as "people of the rocks", appears for the first time well into the narrative presented here
when I describe the migration, in the late 17th century, of a particular branch of royalty to the area of the "rocks" from which the term is derived. Unwilling to do away with the term, however, given that it is significant and applicable in a variety of other contexts, let me just preface the sections that follow by stating that the "Antankaraña past" I refer to is the past reckoned by living Antankaraña, and not the past of a group known through time as "Antankaraña".

The next chapters are perhaps best introduced by the Comaroffs' statement that "no social world may be properly understood without reference both to its internal historicity and to its unfolding relationship with its wider context." (1992b:96, their emphasis). In what follows, I describe both the ways in which the past is conceived and reproduced locally in northern Madagascar, and the way in which locally potent narratives map onto those which describe the "wider context". In preparing to do so, of course, I have been confronted with a variety of representations of past events — many of which suggest certain inevitable quandaries. How, for example, do we approach the accounts of missionaries and colonists whose objectionable goals and prejudices are so obviously inscribed in their work? How too do we deal with oral accounts that highlight the decisions and actions of a few elite men without giving recognition to the voiceless masses who supposedly followed them? How, ultimately, do we consider ideological accounts of the past in the face of our own, objectivist, pre-dispositions (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1992a)? Agreeing with Cunnison's (1951: 22) argument regarding the relativity of the "truth" of such representations (i.e., that different versions of past events may have currency in different contexts — and thus be considered "true" — and that none has any claim to being the unmitigated truth), I consider it important to recognize the value of all — if for nothing else, for what they reveal about those who represent them and the contexts in which they do (or have done) so. As Connerton (1989) notes such an attitude requires only that these representations be cautiously scrutinized so as to reveal the "information which [they do] not explicitly contain" (1989:13).

In the introduction to Ethnography and the Historical Imagination, Comaroff and Comaroff outline a method for writing historical ethnography in which they stress the need
to understand the “making of collective worlds” (1992a:12). Citing Cohn (1987:47f), they suggest that:

A historical ethnography […] must begin by constructing its own archive. It cannot content itself with established canons of documentary evidence, because these are themselves part of the culture of global modernism—as much the subject as the means of inquiry. As anthropologists, therefore, we must work both in and outside the official record, both with and beyond the guardians of memory in the societies we study.

What follows, then, is this dissertation’s custom “archive” – an archive to be drawn upon in a number of ways.

Most obviously, the next chapters are the reader’s introduction to individuals, groups, events and processes of the past that will figure as important factors in later sections of the dissertation. Given this purpose, I stress certain individuals, groups, events and processes over others. Particular events of the mid to late 19th century, for example, will prove especially relevant in my later analysis of the Tsangantsainy (the ritual described so poorly in the introduction). Similarly, an understanding of the policies adopted by the French colonial administration is indispensable to my later discussion of the rise of an Antankaraňa ethnic consciousness. More than just the basis of later arguments, though, I also use the account that follows to introduce some of the many ways in which the past has been and can be considered in the present in northern Madagascar.

The narrative I have created is drawn predominantly from oral and written texts. Rather than over-extend myself in trying to classify these accounts of the past as history, oral history, myth, (or any other such term) based on certain distinctive criteria, I have chosen to focus more on the means by which the accounts of the past enter the present -- the production of the accounts as much as the accounts produced. I will be referring extensively, for example, to tantara -- oral accounts of the past -- told me and others in a variety of contexts over the past few years. With respect to an even more specific term, the man who recounted most of the oral texts I cite, Dadilahy Said, pointed out the limitations
of this medium. "Tantara lovan' sofigny -- 'Stories inherited by the ears,'" he said one afternoon towards the end of my stay, "are things spoken of that haven't been seen. That is what 'inheritance of the ears' [lovan' sofigny] means -- an individual can talk about things that occurred before he was even here on the earth. If there is ever someone who claims to know it all, he's a liar!".

Dadilahy said learned the tantara he told me. While his brothers attended French school (as was their privilege as members of the royal family under the French colonial administration), he was devoted to learning the tantara and fomba (customs) that would later become his métier. Although he told them to me or others when specifically requested, stories of the sort I refer to here would most often be recounted on important occasions in front of large groups of people. I must stress, however, that these are not formal texts. Varying accounts of the same events do exist, though they tend to differ more in form than in content. As is the case throughout much of Madagascar (see Haring 1992), the performance of oral texts (including the gestures, flourishes and inconsequential details that make each distinct) is as appreciated by the audience as its content. In my own narrative I privilege tantara told by Dadilahy Said for the simple reason that he was recognized by royalty and commoners alike as the most knowledgeable teller, and, attesting to the accuracy of this assessment of him, it was invariably he who would speak tantara at large gatherings.

The tantara I cite deal predominantly with the movements and actions of past royalty; the non-royal characters who appear do so by virtue of their relationships to royalty. In this, tantara share one of the most often criticized qualities of traditional "top-down" written history -- they focus on the elite. The common people that modern social history seeks to account for are nowhere apparent in tantara -- they are referred to, if at all, in terms of the descent groups (karazaña) to which they belong. That said, these tantara do nonetheless provide invaluable insight into workings of the polity through time. They frequently recount disputes and disagreements between rulers and their secular and

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1 By the very act of transcribing and reprinting such tantara here, some (for example Tonkin 1986:204) may argue, I have altered it by denying its performative nature. I recognize this point, but hope that in describing the contexts in which tantara are told, I can at least suggest a performative element to my discussion.
sacred advisors, and in so doing reflect that the *Ampanjaka* never acts alone. Significantly, and unlike some other retrospective sources, these *tantara* also grant agency to *Ampanjaka* of the past. While some written historical sources portray local rulers as mere pawns (easily moved about and manipulated) in the game of colony-building, *tantara* frequently stress the proactive stances taken by *Ampanjaka* of the past. At times, *tantara* even suggest an inversion of the above mentioned tendency -- in *tantara* it is sometimes others (the French especially) who are portrayed as mere pawns in the local struggle for autonomy and continuity.

In addition to *tantara*, I also refer to a variety of written sources on the past throughout the next chapters. While at times no more than informed speculation based on *tantara* of the sort described above, these secondary sources are all written by individuals (European, American and Malagasy) trained in a European tradition. Though details are sometimes hard to come by in them (information concerning the Antankaraña past specifically is obviously more difficult to find in these sources than in *tantara*), they offer an important perspective on the Antankaraña past in that they allow us to consider events in the north in relation to events and trends throughout Madagascar. What is more, they offer the sort of insight and commentary that is their prerogative as retrospective accounts. The specifics of official dealings of a French colonial administration intent on using traditional political structures to their own benefit, for example, could appear only in this type of written history.

When relevant, I also include reference to certain primary sources. These are meant to be complementary to the narrative line I have set out -- expanding and/or commenting on the events and issues that are not overtly dealt with in the sorts of texts mentioned above. By citing these travel accounts, speeches and journals with specific reference to their authors, I seek to reveal as much about them as their texts do about the past.

Finally some of the texts referred to through the following sections are in a sense both written and oral. They are written in that they are edited excerpts from my own

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fieldwork journals, and are oral in that they generally (though not always) revolve around conversations (not necessarily tantara) I had with a variety of people concerning the past. With these entries, I hope to add yet another dimension to the narrative presented here. They are meant to introduce the reader to some of the many ways in which the past enters the daily lives of Antankaraña in the present.

By way of ending this introduction, it should be stated that all accounts of the past, including this one, are selective. "In so far as history aspires to meaning", Lévi-Strauss writes, "it is doomed to select regions, periods, groups of men and individuals in these groups and to make them stand out as discontinuous figures against a continuity barely good enough to be used as a backdrop. A truly total history would cancel itself out -- its product would be naught" (1966:257). A "truly total history" would be like a map sharing the same physical dimensions as the land surveyed -- accurate but hard to carry around in your back pocket.

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September 15, 1992 — Ambatoharañana

Lisa, Lipo and I sit around a rickety wooden table in the middle section of Dadilahy Said's three room house. Lisa, a social anthropologist from the University of Michigan, has been here a week. She'll be leaving with her packs of supplies, books and clothing in a few days so we decide to make use of our time together by recording what we can of Dadilahy Said's account of the region's history.

On the table in front of us sits Lisa's tape recorder, two packs of unfiltered Gauloises cigarettes (Dadilahy Said's chosen brand), a token sum of Malagasy money, and a small glass of foul-smelling local rum. The money, including a silver coin, is imperative for we are here to request something sacred -- the past -- and any such request must be accompanied by silver.

Dadilahy Said enters slowly, pausing in the doorway to adjust the cloth he wears around his waist. An old man, though not the oldest in the village, he is the last living member of his generation of royalty. What is more, and this fact (more than his age) is what has drawn us to him, he is recognized by all as an authority on
matters of Antankaraña tradition and history. I have speculated as to his age before, and have settled on late 70s early 80s — people I've asked in the village usually guess higher.

He sits down across from us in the room's only cushioned chair, accepts our respectful greetings, and listens as his grandson Lipo, acting as our translator, explains the reason for our visit. Listening, he takes a cigarette from a crumpled pack in his shirt pocket, lights it and draws deeply. He answers as gently as Lipo had asked, and with a short invocation he pours some of the rum on the ground behind him ("for the ancestors" Lipo quips before he downs the remaining two fingers) then looks dead at us and smiles. Lisa starts the tape recorder and Lipo asks the first question.

"How did we Antankaraña come to live here in Madagascar?"

"The origin of Antankaraña?" Dadilahy replies, pausing for a moment before going on, "We are from Arabie. That is where God first put us..."

***

The tantara begins with Binty Salama, a young Princess from Arabie who became pregnant by a commoner fisherman from whom she had bought her father's, the king's, fish. She was (following the custom of people there, Dadilahy Said points out) condemned to death for her misdeed. At her mother's pleading, though, her father kept her from the usual punishment for such a violation (be-heading), and decided instead to have her cast out to sea in a large canoe. Despite the few provisions smuggled on board by her sympathetic mother, the girl's fate seemed inevitable. The fisherman, meanwhile, having seen what had become of the princess (a fate he played no small part in creating), set out after her, and upon meeting her on the open sea asked her if she would join him in his own (fully provisioned) boat. Binty Salama accepted, and the two of them sailed until they reached Madagascar.
The couple first settled at Bobaomy -- the northernmost tip of the island. Those living in the area accepted the newcomers, and the two of them gradually came to learn the local language. Their child was born, and they named her Volamaka³.

"This" Dadilahy Said says, "was the first appearance of the sacredness of rulers [hasihi'Ampanjaka] here in Madagascar."

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Written sources that account for the origins of the Antankaraña royalty in Madagascar (for example, Mellis 1938; Guillain 1845; Waast 1973 and Vial 1954) invariably begin, not all that differently than Dadilahy Said's tantara, with reference to a "foreign" royal dynasty -- Maroserana -- that was first established on the island sometime around the mid-sixteenth century. Guillain (1845:11) describes it (following oral accounts from the mid nineteenth century) as having originated in the Mahafaly region (in the far south of Madagascar) with the arrival of certain "white men" from the east⁴. Mellis (1938:10) specifies the Persian gulf as the birthplace of the dynasty. Laporte's version sets the origin at the arrival of a princess from Mecca, seeking refuge among the Sakalava of Menabe (1950:5). Although Kent is alone in suggesting that the first representatives of the dynasty were of African origin -- by his suggestion, they arrived with a boatload of gold from the Zimbabwean empire of Mwene Mutapa (Kent 1970:196) -- his take on how the dynasty spread throughout coastal Madagascar jibes with all the others. Taking on local spiritual leaders as allies and advisors, Kent hypothesizes, the foreign royalty spread relatively quickly, through force and negotiation, establishing their authority over politically disparate groups in the south and, over time, the south west and west of Madagascar. Essentially, Kent describes the colonization of the indigenous population (a conglomerate of groups he refers to as the "real Sakalava") by a force holding a "political

³The name that Dadilahy Said attributes to the child is itself interesting. The word vola generally refers to money, though here it might also refer to either gold or silver or something of value. Maka undoubtedly refers to Mecca and thus the Arabic origin of the child.
consciousness developed outside of Madagascar" (1970:196). In that, if in no other way, his account jibes with Dadilahy Said's.

What all of these origin theories (including Dadilahy Said's) share, of course, is the idea of a foreign genitor/genetrix of the line -- never is it implied that the dynasty arose from an indigenous population in the south (or in the north for that matter).

***

Dadilahy Said's *tantara* continues...

Volamaka, the daughter of Binty Salama, grew up and was soon old enough to play with the other children of the village. When these other children contracted rashes, though, their parents blamed the newcomers and forced them to leave. The young family left peacefully, sailed down the coast and settled in Boeny (Boina or Iboina). There, they changed their daughter's name to Volatañana⁵.

"This" he says, "is how we got to Boeny."

***

The Maroserana dynasty continued to grow in size and influence through the late 16th and early 17th centuries. At some point therein, it spawned two new dynasties -- Zafinimena (grandchildren of gold) -- the dynasty in which later Menabe and Iboina Sakalava rulers are included -- and Zafinifotsy (grandchildren of silver) -- the dynasty which contemporary Antankaraña royalty consider themselves a part of. How exactly this came about is a matter of debate among historians. Kent suggests, in keeping with his ⁴These "white men" that Guillain refers to were doubtless of Arabic origin. Dadilahy Said describes Arabs as the first white people in Madagascar.

⁵Another interesting name. *Vola* (once again) referring to "money" (silver or gold), *tañana* meaning "hand".
boatload-of-gold theory, that current Zafinimena (the grandchildren of gold) are obviously the true bearers of the Maroserana line and that the Zafinifotsy were no more than a splinter from it (1970:196). Guillain (1845:11) concurs. Waast (1973:7), working from oral histories, is more careful in his discussion of the matter, pointing out that the version of the story you're likely to get depends entirely upon where you ask. By the Antankaranà (Zafinifotsy) version (a variation of which is offered below), the split took place before the founding of any kingdoms.\footnote{In referring to these two dynasties, I use the shortened terms favored by living members of them. Others, following the true translations of the phrases mentioned above, have used the terms Zafimbolmena and Zafimbolafotsy.}

***

I preface Dadilahy Said's account of the Zafinifotsy-Zafinimena split by stating that it is a decidedly Zafinifotsy version:

Having married a local man, Volatañana, the daughter of Binty Salama, had two sons: Ndrabolafotsy and Ndrabolamena. They were sacred (in that they were descendants of Binty Salama), though not yet rulers (i.e., they did not have followers). While still young, their father tested their characters by placing a piece of gold and a piece of silver in a white plate and having each of them choose one. The younger brother, Ndrabolamena, chose the gold and the older brother, Ndrabolafotsy, chose the silver. The father then explained to them the implications of their respective choices. He told the younger son, the one who had chosen gold, that he would have a large but short lived kingdom. He then told the older son, the one who had chosen silver, that he would have a smaller, but

\footnote{The first Sakalava version, coming from the Menabe tradition, has the split taking place with the accession of Lahifotsy as ruler in Menabe — his first son (of a noble wife) is the founder of Zafinimena, his second son (of a commoner wife) is founder of the Zafinifotsy. The second, coming from the Boina tradition, has the split occurring at the accession of Andriamandiso (founder of Boina) — Zafinimena are descendants of Andriamandiso, Zafinifotsy of his sister. The third version, coming from a northern Boina tradition, puts the split at the time of Andriamandiso's son (Andrianambony). By this final version, Zafinimena are descendants of the younger of this ruler's two sons — the older son (founder of the Zafinifotsy line) was chased out of the area by supporters of his younger brother. Note the similarities between this final version and that told by Dadilahy Said (all recounted in Laporte 1950).}

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much more long-lasting kingdom. The descendants of these two boys are Zafnimena (grandchildren of gold) and Zainifotsy (grandchildren of silver) respectively.

The two boys married local women, and each had his own son. This, Dadilahy Said points out, is key, for it is in this way that the royalty (and its sacredness) spread (i.e., through exogamous unions; cf. Feeley-Harnik 1991: 82-84). While playing one day, the son of Ndrabolafotsy accidentally poked the son of Ndrabolamena in the eye with a small knife, blinding him. Ndrabolamena's wife was furious at what had happened to her son and implored her husband to exact revenge by doing the same to his brother's child.

"That was the beginning of the separation of Ndrabolamena and Ndrabolafotsy" Dadilahy Said notes parenthetically, "Zafnimena and Zainifotsy are still fighting now, even though the men who fathered us were themselves from the same womb!"

Despite Ndrabolafotsy's calls to brotherly loyalty, Ndrabolamena gathered his friends around him and planned to carry out his wife's request. Ndrabolafotsy learned of the plan, and decided to flee rather than face his brother.

"That is why we left Boeny." said Dadilahy Said points out.

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I am inclined to join Waast and Vial in dismissing questions surrounding the Zainifotsy-Zafnimena split with a statement so general that none could find fault with it: It seems likely that a sixteenth century dispute over succession led to a conflict between two branches of a single royal lineage (descended most probably from the Maroserana). "The victorious" as Waast puts it, "qualify as Zafnimena, the others as Zainifotsy" (1973:8).

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8 Laporte's (1950:6) collected version of the Zainifotsy-Zafnimena split is remarkably similar to that offered by Dadilahy Said. By the version he tells, though, the two boys were already Zafnimena — the dynasty had already been established from the first arrival of the princess from Mecca (the gold jewelry she was wearing upon her arrival inspired the identification).
Vial (1954:4) describes the northerly migration of Zafinifotsy royalty in considerable detail. In constant conflict with Zafinimena rulers of Boina, themselves ever seeking to extend the northern extremity of their empire, the Zafinifotsy line split in two. The first group headed east to Androna in the region of Mandritsara. The other, the one to which Antankaraña royalty can be traced, continued north under the leadership of Rasoa, a royal woman, settling eventually in the Sambirano basin opposite the large northern island of Nosy Be. There, in 1609 Vial notes, one of Rasoa's sons, Kozobe, was elected chief.  

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August 21, 1992 — Ambilobe

Sitting in the enclosed front verandah of the zomba, waiting for the Ampanjaka to return from the discussion he is having in his front room to the one we were having out here when two middle-aged men and a young woman arrive at the front gate. I see through a hole in the wall that one of the men is carrying a valiha - a stringed cylindrical instrument I have heard most often in the context of spirit possession ceremonies. He catches my stare, and pauses for a moment before softly calling "hody" — a sort of "hello ... is anyone there". As no one else is around, I answer "karibo" ("come in"). Their huddled discussion causes me to wonder whether I’ve committed some faux-pas or broken a taboo (fasd), but they soon remove their footwear, and come in and sit down on the bench next to me. We trade informal greetings (which is about as far as I’ve ever gotten in the short time I’ve been here),

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*According to a story recounted to Gueunier (1982), Kozobe was not the only, or even the first, candidate for the position of Ampanjaka at the time of his accession. When the people were asked to choose a leader from among the grandchildren of their ailing Ampanjaka (it is stressed in the story that the selection of the Ampanjaka is in the hands of the people) they initially chose his son's son Vala. It is only when doubts were raised as to this prospective Ampanjaka's paternity that another candidate was sought. Kozobe was the reigning Ampanjaka's daughter's son, and since there is no contesting a child's maternity he was deemed a more appropriate choice. As a way of diffusing a potential conflict, the reigning Ampanjaka suggested the two candidates share the power. He divided the kingdom in such a way as to allow the two cousins to rule simultaneously. While he acknowledged Kozobe's right (as the chosen of the people) to rule over all that is above the ground, he reserved the rights to the land itself for Vala (he of the questionable paternity). After the reigning Ampanjaka's death, the two cousins ruled together until*
and sit quietly like patients in a dentist's office. When Jaki, the Ampanjaka’s household assistant, comes out to see who’s arrived, the man with the valiha hustles over to him and whispers calmly. The three newcomers are whisked into the front room, and as quickly, I see through the wind-blown curtains of the doorway, into a room at the very back of the house. When Jaki emerges I ask him what they’re here for.

"She has a tromba [royal spirit] ..." he says, in French, indicating the younger woman, "she has [the spirit of] Kozobe."

I find out later that the young woman, whom I guess to be in her mid twenties, was born in Maroantsetra on the east coast, and now lives in a town on the road from here to there (the Ampanjaka tells me later that her birthplace is a good omen — Maroantsetra was a place of refuge for an Antankarana Ampanjaka of the past). She has come here to seek the Ampanjaka’s blessing for she has learned, with the assistance of the older men with her (themselves both spirit mediums), that she is a medium of the spirit of the first Zafinifotsy Ampanjaka in the north, Kozobe. Not all mediums report the coming of new spirits to the Ampanjaka, but this is a very important case — it represents the potential for a meeting of sacred royalty across several centuries. She has been having bad luck over the past few months (a poor rice crop, illness etc.), and her fellow mediums have deduced that a visit to the living Ampanjaka, and the recognition implied therein should solve her problems.

The Ampanjaka does receive them (privately) in the back room, coming out at one point to greet someone new and see how I’m doing. He brings a white plate (lekaleka) and a silver coin (volafotsy) back with him when he returns to them. These, he later tells me, along with a proper white cloth, make his recognition of the spirit official. The goods, which the Ampanjaka has himself received from the family of a deceased spirit-medium, are necessary ingredients in the process of calling a spirit to inhabit the body of a medium (mikey tromba). The rhythmic hum of a tin rattle and twang of valiha coming from the back room indicate that this is just what they’re doing. Their meeting is a private one, though, and I’ve no idea what Kozobe has to say to his descendant.

conflicting viewpoints on how to deal with an invading army forced them to separate. Vala, still master of the land (if not of what is on top of it), ordered Kozobe to remove his "flag" and go plant it elsewhere.
Figure 2 - The descent of 'Antankaraña' Ampanjaka*

* Drawn from Tsialana III's report (see below) and a royal genealogy collected (from Dadilahy Said) in October 1992. Ampanjaka are emphasized. Dates of reigns of Ampanjaka are drawn from Tsialanal III's report and Rasidy-Mamba (1968).
At this point in my discussion of the past, I introduce an as yet unmentioned written source entitled "Histoire du Royaume Zafinifotsy actuellement Antankarana" -- "History of the Zafinifotsy Kingdom now called Antankarana". Consisting of 11 type-written pages, it recounts Antankarana "history" in the style of Vial and Grandidier (complete with dates) up until the year 1939. What is most interesting about this document is that it was written, in French, by Tsialana III (the tenth Ampanjaka in Maitre Jacky's genealogy) for the French colonial administration. It begins with the accession of Kozobe, the first Zafinifotsy Ampanjaka to reign in the far north.

Kozobe was "elected" (according to Tsialana III) Ampanjaka (or "roi" -- king -- as the report reads) on Nosy Be in 1614. He divided his kingdom into 5 parts, and entrusted his 5 children with their governance. The 5 resulting clans/descent groups (karazana) -- descendants of each of these of Kozobe's children -- namely Antiramena, Antimahatera, Antimahanana, Antimahagnara and Antinosy -- are still recognized as distinct today. Kozobe's tomb now rests near a village called Ambohidrayny, south of the town of Ambanja.

Kozobe, Vial (1954) adds, was succeeded in 1639 by his son Andriamahitso who reigned the next 50 years in relative peace. Andriamahitso's successor, Andriamanampela (the Ampanjaka at the head of Maitre Jacky's list), was less fortunate. His reign was interrupted when Andriantahora, a Zafinimena ruler from Boina, invaded the Sambirano basin forcing Andriamanampela still further north. Andriamanampela was captured and beheaded, his body thrown in a river. Only his nephew (the son of Kozobe's daughter Soalandy), Andriansirotso, who had escaped earlier, avoided the vassalage imposed on those left behind. He moved still further north, eventually establishing himself on the Ankarana plateau (the heartland of the current Antankarana polity). There, with the acceptance of the indigenous groups that had long been there, he reigned as Ampanjaka.

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10 Gueunier (personal communication) notes that reports of this sort were quite common throughout the colonial period in Madagascar.
11 His tomb was recently visited by the current Antankarana Ampanjaka in recognition of this connection.
12 The river in question, Ankarazakognhy, remains taboo (fady) to Antankarana today.
13 Waast (1973:10-11) speculates as to the nature of Zafinifotsy power at this time. He claims that Zafinifotsy nobles (themselves on the run from their Zafinimena brethren) established themselves in an area based on their symbolic rather than their military power. They brought with them "un prestige religieux" and "des pocèdes magiques nouveaux", and their authority was based more on their ability to
For the first time, the term "Antankaraña" (literally translated as "people of the rocks") might be used to describe Andriansirotso and his followers. Never before had a Zafinifotsy Ampanjaka reigned so close to the rocks from which the term "Antankaraña" is derived.

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"We are all Sakalava" Dadilahy Said explains as his tantara continues, "but when our grandmothers arrived at the Ankaraña mountain [massif] ... that is when we became Antankaraña." 14

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March 25, 1994 — Ambatoharañana

Lipo and I have borrowed the key to the schoolhouse, as we've meant to do so many times before, so as to take advantage of the blackboard in our regularly planned but not often realized reciprocal afternoon lessons. Lipo's getting ready to meet "équipe Cousteau" (on their way we've heard, zodiac boats, helicopters and big-time aura in tow, to film the wonders of the Ankaraña massif), and though I assure him that Cousteau (and his équipe I presume) is French, he's intent on stepping up his efforts at English. This day, I go first, explaining the 5 W's of English questioning — writing "who", "what", "when", "where" and "why" on the board. In my own preparation for équipe Cousteau, I teach him important phrases like "who cares?" and "what's your problem?".

Lipo goes next. He erases my writing and draws a large pyramid in the centre of the board and a slanted line far off on its left side. He tells me it's a map of the area - the pyramid is Montagne D'Ambre, the line is the coast and the space in between is arbitration disputes between local groups than on their ability to impose their will. Waast later suggests that it was the repeated invasions of Zafinimena forces from the south (and the knowledge that incorporation into Sakalava empires would bring heavy "taxation" of the lucrative northern trade with Arab and European merchants) that brought previously disparate groupings together, and that the Zafinifotsy royalty were the only ones able to mobilize the others.
the plain. He explains that, according to Dadilahy Said, Andriansirotsa arrived in
Ankarana to an already existing population. There were three groups, as Dadilahy
Said tells it, already thriving in the area in a sort of cooperative independence. The
Antambohitry lived in the mountains (Ambohitra is the local name of Montagne
D'Ambre - the highest mountain in the North and now a reserve controlled by World
Wildlife Fund and the Malagasy State), the Antambazavaka on the plains, and the
Antabohipihafia by the sea. Each group independent of the others, but the three on
good enough terms that they helped and provided for each other in times of need.
They had no rulers among them. When Andriansirotsa arrived in the area, the three
groups took him in and accepted him as their Ampanjaka.

It occurs to me that this is the sort of thing I should have heard before,
especially as it has come from Dadilahy Said. Lipo tells me he's just learned it himself
while collecting information for a pamphlet the World Wildlife Fund office in Diego
wants to put out on the customs of the area.

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Soon after settling at Ankaraña Andriansirotsa was forced to leave when his
Zafimimena nemesis Andriantahora, accompanied by a contingent of Zafinifotsy from the
south, followed his northward path. The (by then) “Antankaraña” Ampanjaka and a loyal
few first went into hiding in the caves of the Ankaraña massif and then fled east to seek
refuge with Raholo, a related Zafinifotsy Ampanjaka. Andriantahora stayed three years
in Ankaraña, returning his attention to Boina only when threatened there by fellow
Zafimimena of Menabe (Grandidier 1958:233).

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14 Waast notes that “in the 17th century, the term Antankarana already existed to designate the inhabitants
of the province north of Andrano. After Andriansirotsa only the subjects of his dynasty, concentrated to
the north of the Sambirano, were designated as Antankarana” (1973:14).
15 Judging by Vial's account of these events, the loyalty of subjects to their ruler seems tenuous at best at
this time. Dadilahy Said points out, in describing the treachery of Andriantahora in conquering the
Sambirano Zafinifotsy by killing their Ampanjaka, that it is Sakalava custom for a group not to attack
another if their Ampanjaka is killed.
16 Vial notes that there remain Zafimimena tombs in the hills west of Ankaranana that attest to
Andriantahora's presence there (1954:5).
Andriansirotso spent these three years in exile on the East coast (in Maroantsetra). It was there, reports Vial, that he met Tsimatohadrafy ("not afraid of rivals") -- the prophetess (moasy) who would help him repatriate Ankaraña.

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Dadilahy Said’s tantara continues, offering interesting detail on these events:

Andriansirotso, threatened by Andriantahora, fled to Maroantsetra to seek refuge with his brother and fellow Zafinifotsy Anpanjaka Raholo. While living there and planning a return to Ankaraña with the military support of Raholo, Andriansirotso was made aware of a young girl said to be capable of miracles. Children had recounted how this girl served them bananas that she had fried for them under water. At the Antankaraña Anpanjaka’s request, the girl came to visit him. She was Tsimatohadrafy -- a prophetess (moasy). She told Andriansirotso that his enemy, Andriantahora, had already left Ankaraña, and that the people he had left there were awaiting his return. She gave him a leaf which, when thrown on the ground, set alight a trail of fire leading back to Ankaraña. She told Andriansirotso to follow the trail of fire, and assured him that she would follow his lead six days later to consecrate his kingdom at the trail’s end.

Andriansirotso followed Tsimatohadrafy’s instructions, but fearing that Andriantahora might still be in wait in Ankaraña, he decided to leave his brother Andriantsifahana at Bemarivo (about halfway along the trail to Ankaraña), telling him that if something were to happen (i.e. if Andriantahora were waiting) at least the

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17 I here supplement my own recorded text with that transcribed by Tsitindry (1987) from the same oral source (i.e., Said Abdorahimo Soltoany).
18 Vial’s version, which may itself be based on tantara similar to the one told by Dadilahy Said, forgoes mention (at this point) of Tsimatohadrafy, mentioning only that the remaining Antankaraña (the Antambohitry, Antambazavaka and Antambohipihagna of Dadilahy Said’s tantara) sent word to the east coast to have their Anpanjaka return.
19 The group of people today called Antibemarivo (the people of/from Bemarivo) are recognized as descendants of Andriantsifahana -- the brother of Andriansirotso who stayed behind at Bemarivo on the trip from Maroantsetra to Ankaraña. Many Antibemarivo now live in the village of Antsaravibe, which, located as it is mid-way along the road between Ambilobe (the local town and site of the current
Zafinifotsy line would not die out. Andriantahora had left Ankaraña and Tsimatahodrafy arrived six days later as she had promised. She named the *Ampanjaka's* new settlement Mahavañño ("that which brings prosperity"), and the river to the south of it Mahavavy ("that which makes hesitate" – i.e., that which would make Sakalava invaders from the south hesitate to cross it). She promised the *Ampanjaka* a peaceful reign provided he would gather up all of the guns in the kingdom and bury them in one place²⁰. It is at Mahavañño, says Dadilahy Said, that Tsimatahodrafy instructed Andriansirotso on the preparations and realization of the first *Tsangantsainy*.

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Andriansirotso died in 1710 (Grandidier 1958:277). He is referred to by the posthumous praise name Andrianilikanianarovo – "the prince who makes a thousand voyages". Andriansirotso was succeeded by his son Lamboeny Be – by all accounts, the longest reigning Antankaraña *Ampanjaka* – whose most cited accomplishments, if written accounts (including Tsialana III’s report) are any indicator, were having fathered 33 children and having met Benyowsky – a Polish representative of French interests in Madagascar in the late eighteenth century.

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July 24, 1994 — Maroantsetra

Dominic took me by surprise. When my new hosts at the Hotel Tropicale told me that the woman I was looking for had a grandson, I hadn’t expected him to be a *vazaňa* (a white foreigner), and when I saw he was, I hadn’t expected him to speak Malagasy.

²⁰This is an especially interesting detail in Dadilahy Said’s *tantara* – possibly an anachronism or evidence that guns were already being amassed through trade with Arab and European merchants along the coast.
"Vaza ha Gasy" he acknowledges — "A Malagasy foreigner". Dominic, visiting from France on his summer vacation, is both French and Malagasy — only his grandmother (his mother's mother) is 100% Malagasy. Both she and her daughter (Dominic's mother, herself métis) married Frenchmen.

The trip here was a rough one (two days by bush taxi from Ambilobe to Vohemar then Sambava, then a twin-otter into the blown-out airport here in Maroantsetra), and my stay, thus far, has been uninspiring. Jokes I had heard about this place (regarding the steady rain and lack of any roads in and out of it) aren't so funny amidst constant drizzle and worries about how I'm going to get back to Sambava. No trucks or bush taxis will be passing through for a couple of months, and the return trip of the airplane I took is all booked up. I comfort myself with the assurance that if I can't get out, at least I can get a telephone connection to Sambava. Testimony to the booming coffee and vanilla industries in the area, and the Malagasy state's preferential system of funds allocation, a huge new satellite phone transmitter sits out back of Maroantsetra's tiny post office, dwarfing all other structures around it.

I had come here originally with the intention of speaking with Dominic's grandmother, who, a friend in Diego had told me, had been married to an administrator in the early part of the century. I was wondering if she, being (again as I was informed earlier) a descendent of a local (though no longer prominent) branch of the Zafinifotsy dynasty that had once ruled the area, had ever heard any stories concerning the time when the Antankarana *Ampanjaka Andriansirotsa* sought refuge here. An initial attempt at conversation with the bed-ridden 99 year old woman unearthed nothing but smiles and the fact that I remind her of her daughter. Speaking with Dominic afterwards, his mother flitting in and out of the room, obviously happy to have her son home for a visit, proves far more helpful.

Although he admits that he knows nothing about Andriansirotsa, and little else about his own royal heritage, Dominic nods when I bring up the name Benyowsky. Was it here, in Maroantsetra that the Polish count first established his post (and by extension French trade interests) in northern Madagascar in the late 18th century? I ask. Was this the former site of Louisbourg (the name given
to Benyowsky's settlement)? "Yes, yes" he nods and then "No". He points north, out the double doors of his mother's house and into the rain, and tells me that it was in Andranofotsy (a village on the northern outskirts of Maroantsetra) that Benyowsky had settled.

"Everyone knows it," he tells me with a laugh, "it's where the trees were planted in straight lines."

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In the section that follows, I have chosen to focus primarily on written documents. I do so, most obviously, I must admit, due to the relative dearth of information concerning the era of Lamboeny's rule to be drawn from oral texts. Whether this is a fault of my own research practice or a reflection of the relative peace that seems to have dominated the era (keep in mind that most previously referred to oral texts revolve around conflicts and the resulting movements of royal ancestors), I can't be certain. Ironically, perhaps, this era, to which I have been able to find so little reference in oral sources, is very well represented in written ones.

Most prominent among the sources I refer to through the next section is the journal of Benyowsky (1904) -- a Polish count commissioned by the French government to represent their economic interests in the north. His is a fascinating story, and his writings, as well as those of Mayeur (1912), an explorer in his employ, reveal much of the economic, political and social climate in the north in the late 18th century. Although Ampanjaka before Lamboeny had doubtless had contact with European and Arabic interests prior to meeting Benyowsky, nowhere else is that contact more meticulously recorded. I begin with reference to the mission set Benyowsky by the French.

On the 15th of September, 1772, M. de Boynes, Secretary of State for the Marine department, communicated to me the intentions of his Majesty (the king of France), to make a considerable enterprise on the island of
Madagascar, and, that his Majesty had determined to entrust this expedition to my care (Benyowsky 1904:457).

Benyowsky was commissioned by the French to establish their presence in Madagascar, and, furnished with boats, provisions for a year, trading goods, book-keepers, ammunition, building materials and 120 men (1904:460-1), he set out to do so at the Bai d'Antongil -- site of present day Maroantsetra (on the north-east coast).

Early in his stay, he called together the "chiefs" of the area surrounding his newly established camp. He did so, he writes, to tell them:

that the intentions of the King of France being to favour and take under his protection the inhabitants of Madagascar in which ... he had resolved to form an establishment, to defend them against their enemies; and to keep warehouses, at which they would at all times find, at cheap rates such merchandizes as they might want; namely cloth, liquors, powder, balls, gun flints etc, which should be furnished to them in exchange for the productions of their country (1904:477).

In return for such benevolence, all Benyowsky asked was that the "chiefs" allow their people to sell land to the French, and that trading posts be allowed inland as well as on the coast.21 The deal was a simple one: military support in return for a monopoly on trade. Foreign cloth, alcohol and other luxury goods along with the inevitable guns and ammunition were offered in exchange for the slaves and provisions necessary to keep other French interests in the Indian Ocean and elsewhere afloat22.

It was not long before Benyowsky came into contact with Lamboeny -- then (in the 1770s) still Antankaraña Ampanjaka.

21The first land Benyowsky bought was all that he could surrounding his new post (at Louisbourg -- Maroantsetra). "I proposed to four chiefs to sell me their villages which surrounded Louisbourg. They consented ... and I gave immediate orders for demolishing them. In this manner I became master of the whole point of land, and my people were less exposed to opportunities of debauchery"(1904:479).

22Support offered in terms of man-power was actually minimal. What was supplied were leaders, strategy and (at a cost) ammunition and guns to carry military projects out.
On the 14th [of October, 1775] I received a courier from the Sieur Mayeur, interpreter, ... whom I had sent in boats round the Northern parts of the island ... in order to examine all the bays, harbours, and rivers, the inhabitants, their numbers, forces, industry, productions and mutual interests. I ordered them to continue their journey, until they arrived at the territories of Lambouin, a chief who assumed the title King of the North. My intention was to engage this chief in our interests and to purchase of him the island Nossebe (1904:547).

Mayeur had been sent around the northern tip of Madagascar and down the north-west coast to explore, and if possible secure rights over the Island of Nosy Be which Benyowsky recognized (as Arab traders already had) as a location of strategic importance. His trip was a success. Lamboeny was already aware of Benyowsky's presence on the east coast (as well of the sort of assistance to be found there) and gladly (by Mayeur's account) entered the network of alliances that Benyowsky was rapidly building in the North. Benyowsky's own comment on this new alliance reveals much of what each party sought in the other:

Being thus assured of the attachment of Lambouin, whose interest it was to secure himself against the vexations of the Seclaves [Sakalava], I could depend on a respectable ally, capable of furnishing fifteen or twenty thousand men (1904:548).

At the time of this contact, Lamboeny's authority in the north was under constant threat from Zafnimena rulers south of Ankaraña. Grandidier even suggests that Lamboeny was paying tribute to the rulers of Boina during this era (1958:156). The alliance that the Antankaraña Ampanjaka developed with Benyowsky was undoubtedly intended to assure his own position and authority in the region.
It should be noted that the French were not interested in developing a colony in Madagascar at this point -- they were more concerned with securing a steady flow of rice and slaves for their already established colonies and plantations on l'Île de Bourbon (now Réunion) and l'Île de France (now Mauritius - then still a French holding). While Benyowski had managed to set up a number of trading posts (especially on the East coast where the Dutch and others had already established networks of slave trade during the earlier part of the century), his attempts were deemed a failure by the ministry. He managed to supply only 1500 slaves over his 31 months at Antongil -- a far cry from the 3000 slaves per year he had promised when first undertaking the enterprise (Filliot 1974:71). Several years earlier, Benyowski had received a warning with regard to his activities at Antongil from Turgot, *Ministre de la Marine*, who wrote:

I was greatly surprised to read of your projects for Madagascar, instead of a simple trading post, it is a colony that you intend to establish. You must abandon these ideas and return to what you have been instructed to do. It's not a colony, but a simple trading post that needs to be established ... Your mission must be reduced to a trading post through which you should develop ties with the people of the country and introduce an exchange network (Filliot 1974:71).

The warning, it would seem, went unheeded as this key excerpt from his journal would attest:

On the 11th, I requested all the chiefs to assemble ... At eight, the assembly being full, I required the execution of an act of engagement, under oath, to be made with the insertion of all the names of the chiefs and people present.

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Filliot notes that between 1720 and 1735, the two most frequented points on the Malagasy coast were Foulépointe and Antongil -- most slaves, though, came out of Antongil (1974:70). Benyowski's reasons for choosing Antongil as his base of operations (and subsequently a capital of his kingdom) are clear.
This act was written in the language of the country, with Roman letters, and was as follows:

'This act of oath ... made the 10th of October 1776, appointing and confirming the election of Maurice Augustus Count of Benyowsky, to the rank of Ampansacabe, or supreme chief of the nation, the Kings, Princes, chiefs and people undersigned, being assembled in cabar:

In presence of our people, having consumed the sacrifice, and made the oath of blood, we proclaim, declare, and acknowledge Mauritius Augustus for our supreme chief Ampansacabe, titles extinct since the decease of our holy family of Ramini, which we revive in him and his family. It is for this reason that having consumed the sacrifice, we submit inviolably to his authority; in consequence of which we determine to erect, in our province of Mohavelou, a monument to perpetuate the memory of our union, and to immortalize our holy oath: ... Cursed be our children who shall not obey our present will; cursed be their inheritances, and the fruits of the earth on which they shall subsist: -- may the most horrid slavery confound them.'

I employed the rest of the day in conferring with the chiefs, in order to persuade them to adopt a constitution, which I had determined to propose the following day.

"Lambouin, King of the North" is one of the three "chiefs" Benyowsky credits as having signed this oath.

Benyowsky left Madagascar soon after this oath had been taken. He travelled extensively over the next ten years in search of supporters for his enterprise, and it was

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24 It is interesting that in describing this oath in his report, Tsalana III uses the exact same wording as Benyowsky had in his journal. The report reads "En 1770, le roi Lamboeny contracta un sérment de sang avec Benyowsky et signa un acte d'alliance écrit dans le langage du pays mais en lettres Romains". Tsalana III, we might assume from this, was himself familiar with Benyowsky's diary.
when he returned to Madagascar that he had the most contact with Lamboeny, still Antankaraña *Ampanjaka* at the time. Both Vial (1954) and Grandidier (1958) mention Benyowsky's six months in Ankarana, but they, like me, lack the primary source (Benyowsky's own journal) which would bring most light to the subject. Vial notes that during his stay there, Benyowsky lost many of his men to tropical disease (especially dysentery) (Vial 1954:5). Grandidier adds that during this stay, Lamboeny continued to express his allegiance to Benyowsky under the understanding that relief from Zafinimena harassment would be forthcoming.

Although few written or oral sources (other than Benyowsky's own journal) provide much information concerning the relationship between Benyowsky and Lamboeny, I must stress that it was an important one. It suggests the lengths to which the *Ampanjaka* would go to protect (or re-take) his authoritative position in Ankarana. Benyowsky was only the first (recorded) powerful foreign ally with whom an Antankaraña *Ampanjaka* would establish and nurture relations. We will see, in the following chapter, how a similar strategy was employed throughout the nineteenth century as well.

Unfortunately for Lamboeny, Benyowsky's promises were never realized as he died a year later. Lamboeny himself died in 1790. He is referred to posthumously as Andriamanolotsoarivo -- "the prince who fathered a thousand royalty". As mentioned earlier, in addition to having been a contemporary of Benyowsky, Lamboeny also had 33 children and is the ancestor to which members of the currently ruling royal family trace their lineage.

According to Tsialana III's report, Lamboeny was succeeded by his son Tehimbola in 1790. Once again, Zafinimena incursions from the south disrupted his reign. Different sources tell different versions of the conflict. Tsialana III's report suggests that it was once again Andriantahora who returned to battle Tehimbola, but such a match-up seems unlikely, the Zafinimena king having last been mentioned alive (and ruling) more than a century earlier. Grandidier asserts that the conflict in question arose after Tehimbola refused to cut his hair at the death of Boina's female ruler, Ravahiny, as was required of him, or as would have been required of him had he recognized her sovereignty. Refusing to comply with *fomba* (custom) in recognition of a supposedly overarching sovereign has
at times been an important expression of resistance in Madagascar. In response to the affront, Ravahiny's grandson and successor, Tsimaloma, sent an army to Ankaraña to secure the Antankarana Ampanjaka's compliance. Versions differ on the outcome of this conflict. Both Grandidier and Vial suggest that while initially defeated, Tehimbola was eventually victorious with the aid of the prophetess Tsimatohadrafy. Tsialana III's report is less detailed on this matter. It states simply that a peace was reached between Tehimbola and Tsimaloma, but that young Antankaraña were constantly pressuring Tsimatohadrafy to use her magical powers and start the war up again.

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According to the tantara of Dadilahy Said Tehimbola pleaded with Tsimatohadrafy to start up a new war:

Tehimbola told Tsimatohadrafy that none of the young men in his kingdom knew how to fight, and that a few skirmishes might help them learn. Tsimatohadrafy was incredulous and refused his request to start a war, reminding him that it was his grandfather (Andriansirotso) who had sought the peace she granted in the first place. Tehimbola continued to pressure the prophetess, eventually resorting to threats to get his way. Tsimatohadrafy gave in and told him where to find all the guns that had been buried in Andriansirotso's time.

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Tehimbola died in 1802 leaving no obvious heir and a dispute over power that would have repercussions over the better part of two centuries. He is posthumously referred to as Andriamandresiarivo - "the prince who conquered a thousand."

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Dadilahy Said's *tantara* explains the troubles that arose at the time of Tehimbola's death.

Tehimbola had a son, Tsimatahotro, who was far too young to take on his father's role as *Ampanjaka*. Boanahajy, a brother of the deceased *Ampanjaka*, was the next choice. He moved the capital from Mahavagnono (present day Ambilobe) some 40km north to Marivorahogno where he was then living. After a while, Boanahajy's sister's son, named Tsialana, approached the *Ampanjaka* requesting land so that he could provide for his mother and family. The *Ampanjaka* granted it, and the two soon became very close. The bond between uncle and nephew was broken, however, when Tsialana learned that Boanahajy had selected a distantly related member of the royal family living in the far north-west of the region, to be his main advisor (*lefitry*).

"*Io naviary aly io!*" Dadilahy Said says "That was the beginning of the fighting!"

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Tsialana III paints a slightly different picture of Boanahajy. In his report, Boanahajy is described as a usurper of royal power. As the brother of Tehimbola (who had no children), and son of Lamboeny, Boanahajy was as viable a candidate as any to take on the position. He was not, however, chosen or approved of by the majority of the people, and was thus seen as unfit to rule. This version is slightly different than that offered by Dadilahy Said, in that, although the following events described were much the same, in Dadilahy Said's version, Boanahajy had the support of the people when he was named *Ampanjaka*, and only lost that support when Tsialana rose to challenge it. What the two accounts share in common, however, is the point I mean to stress. In both cases, the legitimate *Ampanjaka* was the one who had the support of the region's inhabitants.

Boanahajy ruled until overthrown by his two nephews -- Tsialana joined by his cousin Andrianjalalahy. While Tsialana, the son of Lamboeny's daughter Sozo, took on the role of *Ampanjaka* after his uncle's ousting, the cousin who had helped him, Andrianjalalahy (himself the son of Lamboeny's son Lehilahy) took a subordinate role (what Tsialana III's
report calls a " roilet") as authority over the southern part of Antankarana territory. The distinction between the two, and the way in which each is reckoned as royalty (i.e., through female and male links respectively) is something that is still recognized, important and, in some instances, disputed today.

At around the same time that Boanahajy and Tsialana were struggling for power in the north, the kingdom of Imerina was gaining in prominence in Madagascar's highlands. Imerina's origins have been traced to the 16th century when villages and clans in the highlands began grouping themselves into fairly large chiefdoms, eventually uniting under one ruler. After a period of "almost complete anarchy" (Mutibwa 1974:8) in the late eighteenth century in which internal disputes paralysed the kingdom, Andrianampoinimerina (leader of one of the disputing factions) managed, through force and diplomacy, to unite the kingdom as it had never been before and usher in an era of expanding influence. It is Andrianampoinimerina who is credited with having established the institutions (including the royal army) and flexible social structure that accounted for Imerina's success over the next century. It is also he who is credited with having made the famous proclamation, on his deathbed, that the only border of his kingdom was the sea (implying that Imerina would control all of Madagascar). It was during this period Antananarivo was established as capital of Imerina (it remains capital of the Malagasy Republic today) and it was from there that Andrianampoinimerina's son, Radama, began his quest to fulfill his father's dying wish.

A major part of Radama's expansionist project in the early part of the nineteenth century involved the courting of foreign, especially English, favor. In 1817, he signed a treaty of friendship and alliance with the English governor of Mauritius25. The treaty was important to both signing parties. While Radama received official recognition as the king of (all) Madagascar and won a very powerful ally (and arms-dealer) at a time when he most needed it, the English sought to eradicate Madagascar's lucrative slave trade and, by recognizing Imerina as an independent state in control of the entire island, deny the French any prospect of colonization at a time when European competition for influence in Africa and the Indian ocean was reaching its height. With the advent of the treaty, a British

25Mauritius, formerly I' lle de France, had passed into English hands after the treaty of Paris of 1814.
representative, James Hastie (the man whose journal will shortly be under discussion), was stationed at Antananarivo, and the London Missionary Society began its work of conversion and discouraging the slave trade in the Malagasy highlands. Perhaps most important to Radama's expansionist project, however, was the influx of British arms and training to Imerina's military. It was not long before the new and improved royal army had campaigned through much of the island, subduing less well equipped forces and securing their leaders' loyalty and recognition of Radama as sovereign. It was during this period of expansion that Radama's army traveled to the far north and came into contact with Tsialana.

It should be noted parenthetically that, according to Esoavelomandrosoro (1989), "tribal" divisions in Madagascar began to develop at about this time. It was then, in the early nineteenth century, that much of the Malagasy population was first divided into named entities by a government that "in its policies and rhetoric opposed the Merina population and [other] conquered populations" (1989:261) in the interests of administration.

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In July 1987, a conference concerning the history of northern of Madagascar was held in Diego (Antsiranana). Papers presented at the conference dealt exclusively with the north, ranging in topic from a study of venereal disease in Diego in the early 20th century to a retelling and analysis of Dadilahy Said's story of the origin of the Tsangantsainy (already referred to in this section — Tsitindry 1987). Among these were two, presented by Ramiandrasoa and Ratsilavaka (both historians from the highlands), which were especially bold in their call for a re-examination of the taken-for-granted assumptions concerning the north in the early nineteenth century. These papers suggested that early nineteenth century relations between Imerina and the indigenous populations of the north were less antagonistic than they are often seen as being today. Both papers used as their primary source the journal of James Hastie (British representative in Antananarivo at the time) who accompanied Radama on his tour of the north in 1823.
Ramiandrasoa's paper is especially relevant here. "It is in 1823", he writes, "that Ankaraña was officially and definitively integrated in the kingdom of Madagascar with the consent of its Prince and inhabitants" (1987:4). He backs up this claim with reference to the passages in Hastie's journal that recount Radama's arrival at and penetration of Tsialana's hiding place in the caves of the Ankaraña massif. Tsialana is said to have explained that he had no intention of opposing Radama, but was actually in hiding from what he thought were Zafinimena invaders from Sambirano. He is then described by Hastie as swearing his devotion to the Merina Ampanjaka and with the assurance of Merina protection (as part of incorporation in the Merina kingdom), handing over many of the weapons intended to defend Ankaraña against the Zafinimena of Sambirano.

Although Hastie, as a representative of British interests in Madagascar, was by no means an impartial observer, the contents of his journal entries concerning Radama's encounter with Tsialana would be hard to dispute. Still, what is controversial about Ramiandrasoa's paper, and what caused a commotion at the above mentioned 1987 conference, is/what it implies. Ramiandrasoa suggests that the seemingly eternal conflict considered to exist between Antankaraña and Merina is in fact nothing more than a politically motivated creation of nineteenth century French administrator-historians. Ramiandrasoa calls us to consider the works of frequently cited writers such as Guillain (1845), in light of their missions in the region. He suggests the possibility that their priorities lay in finding and documenting incidents of opposition (and not of cooperation) between Antankaraña and Merina as a way of justifying French involvement in the region. As I will point out in the next chapter, were Antankaraña not represented as suffering eternally at the hands of the Merina, no French presence would have been required in the north, and no legal foot-hold would have been available to them in their struggle with the English over the control of Madagascar.

Let us, then, consider one of these biased accounts. Guillain (1845) begins his version of Radama's arrival in the north by noting that at that time, Tsialana was already paying tribute to Sakalava royalty to the south. The Ampanjaka's submission to the invading Hova, therefore, was just a matter of trading one "yoke" for another. As Ramiandrasoa had suggested, the rest of Guillain's account refers to the Hova "invasion"
(1845:154) of Ankarafia, and the attempts of the local people to turn back the aggressors. Tsialana is described as "brave and intelligent", fighting to shake the Merina strangle-hold by entering alliances with other local leaders and leading raids on Hova bases. To no avail though, Guillain notes, for whatever successes they saw were short-lived as internal disputes ultimately split up the alliances that had won them. Tsialana's precarious position at this time was only made more so, Guillain adds, by an ongoing conflict with the uncle (Boanahajy) he had deposed.

Ramiandrasoa's point, that Guillain's account must be scrutinized, is a good one, and one that is not that often stated. Still, to claim that the Antankaraña were incorporated into the Merina kingdom by an act of allegiance on the part of their *Ampanjaka* almost twenty years before the French arrival on Nosy Be is one thing. To claim that that act of allegiance meant anything twenty years later is another. Diplomacy in the north in the nineteenth century, I suspect, was of a different sort than Ramiandrasoa imagines. While the Merina administration may have adopted "Europe's own diplomatic techniques" (Mutibwa:xiv), there is no indication that nineteenth century Antankaraña *Ampanjaka* ever did the same. As Lamboeny had done before him, Tsialana engaged in cooperation and conflict with others as a way of safeguarding his position and authority in the region.

Tsialana died in the late 1820s (exact dates differ in different sources). Although rumored to have been poisoned by Hova invaders, Guillain (1845:155) claims it was more likely smallpox that killed him. He was given the posthumous name Andriamitoharivo -- "the prince who protected a thousand".

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26 I am told that his paper (the one I have summarized here) was poorly received at the Antsiranana conference, and that some questioned the prudence of presenting such a controversial argument months before the approaching *Tsangantsainy* of 1987. Neither his nor Ratsilavaka's papers were published in the special issue of *Omaly sy Anio* mentioned here. I thank Noël Gueunier for bringing their work and the reactions it inspired to my attention.

27 Laporte attributes this posthumous name to Tsialana's offering refuge to Boanamaka -- a Sakalava Bemazava ruler driven north from Sambirano by Zafinimena incursions from the south.
CHAPTER 4

Negotiating Autonomy in the Nineteenth Century

May 23, 1994 - Ambodimadiso

Judging by the route Abdou and I took to get here, I can see why people claim this to be the most isolated part of the Ampanjaka's domain. Having barely made it over the mountains before sundown, we create a mild commotion upon arrival. "Ampanjiky avy haliña" — "visitors arriving at night". We track down Felisse, the rangahy in the village and after all the proper introductions and greetings, explain the purpose of our visit. We have come, says Abdou (with subtleties of politeness that I haven't mastered), in search of stories about the past.

Within the hour, a group of 7 men has gathered in Felisse's plank-floored house, and a large group of curious children and teens have gathered outside its open doorways. Although I had not intended any of these meetings to be so formal, this is the form they've taken over much of our trip. Feeling a bit of an inquisitor, I ask the series of questions I have been asking in each village, doing my best to couch them in the proper and respectful terms.

"How" I ask, "did Antankarana Ampanjaka come to live in the north of Madagascar?"

Whispers all around until Felisse finally answers with a nervous chuckle.

"You live in Ambatoharasana with Said Abdourahimo (Dadilahy Said)" he says, "He's the one you should ask."

I persist, and, gradually, a basic narrative emerges. As has been the case throughout most of these sessions the focus is on the conflict with the Hova (Merina). Felisse explains how the Hova Ampanjaka wanted the Antankarana mast (sainy — the mast raised every five years at the Tsangantsainy), and attacked the Antankarana
Ampanjaka, Lamboeny¹, to get it. Half of the fleeing royal family drowned themselves in the water², while the other half escaped to the caves of the Ankaraña massif to hide from the invaders. The Antankaraña Ampanjaka then led his people over to Nosy Mitsio, leaving the mast but bringing the flags with him — when you're fleeing, Felisse suggests, there's no time to stop for a mast. While on Nosy Mitsio, the Ampanjaka made a blood-bond (fatidra) with the French Ampanjaka, and accompanied by French soldiers he returned to the mainland to defeat the Merina.

Although details differ, the basic elements of Felisse's narrative correspond to those in other narratives that I've been collecting on this village to village walk. His words represent a fairly typical sketch of the Antankaraña past. Like others of its kind, it features the Antankaraña Ampanjaka (who, as in the above case, is not always named correctly) in conflict with the Hova and in cooperation with the French; it notes the Ampanjaka's hiding in the caves and subsequent flight to Nosy Mitsio; and it specifies that it was a fatidra — a blood-bond that renders non-biologically related individuals as close as family — that was established between the Antankaraña and the French Ampanjaka. In all of these sketches, it was thanks to the cooperation of the French that the Ampanjaka was able to return to the mainland to re-establish his authority.

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The sixty years following Tsialana's death in 1829 saw many changes in Madagascar. Among other things, Merina sovereignty over the island was nominally established, the French found themselves a tenuous foothold in the north, and the Antankaraña Ampanjaka of the time, walking the line between Merina and French interests, was drawn deep into the arena of international diplomacy. In the following chapter, I show that though far from the happenings in the Merina court in Antananarivo (on which most texts on Malagasy history focus) and even further from the seat of the

¹This should be Tsimiharo. The mistake is interesting for it shows, as other elements of Felisse's story will, that it is the theme and the dynamic of relations that is more important than the actual actors.
²Again, an interesting mistake in Felisse's narrative. The drowning he refers to is most often associated with the "Antandrano" — referring to an earlier royal family who drowned themselves rather than give in to an invading Merina army.
French foreign ministry, events in the north during the mid to late 19th century were of
great significance to both these powers. It was in the north that the French were first able
to establish legitimate and lasting claims to territory through treaties with local leaders.

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Tsimiharo, the eldest son of Tzialana, succeeded his father as Ampanjaka. In
response to abuses of authority by officers of Merina bases in the north, Tsimiharo
accomplished what Guillain (1845) and others claimed Tzialana never could -- he led a
lasting revolt against the Merina. He was joined in these efforts by Tsiomeko, the
Zafinimena Ampanjaka of Boeny (then living in exile on Nosy Be) who provided men to
accompany Antankarana warriors on their raids of the Merina bases. Though initially
successful, these raids eventually provoked a large scale Merina retaliation, driving the
Antankarana Ampanjaka and his followers into hiding in the caves of the Ankaraña
massif.

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Dadilahy Said's tantara continues.

The Hova invaded the north with many soldiers, and when they demanded
provisions from Tsimiharo, the Antankarana Ampanjaka refused. The fighting then began.
Every time they fought, the Merina were defeated.

"Antankarana ka-ka!" Dadilahy Said exclaims, "Antankarana were unstoppable
["monsters"]!

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3Accounts differ as to Tsimiharo's age at the time of accession -- Grandidier (1958:158) claims he was 18,
4Rasoamiramanana (1987) attributes this turn in Tsimiharo's fortunes to the same causes that Grandidier
had held responsible for Tzialana's failure -- inferior military organization, and insurgent "princes" within
the Antankarana royal family.
Seeing that they were no match for the Antankaraña soldiers, the Merina left and later returned with new soldiers of their own. Although they were called Menabe, they were really from Boina. They were called lava’lohaliky (long knees), and they carried shields (bitaly) with them. They were tough. You could shoot at them and they wouldn't be hit. You could cut them and they wouldn't split. That is when Tsimiharo, with the advice of two of his major advisors (manantany), entered the caves to hide.

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April 7, 1994 - Ambatoharañana

Babany’ Ysoufiany tells me he'd know my trail anywhere. I look behind us and see what he means. Mine are the only footprints, of the many left along this stretch of dusty road, that have an American brand-name written across them.

We're on our way north-east of Ambatoharañana to pick up the hats we had ordered together a few days ago -- it's almost time to take in the rice crop, and we'll need the protection of a wide brim to work through the hottest hours. As we approach the compound of houses where the woman we had commissioned with the task lives, I ask Babany Ysoufiany about the descendants of Njakalagnitry — the prince said to have betrayed Tsimiharo by disclosing the Amanjakas hiding place in the caves of the Ankaraña massif to officers of the Merina army. Babany Ysoufiany recognizes what I'm trying to get at immediately.

"You mean them" he says, pointing to our destination.

I have heard Dadilahy Said's account of the past treachery before. While Tsimiharo was in hiding in the caves, a brother of his still on the outside made a deal with the invading Merina army. He offered to reveal the location of his brother's hiding place in exchange for being named Amanjakas under the new Merina administration. The

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5The traitorous brother’s actions in Dadilahy Said's account of these events are justified somewhat by the acknowledgment that all other Amanjakas along the north west coast had accepted Merina sovereignty (fa
Merina agreed to this arrangement, and, with his help, found their way into the caves. Babany Ysoufiany's account is pretty much the same (though less detailed). I ask him still more, this time about the present. Yes, he says, it's true that the descendants of Njakalagniry are not allowed to enter the caves that had once been Tsimiharo's refuge — they, like the Merina, are forever restricted from doing so. He describes how, at the last ritual visit to the caves in preparation for the 1993 Tsangantsainy, a group of celebrants accompanied by a member of this group were lost and almost killed. He also tells me that although some among them have lived in Ambatoharañana in the past, they now prefer to live outside the village on their own. These living arrangements are supposedly a matter of preference, not of restricted access to land but still, he agrees as we pass through the gate and into their compound, their isolation from the rest of the royal family is striking.

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Dadilahy Said's account of Tsimiharo's hiding in the caves and eventual escape from the mainland is more detailed than that offered in any written source. Tsimiharo was led to a sunken forest within the caves by one of his advisors, and seeing that there was arable land and fresh water available there, agreed to settle. The Hova, meanwhile, bolstered by Njakalangiry's betrayal, conceived a plan to get to the

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*tsy mamaly* — they don't answer), and to continue the revolt that Tsimiharo had started would only cost the lives of the people *(mandany vahoaka).*

6 Following a survey in the 1950s, Raymond Decary describes the caves in which Tsimiharo sought refuge, and speculates as to what might have occurred more than a century earlier: "The cave consists of a gallery approximately 1000 metres long without stalactites. Not far from the entrance, there is a bottleneck with an opening barely 3 or 4 metres wide, not unlike a fire-step, which acted as the first point of defense. At the second well which cuts into the vault of the cave, (Merina) soldiers attempted to build a wall and block in their enemy (Tsimiharo) whom they knew to be hiding in a dead-end corridor. [...] However, the task proved to be beyond their capabilities and they soon gave up. The Antankarana were in their last retreat, but found themselves perfectly protected because at the other end of the cave was a vertical exit, a veritable chimney that, although climbed with difficulty, was easily defensible. This chimney opens halfway up the cliff [...], giving access to a massive cave-in of about 300 metres in diameter. It is known today as Tsimiharo's hole. There is another exit which meets up with a second cave-in, that of Antsaranandrana, through which the Ankara River passes, but the Merina did not know about it. In Tsimiharo's hole, [...] the Antankarana established the *doany* (capital) on a plane; remnants of their occupation can today be found at the back of Tsimiharo's hole." (Grandidier 1958:233)
clearing within the massif without danger of getting lost in the maze of passages that leads to it. They fastened heavy cloth around their feet and climbed the sharp limestone walls of the massif in order to descend on the hiding Ampanjaka's settlement from above. Seeing the Hova approach, the Ampanjaka and his people escaped in the night.

The Ampanjaka suggested they seek refuge on the island of Nosy Be (where Tsiomeko was then living in exile), but a prophetess (Tsiambelo) appeared at the exit of the cave, and told him that they should go to Nosy Mitsio (a much smaller island to the north of Nosy Be) instead.

"Let me tell you" Dadilahy Said credits Tsiambelo as saying to one of the king's advisors, "the Ampanjaka wants to go to Nosy Be, but if he goes to the island without birds [Nosy Mitsio], his kingdom will know no end."

The Ampanjaka and his followers took her advice and headed for the coast, crossing over to Nosy Mitsio a few at a time in sailing canoes.

In another version of this story (Gueunier 1988:30), Dadilahy Said has recounted how it was in the caves that Tsimiharo first embraced Islam. At the advice of an in-law familiar with Islam, he prayed while in the caves, and promised that he would convert if he and his followers were delivered from their predicament.

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July 6, 1994 - Andavakabihy (Nosy Mitsio)

"I need money, and you offer me a cigarette." Fahatelo Bakarimamy says as he takes one of my few remaining Good Looks. That he's not smiling as he says it takes me by surprise. The week I've spent here on Nosy Mitsio has passed smoothly thus far, and I'm unprepared for cynicism.

This is the smallest village I've visited on the island thus far. I ask Bakarimamy, seated on an overturned outrigger in the shade of a palm, who founded it. I expect him to answer that it, like all the other villages I've visited here, was
founded originally by a member of the royal family who had crossed over from the mainland with Tsimiharo at the time of the war with the Merina. I'm wrong.

"I did," he answers, and goes on to point out the houses of his various children and grandchildren. The abandoned ones, he tells me, belong to several of his grandchildren who have left Nosy Mitsio for the mainland in search of work at the sugar refinery (SIRAMA) on the coast. I've heard the same sort of story from several other older people here on the island. The more time I spend here, the more striking its demographics seem. Compared to the mainland villages I've spent any time in, the villages on Nosy Mitsio are noticeably lacking in young men and women.

As we sit and finish my last few cigarettes, I ask Bakarimany about the time when Tsimiharo first came here. He prefices his account by saying he doesn't know everything, but ends up telling me a good deal. Tsimiharo and his people went first to Ankareha — a small loaf island off the west coast of Nosy Mitsio. Arriving there, they had no fresh water, so Tsimiharo called on a representative of the Antambazavaka group (one of the three original groups said to have inhabited Ankarana at the arrival of Zafinifotsy royalty in the north) to pronounce an invocation requesting water. Fresh water sprung from the ground, and they were able to settle there briefly. After a time, the Ampanjaka and his family moved onto Nosy Mitsio itself, spreading out and establishing villages. Tsimiharo himself settled at the village now called Ampasindava — it became his doany (capital) on Nosy Mitsio. Ampasindava, Bakarimany reminds me, is the village where we all stayed last year at the time of the ceremonial visit to the island. It was from there that the living Ampanjaka informed his ancestors, entombed in caves on Nosy Lava (a small island just north of Nosy Mitsio), of the then approaching Tsangantsainy.

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Tsimiharo's diplomatic forays over his first few years on Nosy Mitsio were directed at a wide range of potential allies. In conjunction with Tsiomeko he first sent emissaries to the Sultan of Zanzibar on the east coast of Africa. Offering rights to territory, and the promise of money in exchange for military assistance, the representatives of the two Malagasy rulers managed to secure only weak and short-lived aid. The Sultan ordered a single warship to Nosy Be, but after several damaging skirmishes with Merina posted on
the mainland opposite, it soon returned to Zanzibar. Florent (1987) reports that Tsimiharo also sent emissaries to Mauritius at this time to seek similar assistance from the English. It was not until Admiral de Hell, then governor of Bourbon, sent Passot to explore the North of Madagascar and re-establish a French presence on the island that Tsimiharo and Tsiomeko would find as reliable an ally as the time could offer.

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Dadilahy Said expands on these earliest diplomatic missions:

After reaching Nosy Mitsio, Tsimiharo decided, again with the advice of his main advisors, that foreign aid should be sought in order to repatriate the mainland. He first sent his brother Tsiambany to England. Arriving there, Tsiambany passed on Tsimiharo's message, offering the English rights to Antankaraña land in the north in return for their military assistance. The English agreed to this proposal, but informed Tsiambany that they would not be able to go to Madagascar for three months. They encouraged the Ampanjaka's younger brother to stay for those three months, and paid him (in gold) for every day he stayed there. The English took care of him. They gave him servants and a place to live.

"Tamana baka izy." Dadilahy Said explains -- "He was happy there."

Meanwhile, on Nosy Mitsio, Tsimiharo and his advisors decided, having not heard anything from England, to send yet another brother, Tsimañeriñy, to the Sultan Barakasy - - the king of the black Arabs (Arabo joby) living in Zanzibar (on Africa's east coast). Tsimañeriñy's request there was also met with provisional approval. In this case, though, it was the month of Ramadan that delayed the Sultan's actions. He invited Tsimañeriñy to

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7In 1997 I asked Dadilahy Said's daughter (Moanamisy) for greater detail on Tsiambany and Antankaraña-English relations in the 19th century. She shook her head and indicated with a familiar gesture that Tsiambany drank a lot, and implied that the English probably had no idea what he was doing.
stay in Zanzibar, and like the English had done for Tsiambany, offered him money, food and lodging. Tsimaeerzy stayed.

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As it had been in the eighteenth century, French activity in Madagascar in the early nineteenth century was restricted to the island's eastern and southern coasts. While the British developed official ties with the ever-stronger Merina court, the French made no such efforts, satisfied with their already well-established trade networks. They certainly never went so far as the British had in recognizing Radama's sovereignty over all Madagascar -- to do so would have damaged their own long-established claims on the east coast. Franco-Merina relations remained cordial until the late 1820s, when repeated conflicts on the east coast culminated in the French bombardment of the Merina empire's largest eastern port, Tamatave. The bombardment led to the Merina court's banning of all legal trade with French nationals, and refusal to receive any French envoys seeking improved relations (Mutibwa 1974:24). It took another 10 years before the French sought to re-establish themselves in Madagascar. This time, though, they headed for the west coast.

On the 29th of September, 1839, capitaine Passot dropped anchor off the coast of Nosy Be, a large island about 100 km south of the much smaller Nosy Mitsio. His orders, as reprinted by Decary in his study of the history of the colonization of the island (1960:15), reveal French intentions at that time. Passot was meant to establish relations with the island's "chief", and determine whether or not he had "given in to the domination of the Hova". That done, Passot was meant to offer sympathy and arms:

Make him understand that France, (a country) that has always protected the chiefs of various tribes of Madagascar, sympathizes with his loss of authority, and will supply him with aid in the form of arms, artillery, boats,

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there. She noted, sadly, that if it had not been for his habits, it might have been the English who took over Madagascar.
and help him direct his operations to assure victory over his enemy, the tribe of Hovas, and to return to him the territories he had lost (Decary 1960:15).

Passot’s mission had wider implications. It represented a French desire to re-establish their importance in the Indian Ocean in the face of British rivalry. By seeking out political units that had not yet succumbed to Merina, as de Hell and Passot supposed the sovereigns of Nosy Be and Nosy Mitsio represented, and supporting them, the French sought to establish a defensible (in all ways) foothold on the island. As Ramiandrasoa (1987) pointed out in his earlier cited controversial paper, it was the French who sought out the alliances as much as the local rulers.

Passot’s first treaty was made with Tsiomeko on Nosy Be. In it, the Zafinimena Ampanjaka ceded her rights over territories there and on the mainland to the king of France in return for the promise of French support⁸. On the 5th of March, 1841, the French officially took possession of the island, planting a mast and raising the tri-couleur for the first time amid great ceremony and celebration. One of the French attending the event, capitaine Jehenne, wrote in a letter to the governor of Bourbon:

the national flag flies as of this morning on Nosy Be. Saluted [...] by a twenty-one gun salute on board the Prévoyante and by the acclaim of an immense gathering of Sakalava brought to the place by order of their Queen, this flag from today on protects a population that calls to it ... and gives France a naval position at the entrance to the Indian Ocean (Decary 1960:19-20).

In addition to the French contingent, the gathering included Tsiomeko, her advisors, supporters, and possibly even her ally Tsimiharo who is credited, on that same day, as

⁸Gueunier’s analysis of a draft of this treaty, as recorded in the notebook of Passot’s ship Doctor, reveals more of the nature of this treaty. Tsiomeko offered the French forest (ala) in territories she claimed rights over — cleared land was to remain under her authority. Gueunier’s comments and citations of informants
having signed a treaty very similar to Tsiomeko's. Passot himself describes the conditions under which the treaty with Tsimiharo was first drafted:

Arriving at [Tsimiharo's]^9, I had the prince complete an act of transfer of the kingdom of Ankara, including all the Northern part of Madagascar, from the great Manahare river in the east to the cap d'Ambre and from there to Bavatou Be in the west including also the islands along the west coast, in which his ancestors had reigned for all time. I did not discuss the limits nor the validity of the prince's rights over them; I allowed this brave chief the satisfaction of giving us everything he wanted, and it was under his dictation that my interpreter transcribed his act of transfer (Decary 1960:20).

By Passot's description, there seems to have been little negotiation involved in the preparation of the document. The words of the treaty are attributed to Tsimiharo alone — there is certainly no indication in it of French attitudes towards Tsimiharo, or of their intentions in the north.

The treaty in question was supposedly signed the day of the first flag-raising in Nosy Be. Transcribed here from Tsalana III's report, it reads:

I, Tsimiarou, son of Tsialou King of Ankara, of Nossi-Be, Nossi-Mitsio, Nossi-Faly and other islands in the region of our mainland possessions,

Declare to you, in the presence of my Brothers and Elders, that I cede to His Majesty King Louis Philippe I, King of the French, all of my rights over the mainland of Madagascar, those rights which I hold from my ancestors

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^9Tsimiharo I's name is written as "Simiare" in this and other documents of the time.
We ask to be considered by the Great King as French subjects, and to be treated as such.

I am convinced that His Majesty the Great King to whom I make a gift of my estate, will consider me as his son, and will protect me against all enemies, and distance me from all harm.

I am convinced also that His Majesty the King of the French will extend his beneficence over my subjects. We will carry henceforth the name of the French; whoever shall be the enemy of the Great King will also be our enemy and we will raise our arms against them; whoever shall be his ally shall be ours as well and we will aid them as well as we can.

If His Majesty the King of the French plants his flag anywhere on our lands, we swear by God and the last judgment that we will defend it til the death.

I request that His Majesty the Great King send soldiers to stay on Nossi-Mitsiou and a war-ship to protect us against the Hova [Merina] and all other enemies.

This act has been overseen by me, Tsimiarou, in the presence of M. Passot, officer of the Governor of Bourbon, of M. Jehenne, commander of the King's ship, La Prevoyante, and of all the officers of this ship.

Tsialana III's report notes that in commemoration of this treaty and the flag-raising on Nosy Be, the French king Louis Philippe sent as gifts to Tsimi-haro a "beautifully crafted sabre of honor, a general's costume complete with epaulettes and a bicorné hat [a sort of hat worn by naval officers]."

The treaty transcribed here is quite different from the one Lamboeny had made with Benyowsky in the late eighteenth century. Whereas Benyowsky was, at the time of his treaty, first and foremost a representative of his own (utopian) interests in Madagascar, Passot and others on Nosy Be were truly representative of the French government -- a government whose official stance towards Madagascar had changed considerably in the years since Benyowsky. The 1841 treaty was made at the bidding of the governor of
Bourbon under orders from Paris to establish rights over territory in the north. It was part of a strategy intended, in Decary’s words (1960:14), to “counter-balance British activity” in Madagascar and elsewhere in the Indian ocean. As the British had long since allied themselves with the highland Merina, and had by treaty recognized the Merina king as sovereign of all Madagascar, the French sought to establish alliances with other leaders who still claimed a degree of autonomy. No matter that Tsimiharo’s father had sworn allegiance to Radama decades earlier, or that the land Tsiomeko offered in her treaty had long been incorporated into the Merina empire; as these leaders continued to claim independence on their respective island refuges, they were just what the French needed to re-establish a presence in Madagascar. The treaty with Tsimiharo was especially significant for, although they had already established themselves on Nosy Be thanks to the treaty with Tsiomeko, “France had no interest in having another foreign power installing themselves on his (Tsimiharo’s) land so close to Nosy Be” (Decary 1960:21). Over the decades leading up to the establishment of a protectorate over and then colonization of Madagascar, the rights guaranteed the French in the treaties cited here were repeatedly called upon to justify their presence and to support their interests on the island.

While the 1841 treaty was significant to the French in the pursuit of their interests in Madagascar, it was also significant to Tsimiharo and his interests. Viewed in retrospect, this treaty was in some ways as significant to Tsimiharo as the earlier mentioned 1817 British-Merina treaty had been to Radama, in that it established him as a legitimate ruler in the documentation of a European power. While the ultimate source of the Ampanjaka’s power lay then, as it does now, in the willingness of people in the region to recognize his authority, there is no doubt that the nineteenth century influx of new interests altered the dynamics of royal power in the north considerably. In addition to fulfilling the traditional role of Ampanjaka to his people, Tsimiharo was henceforth representative and negotiator of their interests in a wholly new context — at least the French must have perceived him as such. By this treaty, the Antankarana Ampanjaka became a player (albeit a bit player) on the global stage.

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August 24, 1992 — Ambatoharana.

The time has come to make it official. Jobylava has called Karanibe "vady" (brother-in-law) for years, and after this morning's ceremony, the appellation will be wholly appropriate. We've gathered at the back of the boutique operated by Karanibe and his wife Dadiny Mariata. Men, wearing kitamby and Muslim hats, are seated around a coffee table in the small room usually reserved for beer drinkers, and women, with the exception of Dadiny Mariata, fill the floor of an adjoining room, viewing the events through a wide doorway. Dadilahy Said presides over us all. We're here, he explains, to join Jobylava and Dadiny Mariata, sitting now across from each other holding right hands, as brother and sister.

Dadilahy Said reads the prayer in Arabic from a small blue book eliciting "Aminas" from the rest of us. When finished, Antoasy (second only to Dadilahy Said in his knowledge of things Silamo) raises his arm from below the joined couple, breaking the bond of their right hands. This done, Jobylava hands Dadilahy an envelope containing a token sum of money, and Lipo circulates with a small perfume bottle Dadyny Mariata had retrieved from the front room — we each get two sprits.

As the party breaks up, Dadilahy Said offers an unsolicited exposé on fatidra. It makes two people even closer than family, he explains, and failure to fulfill the obligations of the relationship will result in punishment from God and the ancestors. The first fatidra, he says, was made between the Prophet (Mohammed) and the angel Gabriel. Once again the line I had expected to exist between traditional and Muslim practice seems absent. He continues by describing another key fatidra of the past: The one made between Tsimiharo and RafaIipo (King Louis Philippe of France), he explains to me is at the root of the long-standing association between Antankarana and the French.

We squeeze out into the sunlight and, as requested, I take some pictures of the newly united brother and sister. After only a month and a half, almost all of my film is used up.

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Tsialana III's report recounts events arising from Tsimiharo's alliance with the French. He claims that certain Sakalava "princes" admonished Tsimiharo for entering into such friendly relations with the French, and despite the Antankarana *Ampanjaka*'s assurances that he had only ceded territory that was rightfully his to cede, describes how these malcontents attempted to drive the French off of Nosy Be. Tsimiharo responded by leading an attack (himself at the head, the report stresses) against these enemies of the French (on Nosy Faly) and driving them off. In return for his heroic defense of French interests, he was named Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur, and awarded a monthly stipend of 100 francs.

A year after the signing of the treaty, one of Tsimiharo's brothers, Tsiambany, was taken to visit the island of Mauritius by an English missionary in an attempt, Decary speculates (1960:30), by the British to convince Tsimiharo to revoke the concessions made in his treaty with the French. Decary's speculations may be justified for though the British recognized Nosy Be as a French colony (Mutibwa 1974:29), there's no indication that they did the same for Nosy Mitsio. Perhaps it was in response to this wooing that, later in that same year, the French brought a party, led by Tsimiharo himself, to Bourbon (now Reunion), their own showpiece in the Indian Ocean.

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Dadilahy Said begins his account of Tsimiharo's trip to Bourbon by recounting how the *Ampanjaka* was having doubts about his brothers, still living high off the hog in England and Zanzibar.

"They are of the same mother and father as I, and are thus not restricted from my position [i.e., *Ampanjaka*]. What if they have found somebody to help?", Tsimiharo

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10 What the report fails to mention is that the rulers of these other Sakalava groups had also claimed rights over Nosy Be.

11 The French had awarded a similar monthly stipend to Tsiomeko in 1842 (Decary 1960:197). No direct mention is made in the French documentation of the events recounted in Tsialana III's report.

12 Rasoamiramanana (1987:270) claims that it was Tsimiharo, already frustrated with French apathy to his concerns, who sent his brother to Mauritius to offer to shift Antankarana allegiance.
wondered, "If they return and make war, who can say if they will allow my rule to continue?"

He voiced his concerns to his manantany (advisor) Manoro, telling him that he, like his brothers, wanted to go out in search of an ally.

"Hah!" answered Manoro, "You can't go!"

Manoro explained to Tsimiharo that while it was all right to send his brothers, he could not go himself because he was Ampanjaka -- the ruler can't leave. Tsimiharo, however, held firm to his conviction, and eventually sent for another respected advisor (rangahy) from another part of the island to come and mitigate the disagreement. This man, Robia, arrived a few days later by sailing canoe. Both Manoro and the Ampanjaka made their cases to Robia, and the old man sided with Tsimiharo.

"Let him go and take care of his own power." Robia said.

"Are you willing to go with him?", retorted Manoro.

"Yes," answered Robia, "I will go."

Hearing about the planned trip, Rama, a nephew of the Ampanjaka, decided that he too must go along. Tsimiharo, meanwhile, called for the advice of Tsiatoeny -- a prophetess then still living on the mainland. She came to him and told him that his trip would be a successful one.

The French arrived a short while later to trade their cloth to the people of Nosy Mitsio for seafood. When they learned that Tsimiharo wanted to visit the French Ampanjaka, they encouraged him and his contingent to come aboard.

"The time to leave had arrived," Dadilahy Said says, "... we don't know whether it was a Friday or a Saturday ... they left ... for Bourbon."
October 9, 1992 — Ampasindava (Nosy Mitsio)

The *Ampanjaka* Tsimiharo III sits comfortably in the shade of a huge mango tree, sipping occasionally from the glass of Bonbon Anglais (a sickly sweet Malagasy version of cream soda) on the table in front of him. The barge-trip from the sugar refinery's coastal port was long and cramped, and the disembarkment almost disastrous. Ndrambavilahy, his assistant, cook and sometimes jester yells orders to a group of young men carrying baggage across the beach to the island palace.

From a plastic attaché case at his side, marked with a sticker given him by the World Wildlife Fund, he pulls a manila envelope. From the envelope he removes a sheaf of shiny pages, laser-copied excerpts from the *Journal de Bourbon*, and spreads them over the table in front of him. In a style reminiscent of a gossip column, these documents recount the mid nineteenth century stay of his predecessor and namesake, Tsimiharo, on Bourbon (now Réunion), the island chosen by the French as a base of operations in the Indian Ocean. The date "May 1842" has been marked in ball-point pen at the bottom of each page, and relevant passages have been outlined and starred. He passes the documents, one by one, to the closest of the officials seated on straw mats around him, explaining the contents of each as they pass, indecipherable by their foreign script, among them all. I have seen them before.

*St. Denis Harbor - Arrivals*

*May 10 - La Lionne, under the command of M.Protet, lieutenant of the vessel, having left Nossi Be the 1st of April. Passengers: the Prince Tsimiarou, his nephew Ruma; the chiefs Roubia and Ransialo, two other young nephews of the prince, 2 soldiers, a sailor and eight domestics.*

*News and Diversities*

*The Malagasy prince Tsimiarou, chief of the island Wossi-Mit-Chou, arrived on the French corvette La Lionne, and was received with all the*
honors of his high rank. The prince Tsimiarou has come to Bourbon with the intention of visiting M le Gouverneur and to show him his gratitude for the benevolent protection offered the inhabitants of Nossi Be and Wossi-Mit-Chou by France. The Prince also intends to profit from his stay in Bourbon to study the customs of a French colony. We can only congratulate our government for the hospitality shown to Prince Tsimiarou. Our commercial relations with Madagascar must be maintained, and our establishments there can only profit from our agreements with the country's principal chiefs.

"In this one", remarks the Ampanjaka pointing a finger over his desk to the document he's just handed on, "notice how they call him 'the Malagasy Prince'."

During his short stay in Bourbon, Prince Tsimiharo must have come to appreciate all the benefits of colonial civilization, our government having given him the opportunity to study and profit from them. This was the best and most useful way of receiving the Malagasy Prince. The Prince showed himself to be very appreciative of this generous hospitality.

Yesterday, Thursday, he witnessed the spectacle of a small war simulated by our infantry and artillery divisions rivaling each other in their zealous and precise execution of maneuvers ordered by the military commander. Prince Tsimiarou will take with him an accurate impression of the power of the country (France) to which he will always remain a loyal ally, and he will long remember the pleasures of French affluence which seem to have profoundly impressed him.

Satisfied, Tsimiharo III sits back and, sipping again from his glass of Bonbon Anglais, watches as the last document is reverently passed along the fingertips of those gathered, and is returned to its envelope to await the next showing.

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The sequence of events recounted in written sources (such as the one cited above) does not always correspond with the sequence evident in oral accounts. In Dadilahy Said's *tantara*, for example, the treaty with the French was not established until Tsimiharo's trip to Bourbon. By this oral account, it is the Antankaraña *Ampanjaka* who sought out the French, and not the other way around:

It took three months to get to Bourbon. They first passed Zanzibar, but rather than have them stop so he could see his brother, the *Ampanjaka* told them to keep going. They then passed another island, *Londres* (London -- i.e. England). Once again, rather than stop to visit his brother, Tsimiharo instructed the captain to keep going. When they finally arrived on French land (*tany Frantsay*), Tsimiharo explained his predicament, and the French responded immediately. They said nothing about a three month wait, but rather loaded up a war-boat immediately and set sail back to Madagascar. Their quick return to Nosy Mitsio, though it had been predicted by Tsiatoeny (the prophetess whose advice Tsimiharo had earlier sought on whether or not he should accompany the French), shocked the small island's inhabitants. At the sound of the canons shot off by the French boat (marking their return), many ran off to hide in the forest. Tsimiharo and his party got off the boat, the *Ampanjaka* holding a sword that the French had given him.

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In addition to involving themselves in local politics, the French also supported the efforts of Catholic missionaries intent on converting local groups and their rulers. Particularly disturbing to the Jesuit, named Dalmond, who attempted to convert the Antankaraña *Ampanjaka* and his followers, was the already well established influence of Islam in the region.

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13Here, Dadilahy Said is confusing Bourbon with France -- he earlier justifies the long three month trip to get there by explaining that the Suez canal (which did eventually cut travel time between Madagascar and Europe considerably) was not yet completed. Other accounts of the first meeting also have the Antankaraña *Ampanjaka* traveling to France -- some I have heard even have him traveling by plane to get there.
Dalmond's first mission in Madagascar was established on Nosy Be at the base of Loko Be (the island's highest mountain and most recognized landmark) in the bay of Ambanoro -- on the opposite side of the island from the French military and commercial center of Hellville. Citing the fresh air and cool clear water flowing from the heights of the mountain as inspiration for removing himself and his work from the French center, his choice of location was doubtless also influenced by concerns of a more pragmatic nature. Ambanoro had been a port of Arab trade long before Dalmond's arrival. Ever aware of the head start enjoyed by his well-established, Malagasy speaking Muslim counterparts, Dalmond "worked alone on the abandoned beaches of the bay having only God as support and confidant in his isolation". He held strong to his conviction that this bay and island, being the refuge of so many Malagasy mainlanders fleeing Merina invasions, was the ideal starting point for the missionization of Madagascar. With the eventual defeat of the English (Protestant) backed Merina, he imagined, the converted few in exile (rulers especially) would return to the mainland as emissaries of the Church. In 1842, having established and set to work missions at Ile Sainte-Marie on the east coast and another on Nosy Be, Dalmond sought to establish another on Nosy Mitsio, the refuge of Tsimiharo. "This island" an associate of Dalmond later wrote:

is inhabited by a relatively large number of fugitive Antankarana from the mainland. Tsimiharo, the great chief of this tribe, equivocal ally of France, the same one who, received so magnificently during his stay in Bourbon, had assured Dalmond of a welcoming reception on Nosy Mitsio. Accompanied by a young discharged sailor, he [Dalmond] built a house and began his mission (anonymous 1862:43).

Unfortunately for Dalmond, the novelty of his presence soon wore thin.

As long as gifts lasted and M. Dalmond didn't speak against polygamy, things went, or seemed to go, fairly well. That couldn't last. Displeased to see the supply of gifts on which he had begun to rely drying up, and unable
to accept the idea of having a single wife where many wives are a mark of
his authority, he [Tsimiharo] changed suddenly. He seemed preoccupied,
sometimes even furious with the missionary, and could put up with his
presence no longer. It is even said that one day, in a fit of anger, he
[Tsimiharo] loaded a gun and threatened to kill the missionary if he didn't
leave Nosy Mitsio immediately (1862:44).

Dalmond was forced to abandon his mission and the baptized few who had come to see
him, it is written, "as a father and mother" leaving the island "open to the treacherous
charms of the Arabs".

As noted earlier, "the treacherous charms of the Arabs" were already well attended
to in the region. Tsimiharo, the one who had promised to convert while in the caves (see
above), was not the first Ampanjaka to encounter Islam. Certainly the Ampanjaka
Boanahajy's name (comprised in part of the Arabic for pilgrim — "hajj") is an indication
that Muslim influence in the region dated to the late eighteenth century if not much earlier
(even though Boanahajy is said not to have been Muslim himself). Recall how Dadilahy
Said noted that the line of royalty to which Antankaraña rulers may be traced saw its origin
in "Arabie". In an interview conducted by Gueunier, Dadilahy Said commented further on
this.

One would think that their ancestors ... were people who practiced Islam.
But when they arrived here [i.e., in Madagascar], they were like lost
people! and they also lost the Muslim religion, but they knew of its
existence, and they did not look for another religion to make their vow [i.e.,
in the caves]: they made their vow to Islam (Gueunier 1988:30).

By this thinking, then, Tsimiharo's conversion was merely a decisive turn towards what
had already been an established and influential force in the region. That, in the tantara
Dadilahy Said told, Tsimiharo sent his brother in search of assistance in Zanzibar (an
important Arab port on the east coast of Africa) is yet another indication of this.
Although Tsimiharo's promise in the caves is today referred to as the catalyst which led his followers to convert, there is little indication as to the nature of Muslim practice at that time. More than fifty years later, Ferrand (1891-1902; cited in Guenier 1988) noted that "Islamicized" Sakalava along the coast were by no means orthodox in their practice -- they did not pray or respect the rules of Ramadan, and continued to drink rum at celebrations. Given that the practice of many Muslim Antankarana is similarly unorthodox today, we might consider Ferrand's assessment applicable to the inhabitants of Nosy Mitsio in the mid to late nineteenth century as well. We certainly know that the Antankarana Ampanjaka was not so zealous in his devotion to Islam as to refuse the Jesuit Dalmond's advances. As the above cited excerpts indicate, Tsimiharo was open to foreigners (missionaries included) as long as they did not attempt to undermine his authority. And this is an important point that may explain Tsimiharo's leanings towards Islam. In that it allowed both polygamy and slave-holding (practices frowned upon by Christians), two ways in which the Ampanjaka demonstrated his authority, Islam was the obvious choice. That said, Catholicism was the religion of the French, and Tsimiharo did not reject its influence entirely. Through the proceeding decades he saw to it that the Jesuits on Nosy Be provided his children an education which would later prove indispensable to their incorporation in the French colonial administration.

It seems then, that just as the Ampanjaka was negotiating with outside political forces, so was he effecting control over the influx of religious influence. And undoubtedly, that control was directed in ways that ensured his (and his descendants) position and authority.

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Events of the next decades reveal Tsimiharo's growing frustration at the lack of French interest in his efforts at repatriating the mainland. In 1845, Guillain summed up the situation as such:
Since that time [of the treaty], [Tsimiharo] has in vain begged for our assistance to return to the mainland and attack positions occupied by the Hovas in Ankara territory, and to establish his own authority there: not understanding that we can only remain deaf to his requests, he is frustrated at the inactivity of our government from whom he evidently expects some active cooperation, instead of the armed neutrality that we wish to keep in our dealings with the Hovas (1845:157).

Although they would protect their rights in Nosy Be (and presumably Nosy Mitsio) if threatened, the French showed no interest whatsoever in attacking Merina posts on the northern mainland as Tsimiharo would have had them do. Theirs was, as Guillain points out, a policy of "armed neutrality". By his thinking Nosy Be was nothing more than a foothold to the French — they had no intention of entering a conflict with the Merina over Tsimiharo's petty claims. Such action was reserved for real threats to French interests on the island. It was thus in 1845, the same year as Guillain's above cited account, that the French took action in response to an edict passed down by the Merina court forcing European merchants to join in "executing all public works, even such as are performed by slaves, at the simple order of even the lowest of the Hova authorities" (Mutibwa 1974:29). In cooperation with the equally affronted British, they once again bombarded the eastern port of Tamatave as they had done almost twenty years earlier.

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In a paper given originally at the same 1987 conference as Ramiandrasoa's earlier discussed controversial presentation, Rasoamiramanana (1987) describes Tsimiharo's mid to late nineteenth century relations with the French and Merina by means of a thorough examination of official documentation of the era. Hers is perhaps the most enlightening published discussion of this critical time period in the north, for it shows (in an impartial way) the lengths to which Tsimiharo was willing to go in his efforts at repatriating the mainland.
Shortly after the 1841 treaty, Rasoamiramanana reports, Tsimiharo had returned to the practice of raiding Merina posts. By 1845, thanks largely to French and British activity on the east coast (i.e., following the bombardment of Tamatave) that kept the majority of Merina forces occupied, he had reasserted his authority in the Ankaraña region. Undermanned and under-supplied, the Merina posts in the region were in no shape to defend against Tsimiharo's guerrilla tactics, and the constant threat of ambush thwarted most attempts at over-land travel and hence communication with Antananarivo. Requests for reinforcements that did make it through to the capital went largely unheeded as Merina forces were then being amassed on the east coast out of fear of an impending British invasion.

Rasoamiramanana's study of documents of the Merina court reveals that in the 1850s, there seems to have been a warming of relations between Tsimiharo and the Merina. In 1853, for example, she describes how two Merina soldiers deserted their post and crossed over to Nosy Mitsio from the mainland to seek refuge with Tsimiharo. Rather than take them in, however, Tsimiharo had them returned to their post with an offering to Ranavalona, and the message that he considered himself to be one of the Merina sovereign's children – a significant and submissive gesture. The following year, Tsimiharo is reported to have sent a delegation to participate in an important ceremony associated with the Merina sovereign (fanandroana) in recognition of Merina sovereignty over the north.

To assume that the seeming rapprochement with the Merina described by Rasoamiramanana marked a significant change in Tsimiharo's attitude or that it arose from or led to strained relations with the French would be to misunderstand the nature of his diplomacy. While developing closer ties with Merina administrators based in the north, Tsimiharo also retained a house close to the French post on Nosy Be where he had his children educated at a Jesuit school (despite his own conversion to Islam some years earlier), and received monthly rations of meat, wine and rice from the French administration there. What Rasoamiramanana's paper shows is that while Tsimiharo's
offical relations remained cordial with both the French administration on Nosy Be and the Merina posts in the north, the actions often attributed to him were anything but\textsuperscript{15}. It is not surprising then that shortly after the above described professions of allegiance to Ranavalona I, Tsimiharo is said to have joined forces with other Sakalava leaders in attacking the Merina post at A\~norotsangana.

In her description of the events of 1861, Rasoamiramanana reveals still more of Tsimiharo's ambiguous relations with French and Merina. At the death of a member of the Tsimiharo's immediate family, all Antankarana were expected to follow the custom of cutting their hair and joining in other public expressions of mourning. Vinazo, a member of the royal family based in Nosy Faly, refused. In neglecting the obligation, Vinazo was actually refuting the authority of the Ampanjaka to impose such an obligation on him. Tsimiharo responded accordingly, calling a council to pass judgment on the matter. The verdict in, he had all Vinazo's property on the mainland confiscated. Vinazo, by this time wealthy enough to have left his holdings to live on Nosy Be, complained to a French commandant of his mistreatment. Claiming an authority based on the written word of the 1841 treaty between French and Antankara\~na, the Commandant, Derussat, ordered Tsimiharo to return all stolen property to Vinazo. Part of being "considered as French subjects" was being considered subject to their authority.

Tsimiharo, ridiculed now as a petty-thief and bandit in Nosy Be, where he continued to spend much of his time, retorted with his own interpretation of the treaty. In ceding certain territories to the French, he claimed, he in no way had ceded his own right to govern, according to tradition, the domains retained to himself. Vinazo's impudence was a direct affront to Tsimiharo's position as Ampanjaka, he argued, and was dealt with in the appropriate manner. The French, he claimed, had no right to interfere in the matter.

\textsuperscript{14}Rasoamiramanana points out that despite these acts of goodwill towards the occupying administration, Tsimiharo never appeared in person (despite many invitations) at the Merina post — it was always his representatives who recognized Merina sovereignty over the north.

\textsuperscript{15}Florent (1987:259) points out that while Tsimiharo most certainly ordered raids on posts in the north, he never officially declared war on the Merina, opting instead to retain good relations on paper if nowhere else. Letters cited by Florent show Tsimiharo assuring Merina leaders in the north that he played no part in the raiding of their posts.
Derussat remained unmoved and ordered once again that Vinazo's property be restored to him.

Finally, Tsimiharo, perhaps overestimating his importance in the realm of French foreign affairs, directed an official complaint to Napoleon III. It got no further than Dupré, commander of the French naval base on Nosy Be. Refusing to take the Ampanjaka's case seriously, Dupré sent word to Derussat, telling him not to baby Tsimiharo. He further suggested that the value of "stolen" property should be forcibly deducted from the monthly pension Tsimiharo still received from the French government. Frustrated by the French actions, Tsimiharo turned to the new Merina sovereign, Radama II in the hopes of assistance. Rather than respond directly to Tsimiharo's suggestion that they join forces to drive the French from Nosy Be, the new Merina sovereign, who was at that time seeking to repair long strained Franco-Merina relations as a part of the Merina court's new Europe-friendly policy, reported instead to Dupré of the Antankarana Ampanjaka's machinations. It must be pointed out that Tsimiharo was not alone in his seeming duplicity. The French were engaged in similarly ambiguous relations. With the opening of the Suez canal, the French possession of Nosy Be (once described, remember, as an important "naval position at the entrance to the Indian Ocean") was now "valueless" as Napoleon III's correspondence to the British government indicates:

There had been a time when Madagascar and other islands in those seas had been coveted by France ... [but] the passage through Egypt had rendered the communication by sea less necessary, and the possession of such islands [as Madagascar] comparatively valueless to both governments (Mutibwa 1974:59).

The French had long since agreed to a British proposal stating that neither government would take any action in Madagascar without consulting the other, and now, with the strategic importance of the island in question, they had no intentions of provoking a conflict with the Merina. Quite the opposite in fact. With the accession of a new
European-friendly Merina ruler -- Radama II -- the French actively sought good relations with the Merina court.

Ranavalona I's death in 1861 had marked a significant turning point in relations between the Merina court and those European powers claiming interests in Madagascar (Mutibwa 1974:48). Her successor, Radama II, showed no interest in continuing her protectionist and sometimes antagonistic policies towards the Europeans. He sent diplomatic missions to both London and Paris, and received British and French consuls in Antananarivo. He also lifted restrictions imposed on the practice of Christianity in Ranavalona's time, and encouraged both Catholic and Protestant missionaries to return to their previously abandoned projects of educating the Malagasy people. Where Ranavalona I followed isolationist policies, Radama II was intent on encouraging foreign interest and investment, and it was with these goals that he concluded treaties with the French and British only a year into his reign. The first of these was completed with the French.

In the 1862 treaty, Radama II recognized French rights to certain territories in the north (i.e., Nosy Be, Nosy Mitsio, etc. -- based on the treaties of 1841) in return for their official recognition of him as sovereign of all Madagascar (Mutibwa 1974:66). The French were adamant in demanding official recognition of their own claims, for despite what has been said earlier of their apathetic attitude towards their possessions in Madagascar, they weren't about to give up anything they felt was already won16. Radama II's granting of land and privileges to Europeans in Madagascar (by the above mentioned treaties as well as other agreements) did not go un-opposed in Antananarivo. His rash actions had been taken without proper consultation of his advisors, and they reacted accordingly. Radama II was deposed in 1863 and replaced by a wholly new sort of administration headed by a sovereign stripped considerably of her predecessor's power. Although all Merina sovereigns discussed here had ruled in conjunction with advisors from outside the royal family, Rasoherina (Radama II's successor) was no more than a figure-head to a government controlled largely by her husband, the prime-minister, under a new

16Citing a document of 1859, Mutibwa describes the French attitude towards their possession of Nosy Be. Though the treaties of 1841 had been accepted by the authorities in Réunion, the French government "had doubts about their validity and about the manner in which they had been concluded." Nonetheless,
constitution (Mutibwa 1974:86). The new regime attempted to repeal many of Radama II's decisions. Their first goal was to re-negotiate the contents of the unpopular treaties with the French and English.

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Dadilahy Said's tantara suggests that dissension arising from differing viewpoints on the Europeans was not restricted to the Merina court:

Returning from his mission to the English in Londres, Tsiambany (the brother who had been living there some three months) saw how his brother had developed such close ties with the French. He became angry. "When the English see Malagasy they say 'come here my child, come here my child'," Tsiambany said to his brother the Ampanjaka, "but when the French see Malagasy they say 'go away! go away!' ... and now, we have taken the ones who say 'go away! go away!' and not the ones who say 'come here my child, come here my child.'"

The English who had come at Tsiambany's request saw that the French were there and returned to England. The Sultan Barakasy soon heard the news too and thus didn't send assistance -- he did, however, give Tsimagnerigny (Tsimiharo's brother who had been staying in Zanzibar) a sword. Despite the disagreements brought on by Tsimiharo's alliance with the French, the two brothers settled on Nosy Mitsio, each establishing their own villages.

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While French interests were focused on the re-negotiation of their treaty with the new Merina government, Tsimiharo found himself embroiled in a conflict that threatened his already tenuous position in the region. Tsialana III's report describes it as a "civil war"

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Mutibwa continues, "France was prepared to use them [the treaties] as a casus belli should she ever wish to attack and annex Madagascar" (1974:74).
between Tsimiharo and Tsimatahotra (the son of Andrianjalahy - the prince who was given authority over the southern part of the kingdom after having helped Tsialana depose Boanahajy). Tsimatahotra, the report states, would not profess his allegiance to Tsimiharo as his father had to Tsialana. In the ensuing battle over the issue, Tsimatahotra was killed, and his followers dispersed.

Citing the accounts of two of Tsimiharo's contemporaries, Dalmond and Lacomme (both Jesuit missionaries), Boudou (1941) describes this conflict in great detail. Nosy Faly, an island lying close to the coast between Nosy Mitsio and Nosy Be, had been under the sovereignty of Tsimiharo since the beginning of his reign as Ampanjaka. The princes who ruled as his "lieutenants" there were the descendants of Andrianjalahy (as Tsialana III's report had mentioned) -- the prince who had assisted Tsimiharo's father, Tsialana, in overthrowing Boanahajy as Ampanjaka. Nosy Faly was also named in the treaty Tsimiharo had completed with the French, and was considered by the French administration on Nosy Be to be under their jurisdiction. It was with this assurance that they jailed one of Tsimiharo's "Lieutenants" accused of complicity in the attempted murder of a Mauritian Creole living on Nosy Faly, and later sent him to Mayotte to stand trial. Tsimiharo was outraged at the French action. In a dialogue of correspondence attributed to Tsimiharo and the French commandant on Nosy Be (from sources never cited), Boudou paints a picture of the confrontation. Tsimiharo's representatives arrive with their Ampanjaka's written words:

What has been done against my son, has also been done against me. You call him to you, imprison him and then send him to Mayotte. Is that good? Why do you call me now? [...] I have nothing to discuss. Adieu. (Boudou 1941: 173)

To which the French commandant retorted:
Whether he comes or does not come does not matter to us; we do not need him. He does not think that I am a representative of the Emperor? He should learn to better respect the French commanders! (Boudou 1941:174)

Unlike Tsimiharo, Tsimatahotra, an ambitious prince on Nosy Faly, came to Nosy Be immediately when called. A long time enemy of Tsimiharo, Tsimatahotra was supposedly very popular among the people of Nosy Faly, and would have been their leader had Tsimiharo not claimed sovereignty and imposed another in his place. With Tsimiharo's chosen "lieutenant" now in Mayotte, Tsimatahotra claimed his place and sought protection from the French against Tsimiharo's expected retaliation. The French called a meeting over the matter. This one, Tsimiharo did attend.

Tsimiharo objected to the French support of Tsimatahotra, claiming that it was he and not Tsimataohtra who had completed a treaty with the French, and that it was he who should have their support. When French involvement in the affair continued, Tsimiharo objected again, claiming that the French had no right to interfere as Nosy Faly remained under his and not their control. Although Boudou might dismiss these words and actions as typical of such an uncertain ally, taken from an alternate viewpoint, they suggest an interpretation of the 1841 treaty that was fundamentally different than that of the French administration on Nosy Be. Just as he had on occasions described earlier, Tsimiharo claimed that in declaring allegiance to the King of France, he had never renounced his own right to rule.

The conflict between Tsimiharo and Tsimatahotra continued despite French admonishment, and culminated in a battle in which Tsimatahotra was killed. Tsimiharo, bolstered by the victory, is then described by Boudou as bullying other princes on the mainland, demanding that they all recognize him as their sovereign. His efforts stopped short, however, as one of these disgruntled princes appealed to the Merina for assistance. Tsimiharo, in turn, appealed to the French, but no help was forthcoming, and once again Tsimiharo was forced to officially recognize the sovereignty of the Merina *Ampanjaka*.

Relations with the French continued to be strained even after this conflict had reached its end. Boudou describes how Tsimiharo's subjects and slaves had been
abandoning Nosy Mitsio for Nosy Be ever since the end of the "civil war", to such an extent that the Antankaraña Ampanjaka made a trip to the French controlled island to reclaim them. The French offered no sympathy though, and Tsimiharo threatened to take his case before the Emperor. Despite all that had passed between him and the French, Tsimiharo still referred back to the treaty he had completed with them as justification for demanding their assistance. Nothing came of his appeals.

Ambiguous relations among Antankaraña, French and Merina continued into the 1880s. In 1881, Tsimiharo received representatives of yet another new Merina sovereign on Nosy Mitsio (Decary 1960:67). They carried with them the Merina flag and requested that Tsimiharo raise it in recognition of the new Merina sovereign’s rule over the island. Tsimiharo sent word to Nosy Be, and once again, the French, having never officially taken possession of Nosy Mitsio, were faced with a dilemma. In reference to this affront by the Merina, Baudais, then French commissioner in Antananarivo, wrote:

On the 8th November [1881] the envoys returned, accompanied by troops under arms, and carrying four Hova [Merina] flags. Two of them are destined to be planted in Nossi-Faly and Nossi-Mitsiou, the last two on other points of the coast, in the vicinity ... Now we have indisputable rights over Nossi-Mitsiou and Nossi Faly. In 1840, Tsimiharo, then taking refuge on the west coat, from whence he came each month to draw at Nossi-Be the pension which the French Government allowed him, ceded to France all his rights over Ankara (the northern part of Madagascar) and over the islands which depend on it, Nossi-Mitsiou and Nossi-Faly included (Oliver 1969:76).

Although they had no intention of losing the rights they considered to have been granted them by the treaty with Tsimiharo, they had never officially taken possession of Nosy Mitsio and any action to do so might lead to an unwanted conflict with the Merina. Tsimiharo died at the height of this confusion. He is posthumously referred to as Andriamandavanarivo -- the prince who favors a thousand.
The time of Tsimiharo's reign is critical to all versions of the history of northern Madagascar. The relationships he developed and actions accredited to him during this period feature prominently in written and oral accounts alike. Some of the most memorable occurrences are attributable to these years -- Tsimiharo was, of course, the mis-named Ampanjaka of the narrative recounted at the beginning of this chapter who escaped the Hova by hiding in the caves and then fled to Nosy Mitsio, and it was he who established a treaty/fatidra (blood brotherhood) with the French. Citing documents of the time, Boudou (1941:171) has described Tsimiharo as "traitorous", "uncertain" and "bothersome" in his dealings with the French, but viewed in the light of French diplomacy at the time, it seems that their allegiance to Tsimiharo was as uncertain as his was to them.

I have suggested at several points in this section that instead of using Boudou's reactionary vocabulary, it might be worthwhile to consider Tsimiharo's actions as a product of a different sort of diplomacy. Tsimiharo's efforts were directed at ensuring his authority within a rapidly changing socio-political context. Following the examples of Lamboeny and Tsialana, he sought powerful allies to assist him in doing so. During his reign, one might argue, the Antankaraña polity enjoyed a negotiated autonomy in northern Madagascar.
CHAPTER 5

Colonization and After

In this last section of my discussion of the Antankaraña past, I bring the story up to date (to 1997, at least). Beginning with accounts of French colonization and a discussion of the policies implemented by the new colonial administration, I document some of the significant transitions which took place at the turn of this century in Madagascar. Over a twenty year period — 1885-1905 — Imerina’s rule of the island was broken, a colonial administration was instituted, and the Antankaraña *Ampanjaka* Tsialana II, with the support of his French allies, was able to reestablish his presence and authority on the mainland. Proceeding through the decades following colonization, I explore the effects of the new French administration’s policies (*vis à vis* local rulers especially) on the social, political and economic scenes in the north, and, more specifically, on the nature of the *Ampanjaka’s* authority there. Throughout this chapter, I pay special notice to movements and incidences of resistance to colonial rule — uprisings of the late 19th century and the revolt of 1947 in particular — focusing as much on indigenous protectors of the status quo (i.e., those who publicly declined involvement and supported French efforts at quashing resistance) as on revolutionaries. I mean to stress the diversity of interests and attitudes at play in the colonial era in the north. By the time of Madagascar’s independence in 1960, I argue, the position of the Antankaraña *Ampanjaka* as mediator of state and local interests was well established. What is more, I note, his position as such has been bolstered even more with state attempts at promoting a ‘unity in diversity’ sort of nationalism through the fostering of local “ancestral customs”.

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We pick up Dadilahy Said’s *tantara* at the death of Tsimiharo:
When Tsimiharo died, Ankaraña went three years without an *Ampanjaka*. During this period, the old men and women were the rulers. Before he died, Tsimiharo had made a special request: that he be buried in a certain cave of the Ankarana massif alongside his father (Tsialana). (Dadilahy Said here explains to his listeners the exact location of this particular cave with reference to past ceremonial visits to it). Because of the Merina occupation of the mainland, Tsimiharo's request was not easily fulfilled. After helping the French in the war at Antananarivo, Dadilahy Said later pointed out, the land calmed and it became possible to bring Tsimiharo's body to his desired burial place alongside his father in the caves of the Ankarana massif.

When the time did come to select a replacement for Tsimiharo, a dispute arose. One of Tsimiharo's sons, Mamba, was first selected to fill the role, but on the night before he was to officially take the position, Mamba's brother Tsialana II, entered the *zomba*, put on the *Ampanjaka*'s robes and sat in the *Ampanjaka*'s chair. With the door open, word soon spread that there was a new *Ampanjaka*, and people came to see him. They stayed and sang all night and in the morning carried Tsialana II out of the palace on their shoulders and took him around the mast eight times, making their selection of him official.

"Once he had circled the mast," Dadilahy Said explains, "there was no other ruler than that one."

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At the time of the *Ampanjaka* Tsimiharo's death (1883), the French still claimed rights over certain areas of north and north-western Madagascar based not only on their well established presence on Nosy Be, but also on treaties they had signed with local leaders like Tsimiharo. They even went so far as to forcibly remove flags of the Merina sovereign from various stations along the west coast, including one that had been raised on Nosy Be. This renewed vigor in the defense of France's "ancient rights" in Madagascar marks the beginning of what Mutibwa calls the French "reconstruction of their ... policy towards Madagascar" (1974:247). While Merina ambassadors in Paris attempted to
negotiate solutions to their disputes with France, the French foreign ministry was already pushing for a military solution to the problem of disputed territories in the north. Having completed negotiations with British, German and American governments guaranteeing that none would intervene in a Franco-Merina conflict or dispute French claims to Madagascar, the outcome of the next decade had presumably already been determined. Mutibwa writes:

After the British had stolen a march upon the French in Egypt, and in view of France's setbacks in Tonkin, the French could not countenance another setback in Madagascar. After all, after making so much fuss about their 'ancient rights' in Madagascar based on their treaties with Sakalava chiefs in north-western Madagascar, as well as their right to acquire land in Madagascar, France could not simply drop these claims merely because the Malagasy envoys had rejected them. They would be risking the wrath of that part of French public opinion which was concerned with colonial issues, particularly those in Madagascar (1974:250).

Ultimately, no matter how powerful the arguments of Merina ambassadors, Madagascar had become too important to the French to be allowed its political and economic autonomy in a world where once abundant resource bases were becoming scarce. Colonization was inevitable.

Among the strategies employed by the French at this early stage was one which played on the well documented animosity existing between the highland Merina and the coastal Sakalava populations. Calling again on the treaties of 1841, the French encouraged rebellion against the Merina state, and enlisted support for their own army from coastal groups. Although not all fell in line as expected (see Mutibwa 1974:296 for some notable exceptions), Tsialana II remained faithful to the alliance his father had entered with the French. In an 1885 letter to the commandant of Nosy Be, the new *Ampanjaka* expressed his support of French interests in Madagascar. Having been informed of the impending military action, he offered military support as well, suggesting
that boats be sent to Nosy Mitsio to pick up men to help in the campaign. "We
Antankarana", he wrote, "could never follow a different path from the French; have
confidence in me, I will never abandon the French government" (Grandidier 1958:234).
He requested only that the men he offered to the French not be made to carry equipment,
baggage and/or officers as they were not used to such heavy burdens (presumably, he
wanted his men treated as allies and not servants)1. Antankarana soldiers joined the
French in attacking Merina posts in the north, assisting in the taking of Vohemar (on the
north-east coast) in November 1884, and later in the occupation of Diego-Suarez in
February and March of 1885 (Borisika 1983:9).

Although the Merina administration had earlier offered to recognize French rights
to Nosy Mitsio and Nosy Faly (Mutibwa 1986:264), it took the conflict of 1883-1885 to
make them concede anything on the mainland. In the hopes of keeping the militarily
superior French from overrunning the highlands they offered first to remove all disputed
posts from the north and north-west, and second to concede the northern port of Diego-
Suarez outright to the French. The French accepted, and in turn allowed the Merina to
continue administering the territories that they had controlled before the conflict.

Occupying Diego-Suarez, and retaining close ties with the north and north-western
populations, the French were well positioned to further entrench themselves in
Madagascar. The large naturally protected harbor there had been coveted by the French
as a potential naval base ever since the loss of Mauritius — an island close-by that featured
another suitably large natural harbor — to the English in 1815 (Borisika 1983:ii)2. Taking
complete possession of the bay following the treaty of 1885, then, marked a considerable
advancement of their interests. The city that developed at the bay was planned as a
showcase of colonial civilization. Although many Malagasy were attracted by the

1 It is interesting to note in the closing comments of Tsialana II’s letter the perceived uniqueness of the
campaign that was about to take place. "I am happy", Tsialana II wrote, "that you have remembered me
and my men at this time of war. Now, you may be certain that they [his men] will steal no cattle or
anything else; when the war of Antamboka [the name given to the northern province by the Merina
administration] is over, we will return to our homes" (Grandidier 1958:234). In making such a guarantee
to the French, Tsialana II doubtless expected that rewards would come in a form other than plunder. For
himself, he must have assumed that following the campaign, his authority would be re-instated on the
mainland.
economic opportunities that presented themselves in Diego, many more (especially slaves and cattle thieves) came seeking refuge from their Merina "oppressors" (Esoavelomandroso 1987:284). In chapter 8, I will discuss how this influx of migrants from throughout Madagascar would continue into the next century, and the effects such in-migration would have on the indigenous northern population.

Despite assurances from all sides that the Sakalava and Antankaraña who had assisted the French against the Merina would not suffer in this newly negotiated administration, Berisika (1983) notes that these groups were the only real losers in the conflict of 1883-5 -- in return for their participation on the side of the French, they saw the land and authority they had hoped to recapture divided amongst allies and enemies. In a letter to the Minister of Foreign affairs, Patrimonio, one of the French negotiators of the 1885 treaty, justified this seeming injustice in these terms:

We can only govern and administer through the Hova [Merina] .... the Sakalava and Antankarana as well as the Betsimisaraka are but Negroes of an inferior race. It is through schools and receptive politics that we will attract the Hova element to us. We will have, I repeat, Madagascar in our own time when we want it, when we have retaken our whole liberty of action in Europe (Berisika 1983:10).

Despite the recognition implied by the proviso of the 1885 treaty (guaranteeing the proper treatment of Antankaraña under Madagascar's Merina administration) the fact remains that in recognizing Merina sovereignty over all but ceded areas, the French backed even further away from the still unfulfilled promises of their 1841 treaty with Tsimiharo.

The Antankaraña were not the only ones abandoned by their European "allies". In discussing the events of this era, Mutibwa describes how the Merina were equally

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2 Diego-Suarez features the largest natural harbor in the Indian Ocean and the second largest in the world (after Rio de Janeiro).
"disillusioned" with the English. In a letter to Pickersgill (a British representative in Tana), the Merina Prime-Minister, Rainilaiarivony revealed at once his understanding of the often not so subtle subtleties of European diplomacy, and his dismay at what amounted to the English betrayal of the idea of Malagasy autonomy. He wrote:

it behooves me to inform you frankly that the action of the English [...] has amazed and distressed us beyond measure, for they entered secretly into a compact to hand Madagascar over to the French, although our friendly relations with themselves had not been broken, and we know not what we did amiss that we should be so cast away. [...] although we are but a small nation we shall hold fast to the possession which God has given us and to the independence which is dear to all the people (Mutibwa 1974: 338-9).

We see in Rainilaiarivony's words a patriotism that could not have been shared by Antankarana and certain other coastal Malagasy groups. Although allegiance to the Merina sovereign may have been voiced periodically (as required) by representatives of coastal groups, the autonomy coveted by the Antankarana Ampanjaka would only be achievable with the intervention of the very group who threatened to take it away from the Merina: the French.

Recognizing the attractiveness of the French, the Merina administration of the north asserted its own "politics of charm" — wooing the local population with schools, subsidized irrigation projects, and reduced taxes and labor obligations. They even offered a blanket pardon to all individuals (i.e., Antankarana and Sakalava) who had assisted the French in the conflict of 1883-5, and gave some administrative positions to local notables. Esoavelomandroso (1987:285) reports that in 1886, Tsialana II responded positively to

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3Much to the dismay of the Merina, LMS missionaries and English nationals seeking their livelihood in Madagascar alike, the British government remained largely neutral during the Franco-Merina conflict of 1883-85 (Mutibwa 1974:319).
these reforms and sent his brother to a nearby Merina post with a pledge of his continued allegiance to the Merina sovereign.4

The French too attempted to placate Tsialana II in 1887 by inviting him to Nosy Be to receive a medal of honor commemorating his involvement in the events of 1883-5.5 Tsialana II answered the call, but upon arriving with an entourage of some 200, he demanded somewhat more than the French could offer. He suggested that all of his men who had participated in the conflict should receive medals of honor, and that he himself should be named to the Legion of Honor. While the French refused that request, they did secure Tsialana II a "saber of honor" marked with the inscription: "Tsialana, Roi des Antankarana, République Française" (Paillard 1984:352). Interestingly, the giving of this saber was reportedly surrounded by two days of ceremony deemed necessary (by the governor) to secure the approval of the many who had accompanied the Ampanjaka.6

The final true barrier to annexation disappeared in 1890 when the French did retake their "liberty of action in Europe". In return for Paris' recognition of Zanzibar as a British holding, the British agreed not to interfere with French interests in Madagascar.

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On March 27, 1895, at precisely 11:10 AM, an 11-car train carrying some of the most important public figures of the French Republic pulled out of the Gare de Lyons. M. Felix Faure, President of the Republic, stood on the deck of the caboose waving to a crowded platform bursting with cries of "Vive la France!". Relaxing in the two railway cars set aside for him, the President spent the next 9 hours in transit to Sathonay, the town where the French expeditionary force to Madagascar awaited its departure.

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4 Though no mention of gifts is made in the documents cited by Esoavelomandroso, he nonetheless suggests that there was some sort of compensation offered to the Antankaraña Ampanjaka in return for his support (1987:288). 5 Grandidier (1958:162) reports that Tsialana II had been called to Tamatave several years earlier to receive a similar commemorative medal from the French Admiral Miot. 6 In his *tontara*, Dadilahy Said credits Tsialana II with having demanded "canons" from the French as compensation for Antankaraña men who died in the French campaign.
Upon arriving in Sathonay at 8:30 PM, the President traded formalities with the town's mayor and moved on to inspect the troops already in formation in anticipation of his arrival. He gave each of the leaders of the four regiments gathered there one of the four flags laid out in front of them. "The giving of the flags completed, the President of the Republic turned to face the troops and in a loud voice, rendered still more vibrant by his patriotic fervor, made this proclamation":

*Officiers, sous-officiers et soldats du corps expeditionnaire de Madagascar.*

In the name of the French fatherland I give you these flags -- symbols of its unity and greatness.

These colors are known on the waters you will be crossing and on the great African island where you are going to protect your compatriots, defend the interests of the country and impose the respect of our laws.

With the authority of arms, our flag carries in its folds the intelligence of France; never forget that you are worthy of the civilizing mission that Republic has entrusted to you.

Over the course of this campaign, you will be confronted with serious difficulties and will be required to demonstrate your courage, discipline and endurance.

Under the command of your superiors, certain sacrifices will be expected of you. While on march, in combat, in hours of peril and hours of victory when you cast a look at your flag deployed above you, you will know that France is with you (adapted from Aubanel n.d.:197-201).

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7 The sword given Tsialana II at that time has remained an important symbol of Antankaraña-French alliance (purified of ambiguity) since then. It is now in the possession of the current Antankaraña Ampanjaka Tsimiharo III.
The French campaign to conquer Madagascar took less than six months. They began their march in Majunga, a town on the west coast, and entered Antananarivo in September 1895, securing the surrender of the Merina queen and government with relatively little bloodshed. Although the figure-head queen remained, Rainilaiarivony, the Prime Minister and real power-holder, was immediately exiled to Algeria, and Madagascar was officially declared a French protectorate.

As they had in the conflict ten years earlier, many Antankaraña served the French in various capacities during the 1895 campaign. As laborers, they aided in the construction of the roads necessary for French advancement, as soldiers they accompanied the French army's march on Antananarivo (Vial 1954:10), and as rebels they raided Merina posts in the north. Despite initial successes, the last of these participants were overwhelmed by the Merina and driven off the mainland to Nosy Mitsio where, yet again, they sought refuge. The majority of the royal family remained there until August 1896 when the French took full possession of Madagascar.

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In Dadilahy Said's tantara, too, the war ended quickly:

The French approached the Antankaraña Ampanjaka and asked him for his help.

"We need your soldiers to become our soldiers" they said "so that we can go and make war ... we ask your permission that we may go to the place where we can fight."

They went first to the post at Vohemar (on the east coast), and there defeated the Merina easily. After that, wherever the French went on the mainland, the Malagasy who saw them were afraid and ran away to Antananarivo where they waited. The French only had to shoot once at the palace of the queen Ranavalomanjaka to get the Merina to surrender.
"It wasn't really a war ...", Dadilahy Said explains, "... how do you have a war with someone who isn't as strong as you?"

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With little or no military escort, the first French administrators journeyed to their assignments over new terrain and through a native population that was only at the earliest stage of "pacification". Isolated and with few resources, these functionaries had no-one but the former Merina governors (still occupying the posts that they now occupied) to help them develop ties with the local populations they were meant to govern. Their written instructions from Laroche, France's first Resident General were clear. They were meant to discourage forced labor (for anything but public works that is), promote education, tour their districts frequently, learn to speak the local language, and above all else, to:

Imagine that you are in France. Observe the fundamental principles upon which French society rests: public order, impartial justice, honesty in administration and private affairs, and the liberty of conscience and religion. Continue to retain, in this new world, the good reputation and high morals that we have in the old world; and by practicing the precepts that you preach to the population of the island, lead them, by example, to the superior state of our civilization (Galli n.d.:484).

Among these newly occupied posts was one located halfway between the Ankarana massif and the coast opposite Nosy Mitsio. Following Laroche's written orders "vis à vis des indigènes", the French representative in the area, a Lieutenant Cheneron, encouraged Tsialana to return to the mainland and settle alongside the newly established French post (Vial 1954:10). Fremigacci (1987:298) insinuates that the French ordered the Ampanjaka back to the mainland in the hopes that his presence would precipitate an increase in local agricultural production. The village that rose around that post was Ambatoharaiana --
today the ceremonial center of the Antankaraña polity, and the location of the mast raised during the *Tsangantsainy* every 5 years. Although nothing remains of it, some villagers today still know the location (south of the *zomba*) where the French post once stood.

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Dadilahy Said recounts Tsialana II’s return to the mainland in his *tantara*. Note again how the agency of the *Ampanjaka* is stressed in his relations with the French – it is he who is in a position to fulfill their “need”.

The French came to Nosy Mitsio and spoke to Tsialana II.

"Come back to the mainland," they suggested, “where you had been ... we need to build a post near you, in the village where you are, so that we can defend you when enemies come to attack you."

The *Ampanjaka* agreed because his people were not able to support themselves properly on the limited land of Nosy Mitsio. The French wanted them to settle in a place close to the coast. It would be more accessible to their boats than an inland site. The place they initially suggested was called Ambovoniaomby ("the well of the cows"). Tsialana II’s closest advisors would not accept such a location.

"You would have our ruler drink from the same well as a cow?!?" they demanded.

They decided instead to settle at the site of an abandoned village — the place where Volamary, a royal woman who stayed behind while the rest of the family fled to Nosy Mitsio, kept her cows and hid during the Merina invasion of the area. Dadilahy Said notes parenthetically that the location of Volamary's corral is where the two pieces of wood that make up the mast are prepared and then kept on the afternoon and night before the culmination of the *Tsangantsainy*. 
Gallieni was able to accomplish in his few years as governor general of Madagascar what no Merina monarch had in a century -- he unified the whole island under a single administration. One might attribute this to what Kent (1962) has called his "dual loyalty" to both French and Malagasy interests, a knack for balancing bureaucratic and practical aspects of administration, and openness to and ultimate incorporation into his own administration of traditional political figures.

Gallieni's first goal in his program of pacification was to break the Merina elite's hold over the island's population. He, like many before him, saw the French presence in Madagascar as ultimately positive for coastal Malagasy populations so long 'under the yoke of Merina oppression'. Accordingly, he dismissed much early resistance to the implementation of colonial rule as arising from the meddling of the old aristocracy intent on recapturing its past glory. Within weeks of his arrival, he had ordered the execution of two high-standing Merina figures suspected of conspiring against the French administration. By 1897 he had gained control over the former Merina state and established French military/administrative posts where the Merina equivalents had once been.

To break Merina control over the island, Gallieni proposed to treat them as just another "tribu" in Madagascar. His goal was to:

assist these others [tribus other than the Merina] by relieving them little by little of their past masters, by returning to Imerina the Hova governors who had administered them, and to make them into independent and autonomous confederations commanded by their chiefs themselves directed by our own [French] civil and military personnel; we must, in a word, introduce to Madagascar the politiques de races that has had such positive results in Sudan and Tonkin (Gallieni 1899:138).
It was an idea that had some promise given the socio-political climate of the time: Gain the support of much of the Malagasy population by doing away with the Merina authority that they unanimously (supposedly) despised and allowing local rulers to administer their own people under French direction. Given the lack of education and experience in administrative matters among any but Merina notables, however, it was pretty well destined to fail. No other group (or *tribu*) had the advantages of the Merina. None, for example, had been subject to the same intense missionization (including education) by the London Missionary Society. Although French Jesuits had long been established on Nosy Be, they hadn't received the support or encouragement through the mid to late nineteenth century, that the L.M.S. had. Post-annexation efforts to rectify the imbalance by introducing non-secular public education to the isolated areas most lacking, while well intended, were short lived, and Merina domination of the island's administration continued. Allen writes that "Gallieni sought to facilitate ethnic equilibrium in the emerging generation, but somehow the new elites continued to be predominantly populated by Merina. By practical necessity, *a single ethnic group [i.e. the Merina]* retained the status of a conventionally favored colonial class" (1995:37, my emphasis).

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In describing the aftermath of the war between the French and Merina, Dadilahy Said offered his own interpretation of the continued dominance of the Merina in Madagascar:

"In my opinion", he said, "the French preferred the people who fought them with canons ... those who just followed them were ignored"; it's for that reason that they established

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8Whether intentional or not, Gallieni's "politiques de races" also further strengthened the long-standing association of the French (in this case the French administration) with the Catholic church. Ellis (1986) points out that in the earliest years of French administration, most Malagasy administrators were taught French (an obvious requirement of the job) and in many cases selected for service by Jesuit missionaries.

9The followers Dadilahy Said describes were recognized in at least one way — having gained a reputation for fighting skills through their cooperation with the French, Antankaraña were among the first recruited into the colony's new militia (Ellis 1986:139).
their post in Antananarivo, that's where the big schools were ... we were far behind. The Governor General didn't live here ... if he had lived here, he would have been below us."

This short aside in Dadilahy Said's *tantara* is an especially interesting one. It reveals a recognition of the reasoning behind the French decision to establish their capital in Antananarivo (the Merina did have the infrastructure and education that enabled them to serve the French as Dadilahy Said suggests), but at the same time offers a statement of fact that would have made any other decision on their part disastrous -- had the French decided to settle their capital in the north, they would have been subordinate to the Antankaraña *Ampanjaka*.

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One notes in Gallieni's *Rapport d'Ensemble sur la Pacification, l'Organization et la Colonisation de Madagascar* his special interest in the rapid "pacification" of the North. "These lands", he wrote, "have perhaps the greatest future from the point of view of colonization" (Gallieni 1899:82). The north's rivers, bays, cattle and abundant natural resources made it an obvious target for rapid incorporation into the functioning of the new French colony. In discussing the northern population, Gallieni remained positive, stating that "we [the French] are in good relations with them [the Antankaraña and Northern Sakalava] through the inter mediation of the administrator of Nosy Be who exercises a sort of moral protectorate [protectorat moral] over them [the chiefs Tsialana, Tsiaraso and the Queen Binao]" (1899:83).

In 1897, Gallieni traveled to Nosy Be and called these three *Ampanjaka* to see him. They had already accepted, on behalf of the local populations they claimed to represent, many of the new obligations placed upon them by Gallieni's reforms (the head-tax, forced labor, compulsory French education, etc.) as a necessary concession for the protection and property rights promised them under the new French administration (Paillard 1984:358). Gallieni had called them together to inform them of what Madagascar's annexation would mean in the coming years, and to remind them of their
obligations to the new administration. It was ultimately Gallieni's thinking, and the policies of the new administration engendered by it (specifically the *politiques de races*), that made Tsialana II, Tsiaraso and Binao the first indigenous governors of their local districts (Paillard 1984:358).

Despite Gallieni's attempts at incorporating traditional political figures into the administration of the colony, though, one wonders if he, or any of his predecessors ever understood what Allen (1995:39) calls the "radical mistrust borne by virtually an entire population for any authority that has not emerged out of its own cultural midst." Allen imagines turn-of-the-century Madagascar in terms of communities -- the communities that resisted Merina rule did the same, he argues, when the French attempted to impose their own administration. Keep in mind that before annexation, although the Merina had posts throughout Madagascar and claimed to control the entire island, their influence outside of Antananarivo (especially in communities of the sort Allen describes) was often negligible. Allen's point is that power was then highly localized, and exertions of authority originating from anything but local sources were poorly received. His point is well taken, but the case of the north may be unique, for there local authority seems to have been *so* intimately linked to that of the French. That said, things did not always go smoothly.

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In the weeks before the *Tsangantsainy* of 1997, I asked Dadilahy Said's daughter, Monanmisy specifically about the time of the French occupation of the village. She recounted the following story to me:

After the *Ampanjaka* had settled alongside the newly established French post, his brother Mamba (the same one who *might* have succeeded Tsimiharo) objected to the presence of the French. "I don't like the French being here" he is said to have said. The French, hearing that there was some unrest but not knowing its source, took the *Ampanjaka* (i.e., the malcontent's brother) from his *zomba* and locked him up in their post. By way of objecting to this, the people of the region gathered outside of the post
and stayed there through the night. The French were shocked at this behavior and demanded to know what they were doing. They were told that the people objected to their keeping of the *Ampanjaka*, and would refuse to return to their own homes until the *Ampanjaka* was allowed to return to his *zomba*. The French conceded, but only after capturing Mamba and exiling him to the east coast.

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Early resistance to colonial rule in Madagascar came in a variety of guises corresponding to the variety of abuses sanctioned by the colonial administration. The most wide-spread source of anti-colonial sentiment in the years immediately following annexation was the *menalamba* ("red cloth") movement. Although the early violence associated with it, such as the killing of an LMS missionary family on a day of great significance in the traditional Merina religious calendar, was directed at European Christians in particular, describing *menalamba* as just an anti-Christian would be far too simple -- it ignores the presence of the newly established French administration on the island. Revolutionary rhetoric of the time claimed that it was the rejection of ancestral custom and the adoption of Christianity that had weakened and thus allowed the defeat of their monarch. Ellis (1986) stresses that the unrest associated with the movement during this period rose not so much out of religious or political differences with the French, but rather from a very basic fear on the part of Malagasy people, fueled by rumors of European atrocities, of losing the connection with their ancestral land. Only through a renaissance of traditional beliefs would people be able to attain the supernatural power necessary to defend their ancestral lands from foreigners intent on expelling them from it.

If *menalamba* is to be considered a "nationalist movement", it was so from the perspective of those still loyal to the idea of Merina politico-religious supremacy. Other resistance movements rose more out of local disputes than any pan-Malagasy nationalist sentiment. This was certainly the case in the north. Based on the expectations raised by Gallieni's early promises, Tsalalana II refused requests for support from the *menalamba* movement's leaders (Ellis 1986:139). The *Ampanjaka*'s public denunciation, however,
was not enough to prevent at least part of the northern population, and undoubtedly some of his constituents, from undertaking their own campaigns against the French. Even Tsialana II's brother and rival, Mamba, is reported to have threatened to kill anyone trading with the new colonists (Paillard 1984:359; see Moanamisy's story above). In contrast to menalamba, northern resistance was more anti-colonial than it was nationalist. According to Ellis, "unlike the menalamba, ... insurgents [in the north] did not aim to unite the whole of Madagascar and to restore its independence but had the far more limited aim of freeing the north-west from the abuses to which it was subject" (1986:142). Many individuals in the north were subject to the abuses of the French colonial administration.

Although new taxes and forced labor were doubtless considered among the "abuses" suffered by northerners, more significant, to many, were the attempts by the earliest French administrators in the far north to undermine the privileged position held by royalty there. Despite the ideals of Gallieni's politiques de races, many administrators were hostile to the idea of supporting indigenous hierarchies. Paillard describes how "young and inexperienced representatives of the colonial administration ... addressed themselves directly to the (northern) populations to extract duties"(1984:362), thus depriving the traditional rulers in the area of their previously coveted exclusive rights to the revenues incurred by local trade. These first administrators also made a point of choosing certain "secondary chiefs" as their go-betweens with the indigenous population, angering still further the legitimate leaders of the area, and inciting the people faithful to these leaders to resistance.10

Of the three northern Ampanjaka named governor of their regions by Gallieni, only Tsialana II (the Antankara Ampanjaka) remained uninvolved in this resistance movement. Paillard writes that Tsialana II, having been guaranteed rights to land for his constituents, was "less concerned than the other two Ampanjaka by [French] repression." This may also, of course, be an indication that Ankaraña was a less prized destination than some other regions for French and Réunionais colonists intent on establishing enterprises

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10 Waast too notes that soldiers and officials were given free reign to treat the northern population (whether royal or not) as they wished during this era (Waast 1973:61).
in the north. While it seems likely that the French still held a certain sway over Tsialana II, it also seems likely that Tsialana II had the foresight to recognize the advantages inherent in retaining close and friendly ties with the French administration. Once again, we might retrospectively interpret the *Ampanjaka*’s actions (or his inactivity in this case) to prudence and consider this an example of how he (like his predecessors) effectively managed relations with the group that, at that time, had the power to ensure his authority from without.

As we have seen before, the *Ampanjaka* was not the only one benefiting from this arrangement. The French too, remember, had intentions of their own in supporting local rulers. In a letter commenting on the events of 1898, Pennequin (the French representative in Diego Suarez) suggested the idea that was eventually implemented. "Use the *mpanjaka,*", he wrote, "strengthen their authority, ... governing under their name is the method that I think is the most practical at this moment" (Waast 1973:61-2). In 1904, the system and the *Ampanjaka*’s role within it were codified and the *Ampanjaka* was encouraged to choose his own auxiliaries from influential families throughout the region, allowed to fulfill his traditional role as arbiter of disputes, and entrusted with the task of collecting taxes from his constituents. Waast writes that

this system made royalty the intermediary between administrators and the population. It functioned by filtering governmental exigencies, satisfying those which reinforced the positions of the directing class while avoiding those which threatened the conservation of Antankarana society (1973:62).

Waast goes on to make the point that in fulfilling this intermediary role, the royalty were able to achieve renewed popularity among the people by acting as their "protectors" against a generally mistrusted administration. Like Tsimiharo had done 60 years earlier in first establishing the alliance with the French, Tsialana II took on the important (and exclusive) job of negotiating the interests of his constituents with their colonizers. In fulfilling his role as tax-collector, Waast further suggests, Tsialana II was able to reinforce his position in the eyes of colonizers and constituents alike. On the one side, the French
were pleased to have such an effective system of collecting revenue. On the other, the people couldn't but be impressed with the seeming rejuvenation of royal power that the influx of wealth (in the form of supplemental taxation) brought with it. A palace was built in Ambatoharanana and ceremonies celebrating royal power were never more elaborate (Waast 1973:62). Years later, money would serve to build tombs in the royal cemetery just south of Ambatoharanana. Although well received by those still loyal to the Ampanjaka, these expressions of royal power were little more than a necessary evil to the French. One of the obvious inconveniences of maneuvering behind the "ghost of royal power" (Cohen 1971:78), of course, is that a great many people believe in ghosts.

Following Waast's analysis of reports emanating from the region at that time, it seems reasonable to suggest that this era saw a renaissance of Antankarana royal ritual and a fundamental shift in the nature of royal power. "The powers conferred on the principedom" Waast writes, "no longer emanated from the people, but rather from a foreign authority [i.e. the French]; they [the royalty] were no longer subject to checks."

According to Waast, the basis of royal power changed dramatically with this system of administration. Every aspect of royal power, from the process of selecting an Ampanjaka to his role as intermediary between the ancestors and his kingdom's living constituents, was either altered considerably or done away with entirely. In his view, royalty became the political class.

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Metropolitan France's weak management of her colonies afforded distant governors-general (like Gallieni) almost complete control over their administrations (Cohen 1971). Although perhaps liberating to some administrators, Paris' indifference had critical implications to colonial economies, and especially to the financing of colonial projects. By paying an ever decreasing percentage of colonial expenditures through the early 20th century, the Metropolitan government required its colonial administrations to supply the bulk of their budgets themselves through head and property taxes, and, encouraged them to institute forced labor schemes to defer costs on particularly labor
intensive projects such as road-building. Whether or not one accepts that taxation and forced labor had inherently positive economic, social and educational value for an indigenous population, as was professed by colonial officials of the time, its revolutionary effects on local economies are undeniable.

Initial attempts at developing the northern economy fared poorly. Europeans intent on developing plantations obtained large concessions from the French, but invariably failed in their projects due to a scarcity of labor. Although there were plenty of able people living in the north, few were willing to subject themselves to the conditions of wage labor. While those Antankaraña then occupied by cattle-raising resisted the sacrifices required of such a lifestyle, the group on whom the French were counting to provide the needed man-power, the slaves (Makoa) they had emancipated by a proclamation from the French parliament in 1896 (Allen 1995:36), resisted the stigma associated with it. Waast writes that these liberated slaves had perhaps the greatest reason to avoid the sort of labor that plantations offered -- they sought proper integration into the group with which they had always lived, and thus held fast to their servile, albeit newly illicit, positions vis a vis their former masters (1973:58). Within a few generations, liberated slaves were able to accumulate cattle (received as payment for their services) and with such wealth contribute, as any other Antankaraña would, to the carrying out of royal ceremonies. As wage laborers on European plantations, they never could have achieved such integration.

Neither the implementation of Gallieni's head tax nor the demand engendered by an influx of foreign goods could force other Antankaraña into wage labor. Their primary source of income, and thus their greatest counter-measure to French pressure, remained in the trade of cattle. Their largest market was Diego-Suarez where the French continued to develop what they hoped would be the Indian Ocean's most profitable port. Essentially, there was no need for Antankaraña to work for the Europeans, and, as Waast puts it, "the indigenous society wanted to and could live outside of this foreign production" (1973:59). The labor required for the successful implementation of a plantation economy would only come gradually, through the early part of the 20th century, as the north became home to increasing numbers of immigrants from other parts of Madagascar.
The anti-colonial sentiment that culminated in the events of 1898 in the north continued, though in a different form, into the first years of the 20th century. In an interesting study of primary sources, Fremigacci (1987) describes how, despite the defeat of the menalamba movement, and the quelling of unrest in the north, incidences of violence against colonists continued unabated in Diego Suarez and environs. The reasons he suggests for this warrant consideration. Fremigacci posits that the high-crime rate in the north was a result of the high percentage of migrants living in the area. Citing particular well-documented cases, he blames Antemoro (who by 1908 numbered 6000 -- 1/3 of the Malagasy population of Diego) -- from the south -- and Anjoany -- from the island of Anjouan off the West coast -- as the instigators of violence against the French. What is more, he suggests that segments of these migrant populations were also responsible for the rampant banditry which threatened long-established villages throughout the area. Generally, Fremigacci's paper suggests an unsettling image of the newly poly-ethnic north at the turn of the century -- bands of Antemoro bandits swarming the country-side, sacking villages and stealing cattle (1987:307). The insecurity that arose with the arrival of these first migrants to the north, set the stage, I will later argue, for the development of a particularly Antankaraña ethnic consciousness.

Fremigacci's argument is important for several reasons. It points out that the rise in anti-colonial sentiment (and the corresponding rise in anti-colonial crime) in the north did not emanate from the indigenous northern population -- by his assessment, the Ampanjaka and his followers were not a part of the scene he describes. He explains, for example, how the crime rate in the region of Ambilobe remained relatively low until a gold-mine opening brought an influx of migrant labor, and a disproportionate increase in crime.

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The first half of this century saw a continuation of the pattern set for French dealings with local traditional authorities throughout Africa. In what Cohen describes as a movement towards a policy of "association for the purpose of assimilation" (1971:118),
commandants throughout French Africa eased their administrative burdens by farming certain jobs out to locally recognized chiefs. Retaining little more than a title, these "chiefs" bore little in common with their pre-colonial counterparts. Cohen writes that "French rule had emptied the traditional structures of their meaning, but it did not replace them."(118).

Following the first world war, Garbit took over as governor general of Madagascar and instituted certain administrative reforms. He divided the island into 23 provinces (as suggested by a committee of European and Merina advisors), based loosely on tribal regions -- a system that Kent notes "could not fail to perpetuate tribal divisions." (1962:75).

Governing through the second half of the relatively prosperous 1920s, Madagascar's next governor general, Olivier, reverted somewhat to Gallieni's policies. Doing away with Garbit's 23 province division, he substituted a system of 6 provinces subdivided into 44 districts (Kent 1962:78) -- divisions based on geographic rather than tribal/ethnic boundaries. In conjunction with this reform, Olivier introduced a more representative advisory council, and delegated some of his powers to provincial heads -- both measures hinting at hopes for a decentralized administration.

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It was throughout Tsialana II's reign, Gueunier (1988) reports, that Islamic practice took hold among followers of the Ampanjaka. Although the French were suspicious of Islam, they tolerated the missionary efforts of representatives of a Muslim brotherhood from the Comoros (shadhuli) in northern Madagascar. With the permission and cooperation of Tsialana II, one teacher in particular (Ahmad al-Kabir from the nearby island of Anjouan) toured the region extensively, preaching in villages as he went. Even after he left, his son, Abdurrahman Saqaf stayed behind and continued his work.11 When Tsialana II died (in 1924) he received a strictly Muslim burial.

11 Abdurrahman Saqaf died in Ambilobe in 1965 (Gueunier 1988:31). His tomb is visited annually at Ambilobe's ziara ('visitation').
Upon Tsialana II's death, yet another dispute over succession set in. Both Lamboeny II (the deceased Ampanjaka's younger brother) and Tsialana III (the son of the same) were considered possible successors in the role. While many older people supported the brother (Lamboeny II), the younger generation supported the son (Tsialana III). Debate is said to have been fierce, and threatened to explode into a (physical) confrontation, until French administrators in Ambilobe intervened. Word of the dilemma had been sent to the capital where it was decided (by the governor general, I was told by an informed in-law of the current Ampanjaka) that while Tsialana II's brother was still alive, he should take over as Ampanjaka. The decision was accepted grudgingly by Tsialana III, who refused to vacate the palace (zomba) in which his father had lived.

A few years into Lamboeny II's reign, his close advisors suggested that he cut the mast raised by his brother down and raise his own. Lamboeny II refused outright, declaring that his "rule" (referred to as fanjakana in one account I was offered) was the same as his brother's, and to cut down the mast his brother raised would be like cutting his own rule. His advisors reluctantly accepted his decision and allowed him to reign to his death without having ever raised a mast of his own.

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Waast (1973:69) describes the inter-war era as a time of social and economic upheaval in the north. The migrants who provided the work force for increasing numbers of European concessionaires continued to arrive, and as they did, large-scale projects became more feasible. The good land that had earlier been left to Antankaraña (especially the very fertile delta of the Mahavavy river around Ambilobe) became highly prized by incoming interests. With the dispersal of the population from these areas, Waast claims, came very important changes in the relationship between royalty and commoners. While the royalty remained behind, thriving on revenue guaranteed them (as original landholders) by the French12, their base of support was diminishing -- moving away and setting

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12As original land-holders, Antankarana were allowed to collect one third of the harvest from any "outsider" growing on their land (Waast 1973:72).
up their own centers in less populated areas. Non-royal lineages "deepened" writes Waast, and ritual focused on these local family groups took away from the importance of ritual focused on the royalty. Alliances between large kin-based groups (lohatery) also took on special importance during this era. Waast states that these networks of alliance claimed a certain degree of political autonomy, but doesn't refer to any specific examples of such. It may be more accurate to state that the rise of these lineage networks led to a de-emphasis of royal power and not the negation of it. The relationship between royalty and commoners is considerably different than that between lineages, and both polity and lineage-based forms of social organization could then co-exist as they do now. Still, if we are to accept Waast's general point that this era saw a relative decrease in the significance the local population's relationship with royalty, then it is worth considering again what is today remembered as the most distinctive feature of the reign of the *Ampanjaka* of that time: Throughout Lamboeny II's rule, no mast was raised. Without discounting the possibility that many may have distanced themselves from the *Ampanjaka* out of their dissatisfaction with his close association with the French, it is interesting that through that period the primary means by which the relationship between *Ampanjaka* and polity constituents is today symbolically reestablished never took place. I will be discussing the *Tsangantsainy* extensively in chapter 7.

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Cayla, Olivier's successor as Governor General, did little to encourage further decentralization of Madagascar's administration. His administration's inactivity on pressing issues surrounding public education only perpetuated problems first set in motion in Augagneur's time – under his regime coastal populations remained under-educated and, as such, excluded from their own administrations. Ironically, perhaps, Cayla was the first governor general of Madagascar to visit Ambatoharana – then, as now, capital (*doany*) of the Antankarana *Ampanjaka*. To mark the occasion of this visit, Tsialana III (son of Tsialana II and nephew of the then reigning *Ampanjaka* Lamboeny II), gave a speech in
French. He welcomed Cayla, on behalf of the *Ampanjaka* and the northern population, to Antankarana land:

It is a great day that allows we descendants of the Antankarana king Tsimiharo, to have the honor to receive, for the first time, a Governor General in the natal village of this faithful friend of the French in 1840. You are, in fact, M. Cayla, the only head of the colony of Madagascar who has set foot in our village in the 93 years of alliance between the Antankarana people and France. Your arrival here is proof of the interest you hold in our country that is so thankful for the civilizing mission that she (France) has accomplished and continues to accomplish.

I promise you that I will remain faithful to the bond of attachment and loyalty contracted with France by my father, the king Tsimiharo, and by my brother, the king Tsialana II who I have succeeded. The Antankarana population as well as my family will rest eternally devoted to noble France that has heaped kindness upon us and watched over us like a mother over her child.  

In 1938, Lamboeny II, the *Ampanjaka* credited with the sentiments of the above speech, died and was given the posthumous name of Andriamandrosoarivo -- the one who made enter (i.e., to modern times) a thousand. Not surprisingly, his nephew, Tsialana III (Mohamady Tsialana), the very one who had refused to vacate the original palace in Ambatoharanana, replaced him. Although Ambatoharanana remained the ceremonial centre of the polity, at Lamboeny II's death, Tsialana III established his own residence in Ambilobe, where he was already employed by the French as a local governor. Tsialana III, I should mention, was the author of the report I have referred to frequently throughout this account of the Antanakarana past.

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13 Speech given in 1935. Thanks to Noël Gueunier for providing me a copy.
April 3, 1994 — Ambilobe

"Do you know what it is?" Achilles asks with a raised eyebrow, swirling a golden liquid up the sides of the tumbler in his chunky age-splotched hand. Though heavily accented, his English is very good.

"Rum?" I answer.

"Nonononono... yes, yes well yes it's rum..." he says, giving me the glass and pouring one of his own, raising the eyebrow still further "... but do you know what is in it?"

I drink a little, happy that I was at least part right — that it's not scotch. Though I am as much a foreigner in Ambilobe as Achilles, I'm not the connoisseur I think he thinks I am.

"Uhhhhh... Rum." I answer again, this time much bolder. Achilles looks at me, eyebrows now limp, with the resigned benevolence of a teacher looking at a child who continuously omits "4" on the count to 10.

"It is l'Eau de Vie des Chevaliers de Marta..." he tells me, looking deep into his own glass "... the special ingredient is a type of... seed... grape seed... found only in Cyprus" now breathing it in, chest expanding under slumped shoulders "... a seed so special that the Italians used to send special boats to Cyprus just to pick it up."

Achilles has lived in Madagascar for 60 years. He left Cyprus in his late teens, he had told me when I first met him a few months ago, to seek his fortune here. Moving around the north at first, he worked for a variety of European enterprises, played soccer on an all Malagasy team on Nosy Be, and even spent time as a butcher in Diego Suarez. He finally settled down here, getting on as a manager of the gold mine in Betsiaka just outside of Ambilobe. He's lived here ever since and has seen the events of the past 50 years from an enviable (in my mind) position. Already knowing
what he thinks about the current *Ampanjaka* (we had spoken about him before) I gingerly ask him today about Tsialana III — the first Antankaraña *Ampanjaka* to base himself in Ambilobe. When he smiles, I know he’s not about to launch into an angry barrage of the sort incited by our previous discussion.

By Achilles’ assessment, Tsialana III was a great friend to the *vazaha* (foreigners) of Ambilobe. Well-educated and speaking perfect French, he was truly one of their community. Achilles even describes how a group of Greeks in town were the ones who named “Alexandre” (after Alexander the Great) one of Tsialana III’s sons and the father of the current *Ampanjaka*. He vaguely recalls the timing of the several *Tsangantsainy* which occurred through Tsialana III’s time (once every 3–4 years he says), but he’s much clearer on recounting the *Ampanjaka’s* involvement in the founding of *S.O.SU.MA.V. (Société Sucrerie de la Mahavavy)*, the foreign enterprise which, with the help of the colonial government, established a sugar-plantation and refinery in the region in 1949. Although many in the area have told me that the project could not have gone through without the approval of the Antankarana *Ampanjaka*, Achilles suggests that it was as much Tsialana III the well-connected French administrator, as Tsialana III the *Ampanjaka*, who was involved in the project.

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The Brazzaville conference of 1944 and the constitution of the Fourth French Republic of 1946 were both symbolic and policy-affecting markers of a change in France’s administration of her colonies in Africa. The planned overhaul of French foreign affairs was to be extensive and have implications on all levels. In theory, while chiefs were to be retained as administrative instruments, power was increasingly to be transferred to the hands of African representatives of colonial populations. In Madagascar, for example, elected assemblies appeared with both consultative and (for the first time) deliberative functions, and locally elected deputies (French and Malagasy) joined the French National Assembly in Paris. With promise of elections, unsurprisingly, grew the importance of

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14 A plaque commemorating Tsialana III’s involvement in establishing SOSUMAV (SIRAMA since being taken over as an enterprise of the Malagasy state) still exists on the outside wall of the refinery.
Malagasy political parties — some based on organizations established before the war, others newly created. Dominant among these was the MDRM (Mouvement Democratique de la Renovation Malgache) — a party incorporating both moderate and extremist visions of the future of Malagasy-French relations. Although a French inquiry following the revolt of 1947 would conclude that the MDRM was ultimately responsible for the violence that cost some 89,000 Malagasy lives (Allen 1995:47), the party's platform was actually quite moderate. They suggested a peaceful independence for Madagascar, replacing the colonial administration with an indigenous one. Allen suggests (1995:46) that the "radical" reputation garnered by the MDRM was in fact more applicable to certain of its more vocal sub-factions.

Although largely confined to regions east of Antananarivo, the insurrectionary activity of 1947 had repercussions throughout Madagascar. Attacks on military bases and large French company holdings by rebel forces in the East were answered by large scale French retaliation. Supported by Senegalese troops brought in to quell the troubles, the French army blanketed affected areas, and within a year had eradicated most military resistance to colonial rule. But not without a cost. "France's retaliation against the uprising represents one of the most bloody acts of repression in colonial history." Allen writes, "In the long campaign of 1947-8, nearly 100,000 Malagasy were executed, tortured to death, starved or driven into the desert" (1995:47).

By Kent's interpretation of the revolt of 1947, the promise of Brazzaville was realized too slowly. Setting aside Mannoni's (1964) interpretation of it (as an inevitable result of the disintegration of a psychological complex of dependence), and the French administration's official line (characterizing the revolt as the product of Communist influence), Kent points to the failures of the French administration to gauge nationalist sentiment (and the propensity towards unrest) that had been on the rise since the beginning of the Second World War. In the year preceding the revolt, (a year after Brazzaville) the French administration still refused to negotiate with the MDRM — the very party set to sweep then imminent elections and dominate the newly created assemblies. Kent is even more specific in faulting the administrators whose ignorance of Malagasy social history and lack of vision allowed Madagascar to stagnate under an administration more
concerned with bureaucracy than any "dual loyalty”. "The social change" he writes
"marked by detribalization -- begun by Gallieni, revived temporarily by Olivier -- and
manifesting itself on the political level in the political movement of the 1920s, underwent
two decades of regression not so much by design as through sheer ignorance and inertia." (1962:103). Gallieni’s vision had regressed to a self-perpetuating bureaucratic model
disinclined to reform even in the face of the most blatant social and economic pressures.

The case of the north offers an interesting counterpoint to Kent’s thinking.
Whether intentionally or not, the administration in the north seems to have been anything
but "ignorant" of the social and economic pressures weighing on the indigenous
population. As mentioned earlier, the royal family had, at that time, a great deal invested
in their relationship with the French. Not only did they rely on the French for the
education that allowed them continuing privileges as a political elite, they also relied on
French support of their own claims (as original land-holders) to collect rent from the many
non-Antankaraña who had migrated to the area. By co-opting the power-base of the
Antankaraña royal family, the French administration in the north was assured at least one
influential ally. This is not to say that there were no elements of resistance in the far north
(the reported existence of a "concentration camp" for political prisoners in Diego indicates
that there most certainly were), but rather that resistance was not condoned by the
"ruling" Antankaraña royalty. One informant, currently living in Diego, who had traveled
to Ambilobe in 1947 to spread MDRM propaganda described how he was chased through
the streets under a hail of rotten mangos when he attempted to speak out publicly against
the French. He indicated that Tzialana III’s support of the French through this time was
very influential in the region. He also suggested, as I had heard elsewhere, that this public
support of the French was the cause of a split between him and distant members of the
royal family in Beramanja (the descendants of Andrianjalaha - see chapter 4) who
supported the MDRM15. If anything, for the obvious reasons discussed above, members
of the royal family who were benefitting from their privileged position vis à vis the French

15 A short article in the French serial l”Evénement de Jeudi” (Enckell 1991) recounts the horrors of the
revolt in graphic detail. Among the French administrators singled is one named Taillardat who had been
posted in Ambilobe – among other things, he is accused of employing hammer blows and hot iron pokers
administration had every reason to ensure that the revolt was unsuccessful. The question that naturally arises, then, concerns the amount of influence that the ruling royal family had over the inhabitants of the area. Although there is no sure way of gauging that, it should be noted that many of the French policies objected to by the leaders of the MDRM movement, were as evident in the north as they were in other parts of Madagascar.

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Although I will be discussing ritual practices associated with the polity extensively in Chapter 7, it is worth noting here Vial's observations on the significant events of 1949. The mast that had been raised at the time of Tsialana II in 1916 (Vial 1954:19), and that had lasted through all of Lamboeny II's reign, fell in 1947 during the reign of Tsialana III. In the summer of 1949, it was decided that a new mast must be raised. A visit to the tombs of past rulers in the caves of the Ankaraña massif was quickly organized for the early fall, and then in October, the new mast was erected in Ambatoharana. At this event, both French and Antankaraña flags were raised on the mast. We might consider this to be the origin of the *Tsangantsainy* as it is practiced in contemporary Madagascar. Given that a relatively soft wood was used to construct the mast from, it rotted and fell fairly quickly, and subsequent mast-raisings (at which soft-wood masts have been erected) have taken place with greater frequency.

In recognition of his continuing support, Tsialana III was invited to France in 1954. While only photographs in the current *Ampanjaka*'s possession recount what occurred on that trip (he was presented with yet another saber by French officials), many individuals recall the scene of the *Ampanjaka*'s triumphant return to Ambilobe.

The entourage arrived at Ysesy (a village 10 km north of Ambilobe on the main highway) via helicopter from Diego. They were meant to travel the rest of the way to Ambilobe by car, but the huge crowd of people waiting for them wouldn't allow it. They insisted, instead, on carrying the *Ampanjaka* on their shoulders. By the time their

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in torturing MDRM supporters. One informant told me that Taillardat was also the man who tortured the MDRM friendly relative of Tsialana III in Beramanja.
procession arrived at the outskirts of Ambilobe, cloths had been laid down to form a path (along the road) leading to the *zomba*.

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Madagascar's independence did eventually come, although not through the violence that characterized the 1947 revolt. In a 1958 referendum, voters opted for a limited independence -- electing their own centralized government, but remaining tied to De Gaulle's newly established Fifth Republic. During this election, Tsialana III campaigned strongly for the "Yes" side which promoted the acceptance of a proposal for limited independence put forward by the French (the other option for voters was to support the MDRM's push for complete independence). Some even report that the *Ampanjaka* spent election day seated on his front stoop yelling his preference to passing voters. When he died, he was given the posthumous name Andriamandefitriravo -- the prince who calms a thousand. His son Tsimiharo II succeeded him.

With French support, Philbert Tsiranana and his Partie Sociale Democratique (PSD), dominated Madagascar's national political scene for the next 14 years. Following independence in 1960, Tsiranana ruled as President of the republic for 12 years. His government retained amiable relations with the French and sought, as both French and Merina administrations had in the past, to establish some balance between "central direction and local participation" (Allen 1995:53). The success of Tsiranana's party depended at least partly on the successful manipulation of the long-standing animosity between highland and coastal populations. In what was "nothing but a repetition of a colonial propaganda theme that for more than 60 years presented the expedition of 1895 as a liberation of peoples from royal (i.e., Merina) despotism" (cited in Allen 1995:49), Althabe claims that the PSD (and Tsiranana's former party, the PADESM -- a party supported by the French to oppose the MDRM movement before the 1947 revolt) encouraged the division between coastal populations and the Merina, and fought to slow the process of decolonization so that representatives of coastal groups might prepare themselves for entry in a new, independent, administration. Opposing a variety of parties
seeped in anti-French propaganda, Tsiranana's PSD appealed to the coastal populations who feared a return to Merina domination of the island. The fact that Tsiranana was himself part Sakalava and his party was based in Majunga, a city on the west coast, certainly worked to his advantage. By the early 1970s, however, the situation had changed, and conditions and sentiments in much of Madagascar mirrored those which had been prevalent before the revolt of 1947. Interestingly, in the midst of this social and economic volatility, some church-leaders and politicians found a scape-goat in the form of unproductive traditional customs. Allen writes that during this era in particular, "otherwise sacrosanct customs had lost their cultural charm in the anxiety over economic development and political stability" (1995:61).

The practice of playing on the long existing animosity between coastal and highland populations for political gain persists in contemporary Madagascar as does, of course, the animosity that allows it. In the 1992 presidential election, Didier Ratsiraka, the President who succeeded Tsiranana, sought re-election on a platform suggesting the de-centralization of the Malagasy state that suggested yet another variation on this theme. His plan, as it was explained to me by supporters of it in 1992, offered coastal populations more control over their own affairs through a federal system which would guarantee regional benefits from regional wealth. He promised that there would be an end to policies which siphoned northern wealth into highland coffers. Ironically, Ratsiraka's opposition in that election, Albert Zafy, the man who did win as Maitre Jacky had predicted in the opening paragraphs of chapter 3, was a native of Ambilobe. The situation is now (as of 1997) up in the air -- although Zafy's term as President began with great promise, he has very recently been ousted from the position and has returned to his compound in Ambilobe. The demands of an increasingly impoverished population (the 1994 devaluation of the Malagasy franc on the world monetary market has led to rampant inflation throughout the country), and the World Bank (who will not release loans to Madagascar until the state corruption has diminished) seem to have crippled the Malagasy

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16The only incidence of an Ampanjaka's entering into the affairs of the Malagasy state which Dadilahy Said ever spoke to me about involved Tsiranana and then ampanajaka Tialana III. During one election (probably in 1958) Tialana III publicly supported Tsiranana's candidacy (campaigning for him by the sounds of it), as all of the other candidates were Merina.
government in recent years, and it is difficult to say what is to come. Some predict great economic gains with the implementation of decentralization and privatization, others expect civil war at any moment.

As noted in chapter 2, the current Ampanjaka's involvement in the local and national political scenes has been quite profound. His continuing support for certain political candidates is no secret to anyone in the region. Still, he has moved away from the public statements which some have accused him of making in the past, and in recent years has opted for a laid-back approach which seems far more acceptable to polity constituents and politicians alike. He waits for them to come to him. Significantly, though, his involvement in politics and support for certain politicians does not make him a mere puppet -- at times he asserts the supremacy of local concerns. Even the influence of the former President, for example, could not convince him to agree to a potentially lucrative shrimp-farming project which he, his advisors and ancestors (speaking to him through dreams and spirit mediums) considered a bad idea. Experience has taught him that the true source of his power in the region comes from those immediately around him -- those very people whose support is sought through him by politicians, NGO representatives and foreign investors. He continues then, as Ampanjaka of the past have, to negotiate autonomy through the management of relations with powerful outsiders in the face of contemporary concerns and conditions.
Chapter 6

Experiencing the Past

The account of the past I have just offered is concerned almost exclusively with royalty. The story told is that of a royal family; the actors referred to, with a few notable exceptions, are members of it. It is royalty who are named, and it is their names that are spoken, written, invoked, heard and read in the present. In a pattern not unfamiliar to students of Western historiography, the common people figure only in the background of tantara and written sources alike, even though their support is necessary for the story of rulers to progress.

To argue that accounts of the past are concerned only with royalty, however, is not to suggest that they are of concern only to royalty. Although living royalty may recognize a special and obvious tie to the events and personalities of the past recounted in the present, commoners too may claim this past as their own. In the journal entries included in the previous three chapters, I have attempted to show some of the ways in which they may do so. As will become increasingly obvious throughout the concluding chapters of this dissertation, identification as Antankaraña usually implies not only affiliation with a particular past and a particular polity, but with the particular past of a particular polity. In this chapter I will discuss some of the ways in which this affiliation is constituted.

Much recent literature points out how culturally specific commemorative practices are fundamental to the ways in which "societies remember" (Connerton 1989; see also, Schwartz 1982; Lowenthal 1985; Nora 1989). In her study of Zionist constructions of the past in Israel, for example, Yael Zerubavel (1996) suggests that "collective memory is substantiated through multiple forms of commemoration: the celebration of a communal festival, the reading of a tale, the participation in a memorial service or the observance of a holiday" (1996:5). She goes on to state that "while scholars and intellectuals engage in a formal historical discourse, for most members of the society, knowledge of the past is first and foremost shaped by these multiple commemorations" (1996:6). These
commemorations, in effect, substantiate commemorative narratives through which collective memory is itself substantiated. Following Halbwachs, Zerubavel emphasizes the relationship between collective memory and collective identity, noting that commemorative narratives invariably focus on "the event that marks the group's emergence as an independent social entity" (1996:7) -- the group's "beginnings" especially.

Zerubavel's study suggests many of the themes I will be discussing here and in the next chapter: the multiple ways in which the past is recalled in the present, the construction of narratives through practice, the significance of these narratives in the determination and legitimization of contemporary hierarchies and practice, etc. That said, the view Zerubavel presents is not entirely analogous to that which I propose here. Two important differences are immediately apparent. The first is that in northern Madagascar "beginnings" are not the obvious focus of collective memory that they are in Israel. Although the "arrivals" of people and forces in the region which contributed to the founding of what is today a "distinct social entity" are featured prominently in local commemorative narratives (as noted in the Introduction), they do not necessarily dominate. As important are the tribulations precipitated by subsequent arrivals -- tribulations, themselves marked by commemorative practice, that are as significant to imagining collective identity as "beginnings". The second difference is that in northern Madagascar commemorative practices are not just, or even primarily, about substantiating commemorative narratives -- they are also among the primary means by which political affiliation is expressed. And this is a feature of them that I mean to stress.

The focus in Zerubavel's work is firmly on what people know about the past -- that influential and action-shaping "history that common people carry around in their heads" (Becker 1958:61 cited in Zerubavel 1996:2) -- and the ways they come to know it. The assumption in such a focus seems to be that the narratives substantiated by commemoration provide individual members of a collective with justification both for thoughts on collective identity and for actions taken or words spoken in its promotion or defense. While this is undoubtedly true and perhaps even universal (I have certainly seen examples of this in Madagascar), there is more to commemoration than just this. In
northern Madagascar, for example, commemorating is also about affiliating -- not just with the past commemorated, but with the polity whose past it is.

In this chapter, then, I will be discussing some of the ways in which individuals affiliate themselves with the Antankarana polity. I will refer to the ways I discuss as "media" because in addition to providing individuals the means of affiliating, they also convey information about the past of the thing they are affiliating with. With each medium, I discuss the sort of information that is conveyed and then suggest how it is that in this conveyance affiliation with the polity is established.

Interpreting the Antankarana past

In the next few pages, I introduce three pair of terms which I have found helpful in framing how the past enters and is interpreted in the present in northern Madagascar -- two (individual-collective and inside-outside) quite well worn in anthropological discourse on history, a third (privileged-unprivileged) of particular relevance to the case at hand. Although the terms that make up each pair might be classified as lexical opposites, the ideas, conditions and viewpoints they suggest are not meant to reflect a reality where interpretations of the past can be classified exclusively as examples of one or the other. If anything, I am trying to break from the tradition that promotes the need for such classifications -- the one where "such polarities as history from below versus history from above, event history versus serial history, the native view of history versus the outsider's view" (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990:4 my emphases) dominate. In northern Madagascar individual and collective representations and understandings of the past inform and respond to each other, privilege might be accounted for on many levels and in relative terms, and classifying individuals as insiders or outsiders is never easy. Although I discuss each pair of terms in turn, I should point out that what might be most interesting about the case I describe here emerges when we consider each pair (or even each element of each pair) in relation to the other(s) -- where a list of random combinations of the aforementioned "individual", "collective", "privileged", "unprivileged", "inside" and "outside" offers an array of interesting avenues of inquiry.
*Individual and Collective*

Any attempt at distinguishing between individual and collective interpretations of the past must surely begin with two basic questions: what is *unique* to individuals in the way they interpret history? and, what is *shared* by individual members of a collective in the way they all interpret it? I would argue, following D. W. Cohen (1989) and Sahlins (1987) respectively, that what is unique to individuals is *experience* and what is shared by the collective is *culture*. As in the works I cite it is Cohen who comments on Sahlins, let me start with the latter's discussion of what is shared by the collective.

At its most basic level, Sahlins' argument concerning the inter-relatedness of history and social structure is one for cultural relativism. Throughout the papers contained in *Islands of History*, he argues that although all new events are unique and are necessarily harbingers of change, the scheme by which these events are perceived and categorized is the ultimate source of a collective's continuity. What is shared by individual members of the collective in the present is the "cultural scheme" (1987:xiv) that governs their perceptions and categorizations and implicit in this cultural scheme are the past events which have predicated it. In other words, if individuals share culture, and culture is "the organization of the current situation in terms of the past" (1987:155), then individuals (even those Sahlins calls "historyless") express their connectedness to the past in their interpretations of the mundane events that constitute their current situations. Sahlins' gives the following example to illustrate:

"If 'So-and-so, the youngest son of So-and-so, married So-and-so -- you know the adopted favorite daughter of the Kealoha folks -- and moved inland to take up farming,' then a whole series of distinctions and relations between land and sea, agriculture and fishing, junior and senior, birth and adoption -- the same sorts of difference that make a difference in royal rite or myth -- are being engaged in the recitation of the quotidian and mundane" (1987:51-2).
Culture is "lived" by members of a collective cultural order in as much as they subscribe to the particular "modes of historical action, consciousness and determination" that makes their "historical practice" unique. Individuals interpret the past (albeit sometimes unconsciously) as members of a collective.

Although I have found Sahlins' thoughts on what is shared helpful, the work represented in Islands of History lacks (given my purposes, not Sahlins') in reference to what is unique to individuals. Cohen, responding to Sahlins, offers the necessary supplement. In a paper on the "undefining of oral tradition", he claims that it is the experience of the present, and not just the interpretation of it, that links individuals to the past. "Not located most formidably in poetic verse or extended narratives of a formulaic kind," Cohen writes, "it [knowledge of the past] is constantly voiced, addressed and invoked through everyday life" (1989:13). The past lives in "offices, land titles, inheritance, belief and ritual, clientage, debts and marriage" — individuals (from all backgrounds) necessarily encounter and process it through daily interaction. They know the past as they experience it, and as much as all experience is unique, so, to a degree, are individual interpretations of the past.

As the reader may have guessed, I hold a certain affinity for a view by which the past can be spoken of as "experienced" by individuals in the present. In citing my journal entries in the previous three chapters, I have attempted to introduce how the past "is voiced, addressed and invoked" (as Cohen has suggested) in northern Madagascar. In this chapter, I explore this idea further. Although links between experience and personal history are certainly made — the individual who walks by the tree she planted as a child, for example — the associations I will be referring to here are of a different sort. What I mean to emphasize are the experiences of individuals which frequently recall a collective past from which their own ancestors are noticeably absent — a past that is theirs through affiliation. I will argue that in accepting and identifying with a collective past not their "own" through certain culturally prescribed means, individuals affiliate themselves with the polity (and the royalty at its centre) represented in the very narratives they propagate through those means.
Privileged and unprivileged

In describing a certain category of Hawaiian individuals as "historyless" (i.e., individuals with limited knowledge of actual events of or texts concerning the past), Sahlins implies that, even if they do share the cultural scheme by which events are interpreted, not all individual members of a collective share the same knowledge of the past (1987:49-50). I would suggest, following Sahlins, that individuals might be considered relatively privileged or unprivileged with regard to collective history. This condition might be considered in several ways. First, and most obviously, privilege is marked in terms of individual access to the media by which information about the past is conveyed. Individuals are relatively privileged or unprivileged in this way by virtue of their position in a social or political hierarchy, education, class, gender, age or any other such conceivable criteria. Secondly, privilege may be marked in terms of how well represented one's ancestors are in dominant historical narratives. Individuals are privileged or unprivileged in this way largely by virtue of their particular ancestry. In the following section I consider this pair of conditions in the context of northern Madagascar. I argue that although it is the ancestors of royalty who are most frequently represented in accounts of the past that dominate in the region, commoners too have a certain claim to privilege in terms of their access to the means by which such accounts are reproduced in the present.

By way of opening her discussion of a "kingship" not far removed (in time or place) from the Antankaraña polity that is my focus, Feeley-Harnik (1978) cites a question raised by Evans-Pritchard in an essay of his concerning Anthropology and History. "Why", she credits him with asking, "among some peoples are historical traditions rich and among others poor?" While Evans Pritchard was doubtless referring to "peoples" as units set apart (geographically) from each other, Feeley-Harnik uses his question to explore the different "historical traditions" within a single "people", "Sakalava history" she writes, "is the history of the royal dynasty. Commoner histories are much less elaborate, telescoped like their genealogies and restricted primarily to their peculiar associations with the kingship" (1978:403). Feeley-Harnik argues that only living royalty can be said to
have history (which she equates with tantara) — "the only tantara of significance to Sakalava as a whole", she writes, "is the history of the Sakalava monarchy, from its origins to its present day location" (1978:411). Commoners, although they might participate in rituals which by their nature recall the past, have no claim to the Sakalava past in that it is the ancestors of their rulers (and not their own) that are referred to in tantara. Feeley-Hamik goes on to discuss the question of access to the past. "Sakalava royal history", she writes, "is not known to everyone equally." (1978:411) Knowledge of the specifics of royal history is a necessary element of the royal ritual specialist's métier (he calls such details forth on certain occasions in sometimes secretive ways), and is thus not available for public consumption. "History", Feeley-Hamik notes, "is not evenly distributed because to have it is a sign of politico-religious power and authority. Historical knowledge is not evenly distributed; it is a principal means to that power and authority" (1978:402).

Feeley-Hamik's description is ultimately one that centres (in the present) on the idea of what I am calling privilege. Living royalty are privileged first in that it is their ancestry (and no other) that is portrayed in "the only tantara significant to Sakalava as a whole" — being represented in history is a sign of their authority. They are also privileged in that some of the media by which this information is conveyed are restricted to certain among them. Commoners, then, are "prevented from knowing the historical details which are the ways and means of power and authority among ritual specialists and office-holders in the Southern Bemihisatra monarchy" (1978:412). That said, commoners may become "adepts of history" by virtue of their being possessed by royal spirits. Elsewhere (1988), Feeley-Hamik documents how they may even take on the roles of past royalty in the performance of a dance which recalls a significant episode in the Sakalava past.

Like the Sakalava commoners Feeley-Hamik describes, many constituents of the Antankaraña polity in the far north might also be considered "adepts of history". Just because they may not learn and recite the details of tantara does not mean that they have no role in the “making” of history. They are the mediums possessed by the spirits of past royalty, the celebrants who observe historically salient taboos, and the farmers and workers who contribute the rice, cattle and labor necessary for the successful completion of the Tsangantsainy and its preparatory stages. As such they might be seen as
propagators (and sponsors) of the locally salient commemorative narratives which focus on royalty – narratives that, although sometimes ambiguous, dominate popular discourse concerning Antankaraña history. And, as I will be stressing in chapter 7, it is frequently these sorts of narratives, and not the detailed sort recalled in tantara, that are “used” in contemporary northern Madagascar.

*Inside and Outside*

The table of contents of Volume 24-25 of the University of Madagascar's History journal (*Omaly sy Anio* -- "Yesterday and Today" in official Malagasy) -- a special issue featuring selected papers presented at the 1987 conference on *l'Histoire et Civilisation du Nord Malgache* in Diego-Suarez -- reads a little like a menu of global-fusion delicacies. Like the elaborate names given dishes of that cuisine, the names of contributors to this source offer few hints as to what perspective one is likely to find in their offerings. Robert Jaovelo-Dzao, Jean Theodore, Michael Lambek, Evelyne Rakotoarimanitra, Noël Gueunier -- all historians and/or anthropologists (though not all degree-holders in those fields), and all holding very different positions vis à vis their chosen subject matter. Who among them are insiders, and who outsiders? A reasonable question, but not one easily answered.

Consider Noël Gueunier -- French, an anthropologist, and currently (i.e., 1996) teaching at the University of Strasbourg -- an obvious "outsider", right? Well, that depends on what you mean by "outsider". At the time of his writing the paper included in the 1987 collection, he had been teaching in Madagascar (at Tulear) for some years and had already published a variety of documents locally (some under his adopted Malagasy name Velonandro). During my own time in the north, I heard stories of his mastery of the northern dialect and customs (*fomba*), and was told by many that he was more Antankaraña than many Antankaraña. His contribution to the volume, dealing with the specialized vocabulary associated with certain sailing vessels built in the north, is hardly the sort of thing one would expect of an "outsider". Now consider Jean Theodore -- from the town of Ambilobe, a school teacher and an acquaintance of the living Antankaraña
Ampanjaka. Surely an insider if there ever was one? Yes, although hardly as "inside" as some. Living in the town of Ambilobe, a faithful correspondent of foreign researchers, and an avid reader of scholarly works on Madagascar in general and the north in particular (the first time I met him he was carefully going through a copy of Baré's Sable Rouge -- an historical study of Sakalava on Nosy Be) he is unique among insiders and thus (by extension) somewhat of an outsider himself. In his contribution to the journal, concerning tromba (royal spirits) and the Tsangantsainy, he makes the sorts of objective theoretical extrapolations that are usually considered among the outsider's bag of tricks. Rather than classify them as opposites, then, it is worthwhile to consider what Gueimier and Theodore share in common. Most obviously, they both attended that 1987 conference on history in the north, and both conveyed information about the past there in the same, written, format. In that, they differ considerably from certain others.

Joby Lava, Dominic Destiné, Kozobe's spirit medium -- these and other individuals referred to in the journal extracts of the previous three chapters also warrant consideration in the light of the inside-outside division. As above, each individual is hard to classify as one or the other. Joby Lava, the commoner turned blood-brother of the wife of an uncle of the reigning Ampanjaka; Dominic Destiné, the Parisian visiting his mother and grandmother in Maroantsetra; the spirit medium living far from the Ampanjaka but troubled by a powerful ancestor of his. None of these individuals are entirely inside or outside in terms of the society that is their reference point. While true, Joby Lava would call himself "Antankaraina", he is a commoner with (some suggested to me) a hint of Makoa (implying descent from East African slaves bought by past Ampanjaka -- in the north and elsewhere -- from foreign traders) blood, and is also a heavy drinker and thus partially marginalized. Dominic Destiné, meanwhile, is at once a descendent of East coast Zafimifotsy royalty and East coast French colonial administrators. The spirit medium from the road to Maroantsetra is a northerner but from a region over which no Antankaraina Ampanjaka since Lamboeny Be (in the 18th century) has claimed control. What these individuals share is the way in which they refer to and (especially here) experience the past. In the journal excerpts referred to in the previous three chapters, Joby Lava is joined as blood-brother to a woman in a ceremony (fatidra) that recalls the key alliance of an Antankaraina
Arnpmjako with the French, Dominic Destiné tells me what everyone knows about Benyowsky by referring to the lines of trees that stand where the Polish count's base once did, and the spirit medium from Maroantsetra seeks out a living Arnpmjako in order to placate the long-dead one that possesses her. All of these individuals convey the past in ways that no written or spoken text can -- they refer to it as it enters their daily lives (cf. Cohen 1989 and above). The sort of media by which they do so are what I will be discussing in the second half of this chapter.

The point I am trying to make here with regard to the inside-outside problem is that categorizing individuals as "inside" and "outside" of the group whose past is under discussion is too difficult and time consuming. Distinguishing the media by which the information they interpret is conveyed may be more revealing in the long run.

Mediating past and present

My interest in the media by which the past is conveyed is not unprecedented in the realm of Sakalava ethnography. Feeley-Harnik (1988), for example, has discussed dance as a practice in which the connection between past and present is evident. Similarly, in their discussions of spirit possession (tromba), Lambek (1998) and Sharp (1993), have remarked on the connection between past and present. They describe commoners possessed by the spirits of past royalty as participating in ceremonies that are "a form of pageantry where history is dramatized and displayed through the dress, mannerisms, dialects and actions of the tromba [royal spirits]" (Sharp 1993: 147). As actors in these pageants, mediums embody the past, and through this embodiment, transmit it to those around them (Lambek 1998).

In the following section I suggest some of the multiple ways in which the past is conveyed in the present. Focusing specifically on geography, spirit possession (tromba), and taboo (fady) I describe some of the ways in which the past is recalled and/or represented by Antankaraña in the present. I argue that what makes these media so significant is that they render the past something to be experienced -- they are the means by which the past enters the daily lives of the majority of polity constituents. Spirit
mediums possessed by ancestral royalty become those figures, and, even outside of a state of possession, must respect their needs and wishes; certain mnemonic taboos restrict individuals in ways that recall the past; visits to faraway tombs of royal ancestors lead celebrants to places of particular significance in the commonly repeated narrative of the Antankaraña past. These media (among others) allow Antankaraña to participate in a story that texts only tell of, and the performances required of many of these media are themselves "acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible" (Connerton, 1989:39).

**Geography**

**October 21, 1992 — Ampasindava (Nosy Mitsio)**

With all the morning's excitement, we don't eat lunch until mid afternoon. It's our second day here on Nosy Mitsio, and knowing that after the *Ampanjaka's joro* (invocation) tomorrow we'll have to start thinking about heading back to the mainland, I'm willing to forego the comfort of regular mealtimes for the time being. Lisa and I enjoy the post meal lull under a mango tree, trading vocabulary with Solange and Suzette. Lipo, self appointed Woodward to microphone toting Justin's Bernstein, joins us, video camera in hand, and dodging his younger sisters' requests to be filmed on the beach, suggests we ask Dadilahy Said to show us where Tsimiharo's palace once stood. It'll be a good addition to the video they're making for broadcast on Ambilobe's local T.V. station.

Joined by a number of the *Ampanjaka* advisors, we walk no more than 20 metres into the brush north of the *Ampanjaka* 's plaza. At Justin's direction, Lipo pans the camera across the group of us, lowering it finally to focus on the ruins at our feet. This was the site, he narrates, of Tsimiharo's *zomba* (palace) on the island. Repeated questioning brings forth anecdotes concerning Tsimiharo's time there. At the heart of Dadilahy Said's words is an implicit locatedness that his gestures render explicit. It was *here*, Nosy Mitsio, the island without birds, in this spot, that Tsimiharo reigned; it was that altar *there* that Robia, Tsimiharo's delinquent advisor, had built in penance, dragging slabs of stone from that mountain over *there*; it was in the water *there* that boats, carrying foreigners intent on meeting the *Ampanjaka*, arrived; etc.
Never has the importance of our visit to Nosy Mitsio been more obvious. We are here it is true to support the Ampanjaka in seeking the benediction of royal ancestors buried on the islands surrounding this one. Like the visit to the caves, in which a similar benediction is sought, this visit is necessary to ensure the proper completion of the Tsangantsainy slated for next year. I realize, though, that we are not here just because this is where so many royal ancestors died -- we are here because this is where so many royal ancestors lived.

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The Antankaraña past is defined in space as much as it is in time. Rarely is any mention of a past event not accompanied by an arm's length finger point, chin-extension, or, at the very least, mention of the cardinal direction which the listener could follow to come upon the actual location at which the event recounted occurred. Location is particularly important in the reckoning of royalty's history in the region. Nosy Mitsio, the Ankaraña massif, Ambilobe (formerly Mahavañono), Ambatoharaña, Matsaboridoany -- these, like the innumerable hills, rivers, lakes and mango trees that are distinguished from the rest are significant for what is said to have taken place at them. Although few of the people I spoke with during my fieldwork could (or would be inclined to) offer particular dates for Tsimiharo's hiding and escape from the Merina, for example, few could not mention exactly where he hid and to where it was that he escaped.

Commenting on a series of place names (not unlike the list offered above) in History on the Luapula, Cunnison states that "these places are known to everyone who hears the story [of the past] today, and clearly vivify ... the events recounted" (1951:39). Nosy Mitsio and the caves of the Ankaraña massif are clearly among the locations that "vivify" the Antankaraña past, and the visits to these places in the years leading up to the Tsangantsainy are rife with mnemonic significance. During the visit to Nosy Mitsio (referred to in the above journal extract) co-celebrants stayed in the village established by Tsimiharo following his crossing over from the mainland. They walked among the ruins of that nineteenth century Ampanjaka's now crumbled palace and watched intently as the living Ampanjaka, seated on the stone platform first built there in the mid-nineteenth
century, pronounced an invocation to royal ancestors entombed on smaller surrounding islands. At night, they slept on the beach where Tsimiharo and his brothers disembarked after their long trips abroad in search of foreign allies. I must note here that these connections, between the recalled past and an experienced present, did not exist only in my mind, nor were they offered at my own suggestive questioning while walking, watching or lounging alongside participants over the few days of the visit. They were, in fact, consciously voiced in the way I describe by co-participants over the several days and nights we spent on the island. Although the visit to Nosy Mitsio was not necessarily meant to be commemorative (we were there to observe the *Ampanjaka* in his *joro* to ancestors entombed on surrounding islands requesting a year of plenty in preparation for the *Tsangantsainy*), there is no doubt that by just being on the island, in the village, under the trees, we were, in fact, commemorating a particularly salient era of the Antankarana past.

Stating that individuals recall particular events of the past through their recognition of important locations in a "sacred geography" is not enough. I would argue that, in certain cases, where particular locations recall single elements of a narrative comprised of many, reference to one location can call forth a whole series of them as well as the accompanying narrative that ties them all together. In northern Madagascar, encountering one location (in whatever context) in Antankarana ‘sacred geography’, can call forth not just other locations, but also the story that connects these locations to each other. It is difficult to discuss the significance of Nosy Mitsio, for example, without reference to the events that preceded and followed Tsimiharo's 19th century exile there (cf. Harwood 1976).

Visiting or referring to particular places, then, recalls important events of the past and the narratives which draw those events together. That said, the events (or narratives) recalled by these places do not necessarily involve the ancestors of all those who recognize them (the events *and* the places) as important. At the time of the narrative recalled by the visit to the caves of Ankaraña and to Nosy Mitsio, not all living in the region followed Tsimiharo's every move -- not all entered and hid in the caves, and not all crossed along with him to Nosy Mitsio. Many, members of Tsimiharo's own family among them, stayed
out of the caves and behind on the mainland, and accepted Merina sovereignty regardless of its implications. What is so interesting is that in the present, it is all (the descendants of those who stayed behind included) who are meant to participate in the visits that recall those events -- a notion that recalls an important point mentioned earlier: The narrative recalled by these locations and visits to them is not one that accounts for the tribulations and survival of a people in the face of adversity, but one that recounts the tribulations and survival of a political order and its living representatives. As I will be pointing out in the next two chapters, it is hard to imagine the Antankarana as a people at all in contemporary Madagascar without reference to that political order, its rulers (past and present) and the perseverance and survival of both.

How then is affiliation marked by means of geography? As I have hinted at above, and will be discussing in greater detail in the next chapter, it is mostly during the large collective visits to these places that affiliation with the polity is marked. More generally, I would argue that in just recognizing these locations (and others like them) as significant to local "sacred geography" even though the past events that have made them significant may not have involved their own ancestors, individuals are also recognizing the importance of the polity (and its rulers) in the region. I will shortly argue a similar point with regard to certain taboos which also recall events of the past.

_Tromba_

The phenomenon of spirit possession is probably the most commonly observed way in which the past might be said to be "experienced" in Madagascar. In situations like the one described in chapter 3, where the spirit of a 17th century Ampanjaka (Kozobe) speaks with his descendant (the living Ampanjaka) by means of the medium he possesses, the vitality of the connection between past and present is striking. In the following section, I explore this connection and delineate the contexts in which it is most evident. I stress that connections to the past are evident both in the daily lives of individual spirit mediums and at the events at which spirits appear -- the past is consumed (sometimes literally) and consuming in both domestic and public spheres in a variety of ways. Although
there are many types of possessing forces warranting discussion, I will here restrict myself to a discussion of tromba— the spirits of ancestral royalty that possess (usually non-royal) mediums in the present.

Tromba spirits usually make themselves known to the mediums they will possess through illness. Ailing individuals who consult local specialists are diagnosed through divination (sikidy), and when appropriate are informed that there is a spirit troubling them. Such information is sometimes difficult to deal with, for once it is out and known it requires that the patient (whether already a spirit medium or not) prepare herself for the inevitable possession.

Acceptance of a spirit requires that the medium also accept its taboos (fady)—taboos that invade her daily life, restricting her from eating certain types of food, working on certain days, or even traveling by certain modes of transportation. These taboos are commonly connected to the cause or context of death of the physical bodies that the particular ancestors once possessed wholly. A certain spirit, whose physical self was killed in an accident involving a wagon loaded with sacks of cashews and a light colored bush-taxi, for example, imposes taboos against both the eating of cashews and travel by wagon or light colored bush-taxi on its medium. Similarly, mediums possessed by the members of particular family that had drowned themselves en masse several centuries ago are forbidden from eating any of the types of fish that may have consumed the spirits’ physical selves. Failure to respect these taboos can lead to a re-emergence of a past illness, or even the emergence of a new illness in the medium.

While respecting these taboos is an important part of the healing process, so is the fulfilling of the spirit’s ultimate need. To fully recover, the afflicted individual must give the spirit a voice and embodiment. In conjunction with other, intermediary, spirit-mediums and their own spouses (usually husbands), a ceremony must be planned to allow the spirit to make its appearance (miboaka) and announce itself. It is in the context of such ceremonies that the phenomenon of spirit possession is most obviously a medium of the past.

While the particular taboos respected by mediums often reflect the earthly demise of the spirits that possess them, the habits and preferences followed while in a state of
possession usually reflect these spirits' lives and personalities. As part of the *rombo* (as these ceremonies are called), food, cigarettes and alcohol must be provided for all of those spirits and celebrants in attendance. The individuality of each spirit is nowhere more apparent -- some spirits like menthol cigarettes, others favor candy; some drink just rum, others prefer more expensive drinks such as bottled beer or Coca-Cola. Spirits may also require their mediums to wear particular types of clothing, the styles of which are meant to be those of the time and milieu in which they had once lived. The costs incurred and planning required to accommodate such preferences are considerable, and events are sometimes postponed if the host and her husband are unable to raise enough money to ensure that all are properly provided for. What is so interesting about these preferences is how they situate the spirits in terms of the era or milieu in which they had once lived -- a point well made in Lambek's (1998) recent work on Sakalava possession on the west coast of Madagascar. In this way they, like the taboos mediums must respect when not possessed, recall the past and indeed bring it into present day experience.

The vintage of spirits is also evident in the habits and actions that they demonstrate and carry-out in the bodies of their mediums. The speech patterns and comportment adopted by mediums in states of possession, for example, are meant to be those of the spirits that possess them. Each spirit has its own personality -- some sit quietly drinking and listening to music, others tell bawdy stories and dance -- and each personality bears no obvious connection to the personality of the medium it occupies. Reserved mediums may be possessed by raucous spirits and vice-versa. Often, a shift in spoken dialect of Malagasy (appropriate to the time and place the spirits once lived) accompanies such shifts in personality -- spirits may even use archaic vocabulary that their mediums might not be expected to know. A medium who doesn't drink or smoke may be possessed by a spirit who does and thus be compelled to have a cigarette or glass of rum while possessed. It is in situations like these, where the conduct of the spirit and that expected of the medium most obviously diverge, that the simultaneous connectedness and disconnectedness of past and present are evident.
More than just individual personalities, though, these spirits are also what Lambek has called "icons of history". "Spirits", he writes, "juxtapose distinct historical epochs. The juxtaposition is in part a means of their very constitution -- by means of contrasting signifiers in comportment, clothing, furniture, drink, dialect etc. But more than this, the space of performance enables the simultaneous display of successive temporalities" (1998, in press). What is so striking about possession in the far north however, and what makes it so different from the sort of possession described by Lambek and Feeley Harnik (1991), is that the spirits that appear most frequently are not themselves from the area, and are thus not (specifically) Antankarana. Even Kozobe, whose is arguably a member of the line of Antankarana Ampanjaka, died and is entombed far south of the current Antankarana capital of Ambatoharanana. In addition to juxtaposing distinct historical epochs, possessed mediums in the north also juxtapose distinct branches of a royal lineage. In allowing living members of one branch to communicate with dead members of another, they link royalty through space as well as through time (cf. Lan 1985:34 on "spirit provinces").

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August 19, 1994 — Ambavanakarana

The front room of the village rangahy's stilt house is crowded. We listen as Dadilahy Said explains our visit. He has come despite his wife's concern for his health and the difficulty of walking the 6 muddy kilometres from Ambatoharanana.

"The ancestors are our owners/masters," he says, "when they are clean, we are all clean."

This is the second fisehana (bathing of tromba spirits) that I've attended in the past three years. Ambavanakarana is decidedly more calm that Ampasinanteniny was in

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1The most striking example of this that I have seen occurred when an 11 year old girl drank rum and smoked cigarettes like an adult while possessed. Normally, such an act would be frowned upon by any of those gathered, but in the context in which the incident occurred it was acceptable — it was the spirit and not she that was drinking.
1992 — I expect that that village's concurrent fisehana (at which the Ampanjaka will be in attendance) will be far more lively than this one promises to be. His speech finished, Dadilahy reverts to a more casual style of conversation. He expresses his concern with the idea of having two fisehana simultaneously at two separate places along the coast. As the spirits attending each can only appear in one medium at a time, he fears that some, especially Dady ny Kotro (the grandfather of the family of spirits for whom this fisehana is being held), won't appear here at all. Still, he says, we'll all bathe with the spirits that do appear regardless.

The following morning, Dady ny Kotro does arrive. The medium possessed by him dons a finely crafted headpiece — the sickle moon and star that are his identifying marks striking in polished silver. Many of his descendants have already arrived in their mediums. Bivaoko (Dady ny Kotro's son) and a number of his grandchildren have been playing most of the night in the courtyard set aside for them. They all greet him upon arrival in the required respectful terms. He watches their "play" (soma) quietly (as an old man would), occasionally letting one of his grandchildren sit and rock in his lap. We all wait for the tide to go out and the word from Dadilahy Said that the bathing should begin. By 9 AM, it's time.

The Ndrambavibe and Dady ny Mariata lead the group of us (about 40 — mostly women) along the water's edge. Dadilahy Said follows alongside in a canoe. The mediums possessed with Antandrano spirits follow behind us, playing still; clapping and singing, stamping their feet on the sticky sand, seemingly oblivious to the cold windblown ocean spray that has the rest of us complaining. Arriving at the horonbato (a polyhedral stone rising three feet out of the sand that will be the site of Dadilahy Said's invocation), we kneel or crouch around its western side and wait for Dadilahy to begin. Shivering furiously, he accepts a white cloth from one of the possessed mediums crouched alongside him and wraps it around his shoulders before he begins.

"Yaaa .. Merci Dady." he says, "Thank-you Grandparent."

Dadilahy Said's invocation (joro) proceeds through the cold.

"I am your grandson ..." he begins.
Calling first upon God and then on the ancestors, he requests rain for the coming year's crops and good (*tsara*) for those of us gathered. These are common elements of just about every public invocation of this kind. He also requests that the "door" (*varavarania*) closed during the taboo month just passed, be opened again to allow the spirits about to be bathed to possess their mediums freely. Dadilahy Said slaps his cane on the water beside us 8 times, indicating that it is time to bathe. The possessed mediums (and a few courageous non-possessed) dive in the water, splash about and return to Ambavankaraña.

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Nowhere is the past more evidently embodied and conveyed than at the large annual bathing of *tromba* spirits -- called *fisehana* -- held at several points along the coast near Ankaraña and Ambilobe. While the mediums possessed by *tromba* spirits are obviously the most important participants (it is they who carry their spirits into the water to be cleansed following the taboo month of *Sakave*) these events are enjoying increasing popularity among non-mediums as well. Under the *Ampanjakà*’s guiding eye, the *fisehana* has become an annual event drawing nearly as much interest as the preliminary stages of the ritual cycle described in the introduction².

While it is Zafinifotsy (the spirits of past royalty of that lineage) who are the "owners" of the event (*tompin'ny asa*) and the bathing place, and thus mediums of Zafinifotsy royalty who most frequently attend, all *tromba* spirits, including Zafininmena (the spirits of past royalty of that lineage), are welcome to come to the *fisehana* to bathe and play (*misoma*) -- to drink rum, smoke cigarettes, dance and play music. Separate areas for this play are designated to Zafinifotsy and Zafininmena spirits, each with their own restrictive taboos. The Zafinifotsy spirits that arrive for the bathing itself, as well as in the days and hours leading up to it, are mostly from a branch of royalty called Antandrano -- "the people of water". This group is distinct from others in that its

²My comments here are based on having attended two *fisehana* -- in Ampasinenteniny (1992) and Ambavanankaraña (1994).
members shared a common end (they drowned themselves en masse rather than give in to highland invaders) and thus hold characteristics (clothing, habits, taboo, etc.) in common. When Antandrano spirits possess their mediums at the fisehana (as on other occasions), they put them through a violent re-creation of their traumatic demise. As an individual medium becomes possessed (misazoko), she thrashes madly — her head rocking back and forth, unbraided hair flying — in a re-enactment of the drowning that killed the bodies that the spirits once occupied. In a sort of reversal in time, the dead are called back to the world of the living through an imitation of the actions that first cast them out of it.

In contexts like the fisehana, spirit-possession is not just a private or family concern — it is a very public one. I described earlier how mediums embody the past through the recognition (both in and out of states of possession) of the spirits that possess them. Others, especially spouses and other mediums, share somewhat in this link to the past, but it would be hard to describe as a very public process. In contexts like the ones described above, however, it is their performances that convey the past. In appearing at the fisehana, the Antandrano spirits do more than just play. They call forth a long-past tragedy and remind the large audience gathered that they had once lived, resisted and drowned. To most observers it is the actions of the spirits in the bodies of their mediums, and not the taboos and habits associated with each individual spirit, that are the obvious referents to the past.

And what is the message conveyed? The tragedy referred to in the fisehana described above recalls for many the animosity between coastal and highland groups. Even though the physical demise of Dady ny Kotro and the rest of the Antandrano spirits (traceable — by Dadilahy Said's genealogy — to the late 17th century) occurred in an era long before that of the nineteenth century Merina imperialism, the conflict commemorated at the fisehana is often linked to the one which drove Tsimiharo first into the caves and then to Nosy Mitsio. And just as Merina of today are restricted access to the caves where Tsimiharo hid (more on this shortly) so are they said to be vulnerable to the wrath of royal ancestors if they approach the spot where the Antandrano are said to have drowned, or

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3According to Dadilahy Said, Dady ny Kotro, the patriarch of the Antandrano spirits, was the younger brother (zandry) of Baratavaoko (Kozobe's father).
attempt to attend one of these events at which Antandrano spirits are bathed. At the two fisehana I attended, I heard stories of how Merina piloting boats along the coast were liable to be caught in a storm and drowned.

Whether considered in domestic or public spheres, then, possession conveys information about the past. As significantly, though, it is also a means by which individuals affiliate with the polity and the royalty at its centre. In her study of tromba in a north-western migrant town Sharp discusses an interesting and analogous case. In Ambanja, a plantation town 100 km south of Ambilobe populated largely by the descendants of migrants from throughout Madagascar, she notes that "involvement in tromba ... is simultaneously evidence of an individual's integration into the local community and a means to achieve this end" (1996:180). Possession is virtually the only means by which (female) descendants of long-term migrants in the area can claim something of an insider's status -- as mediums of the ancestors of local royalty, they enter a variety of social networks (both with other mediums and with the spirits that possess them) that effectively draw them "inside" an ethnic group not their own. While a similar argument could probably be made for possession in the town of Ambilobe or at SIRAMA (where there are also large migrant populations), my concern here is not so much with how possession provides opportunities for integration into an ethnic unit, but with how possession draws individuals into a political one. I am particularly interested in how possession requires that mediums recognize and associate with the descendants of the spirits that possess them -- the Ampanjaka in particular.

_Tromba_ possession necessitates contact between spirit mediums and living representatives of the polity in a number of ways. First, at the inception of possession, mediums are meant to visit the Ampanjaka or Ndrambavibe, often with the other mediums who have overseen the possession process, in order to obtain the objects -- a white plate (lekaleka), kaolin (tanifotsy) and pieces of silver (volafotsy), for example -- necessary for possession to take place. The reader might recall the visit, described in chapter 3, of Kozobe's spirit medium to the Ampanjaka. As my description of that case indicated, the visit was made to obtain these objects, but also because it is what Kozobe (the spirit troubling the young medium) wanted. Just as the medium must rely on the Ampanjaka to
supply the means by which they may be cured, the spirits of royal ancestors, then, must rely on their living descendant (the *Ampanjaka*) if they are to enter the material world - without his authorization neither spirit nor medium can achieve their objectives. Sometimes, spirits who want contact with the living *Ampanjaka* have something to tell him, and generally, as in a case to be described shortly in which they advised against the *Ampanjaka*’s involvement in a business venture in the region, their advice is carefully considered. The contact between spirits and their living descendants is not restricted to private settings, however. They may also meet with him *en masse* at events like the above described *fisehana* and the soon to be discussed *Tsangantsainy*. In all cases, these meetings take place in the *Ampanjaka*’s own space -- never does he go to consult them, they must always come to him.

Interestingly, spirits may also lead their mediums to the polity’s centre by having them make material contributions to it. The first step in understanding how this is so is to recognize that spirits may own things. In addition to receiving goods from their human mediums, the spouses of those mediums and the *Ampanjaka*, spirits are also likely to receive payments from the clients they treat. These payments, which can be as small as a token sum of money or as large as cow, become the property of the spirit (not the medium) and can be used as the spirit sees fit. If the medium desires, she may request something from the spirit through an intermediary, but if she consumes something without asking first, she is liable to be punished for it. Commonly, spirits choose to donate some of their resources to the living *Ampanjaka* -- usually in the form of money (given on occasions such as the *fisehana* and *Tsangantsainy* -- more on this in the next chapter), but sometimes cattle may be given too. This connection between spirits, their mediums and the polity is even further pronounced at the time of the death of a medium. Just as the goods required for possession were attained from the *Ampanjaka* and *Ndrambavibe* in the first place, so are they meant to return to these sources after the medium has died. Meant to be given over too are all of the possessions the spirits had accumulated through other sources -- the money, silver, clothing, accessories and cattle they had been provided with by obliging spouses and clients. In all of these circumstances, the primary relationship is not between spirit and medium or medium and *Ampanjaka/Ndrambavibe*, but between the
spirit and the *Ampanjaka/N'drampavibe*. Mediums are the means by which this communication and exchange across generations takes place.

In these ways, then, *tromba* possession draws individuals into the polity's fold. While true that it is frequently the spirits themselves, and not the mediums, who require involvement with the polity and its leaders, the well being of the second is generally tied up with the desires and needs of the first. It is only allowing themselves to embody the past of and for others that mediums can be cured of their ailments.

**Taboos**

April 24, 1994 -- Ambilobe

Zoky Mariamo gets the unruly kids bedded down in their two rooms and comes out to join me on the landing. Ambilobe is cool and peaceful for a change; the only sounds a faint *koasa-koasa* from a distant *bush-taxi* tape-deck and the occasional peal of laughter from inside the house as the kids imitate some favorite segments of the scout play they've just seen at the church. Zoky Mariamo whispers a harsh warning through the door and returns to our conversation. We'd been talking about the failed shrimp farming project.

While negotiations for the project were proceeding, a spirit medium from Ambavanakaraña (the site of the proposed operation and of an annual *fisehana*) had a disturbing dream and reported its contents to the *Ampanjaka*. The Antandrano spirits would never stand for the project for, although it promised employment to a great many Antankaraña, it would doubtless be administered by Merina. Such a flagrant disregard of taboo (*fady*) would doom the project from the start. Zoky Mariamo credits the *Ampanjaka* as having wisely followed the medium's advice and ended negotiations there.

I've heard a variety of interpretations of and commentaries on the failed shrimp farming project (all biased in their own way), but I find this take on it the most interesting. Crediting the spirits with having scuttled the project takes the blame from the living and renders the other, sometimes virulent, descriptions of the negotiation process impotent. At the same time, Zoky Mariamo's version touches on the issues of
self determination and control that dominate the current debate over the economic
development of the north. In her words I sense the implication that the spirits would
not be the only ones to object to an administration of outsiders presiding over a work-
force of locals.

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While spirit possession has individuals (whether mediums, clients or just observers)
confront the past through interaction, certain taboos (*fady*) convey the past through the
*constraint* of action. The taboos discussed above, those associated with certain spirits, are
good examples of this. By not eating particular foods or traveling by certain modes of
transportation individual mediums call forth the lives and deaths of royal ancestors. In the
following section, I will discuss other ways in which taboos can be said to convey the past.

Jorgen Ruud's 1960 book on taboo in Madagascar, entitled *Taboo: A Study of
Malagasy Customs and Beliefs*, has a cover that screams of ethnographic kitsch: Two
monuments pictured aside each other in vibrant color -- the first tall, thin and studded with
ox horns on either side, the second more of an obelisk with the word "TABOO" painted in
what looks like blood (like on a poster of a cheap horror film, each letter dripping the
stuff) down its side. Setting aside for the moment the fact that "TABOO" is not a
Malagasy word (let alone that it would be written in blood down the side of a monument),
and keeping in mind the old adage about books and their covers, Ruud's work deserves
credit for what it is -- a thorough catalogue of many of the taboos or "prohibitions"
(1960:1) which various Malagasy groups recognize.

His "information" on specifically "Antankarana" *fady* is unfortunately very sparse.
He makes reference to only three, relatively obscure, taboos: the first stating that it is
prohibited for a child to eat the legs of a fowl while his/her father is still alive (the
implication being that the best part is reserved for the father), the second stating that it is
prohibited for a girl to wash her brother's shorts, and the third stating that a pregnant
woman is prohibited from sitting in an open doorway lest the passage of her child out of
her body itself be blocked. Although I don't doubt the veracity of Ruud's "information", I
do doubt that very many people identifying themselves as Antankarana today would
recognize and respect these (except possibly for the last one) prohibitions as fady. Although the best part of the chicken is always set aside for father, and sisters might object to washing their brothers' shorts, it is questionable whether these (in-)actions are attributable to a respect of fady.

In a paper concerning the nature of fady-observance, Lambek recognizes Ruud in his discussion of the importance of taboos in the reckoning of identity. By Lambek's thinking, "at the heart of Malagasy identity ... lies implicit affirmation by means of negation" (1992:2) -- negation often expressed in the form of fady. Fady are not just prohibitions imposed or rules to be followed, they are often important criteria by which personal and collective identities are conceived. The key question is not so much what is restricted and to whom, but rather what broader effects such restrictions have on the individuals to whom they do and don't apply. Lambek's discussion serves well in helping imagine the significance of fady in the negotiation of personal and collective identities, but an additional element must be considered to make it applicable to the case I am discussing here. Many of the fady I describe throughout this dissertation must be considered with regard to the past events that predicated them. Not only might they be said to originate with those events, they also recall them, and as such could be termed 'mnemonic fady'. Consider the following journal excerpt.

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November 4, 1992 – Andavaka ("inside the caves").

The potential for disaster is immense. Consider the factors:

1. Of the 1500 of us who managed to cross the sharp limestone foyer of the cave entrance and squeeze through the tiny opening and into the highway-tunnel-size main passage that leads to our destination, about 1/4 are partially drunk. The rest of us are just exhausted from last night's rain-soaked tsimandrindraimy ("no lying down") festivities.
2. The dried palm torches we were given back at Ampanamambahiny (the camp where we're based when not making these visits to the tombs of past Ampanjaka) give off more smoke than light and burn out fast. The dying embers of the most eager torch-bearers mark the path to Andriansirotso's resting place like bread crumbs. I just wonder how we'll ever see our way back after the Ampanjaka has completed the joro (prayer/invocation) we've come to assist in. Flashlights (along with underwear) are also fady.

3. The women I've been walking behind keep whispering their uneasiness at having seen a member of the Njakiagnitry family enter the cave alongside us. "Masaky raha" one murmurs to the other, "they dare things". Members of the Njakiagnitry family, like living Merina, are restricted access to these caves based on the actions of their ancestors. Both categories of individuals share responsibility for having driven Tsimiharo I into hiding in the caves in the first place, and are ultimately responsible for his later exile on Nosy Mitsio. From what I understand of their conversation, this violation of fady could be bad news for all of us.

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Fady are not just prohibitions passed through the generations from time immemorial. Many are rooted in a known past, and the respect of them, especially on important occasions such the visit to the cave-tombs of past Ampanjaka in preparation for the Tsangantsainy, is yet another way in which the past is "vivified" in the present. In the above cited example, co-celebrants entered the caves barefoot and without underclothing like their forebears all the time heeding the rule of silence that had kept Tsimiharo's faithful from being followed. More than just remembering the past through their respect of these fady, they are in a sense re-enacting it.

In a recent paper concerning famadihana, the Merina practice of removing the corpses of ancestors from their tombs, re-wrapping and then re-placing them to await the next such event, Graeber describes fady as a powerful means by which control is established. "Throughout Madagascar", he writes, "to be able to impose such restrictions [i.e. fady] on others is one of the most basic ways of demonstrating authority over them"
Although this is certainly true with respect to the *fady* he discusses (those concerning potential marriage partners for example), and is also true in the case of many *fady* in the north (recall the taboos imposed by spirits on the mediums they possess), prohibitions of the sort described above must be thought of in another way. What makes the restrictions imposed during ceremonial visits to the caves or at enactments of the *fisehana* so interesting is that they are mnemonic. Some recall conditions of the past by having current practitioners carry themselves like the ancestors (silently and with torches). Others recall tribulations and tragedies of the past by restricting the presence of the descendants of those considered culpable in retrospect.

In significant contrast to the sorts of *fady* discussed by Lambek and Graeber, then, some of the mnemonic *fady* I am discussing here are most significant to those who they do not restrict. On occasions such as the visit to the caves or the *fisehana*, *fady* do help establish group identity by marking the difference between the prohibited and the non-prohibited, as Lambek suggests, but in this case it is the *freedom* to act that marks the collective. In a sense, these *fady* perpetuate the relationships established at the time of the events commemorated by associating living descendants with their ancestors actions. Cunnison's comment that "historical events ... have a very real and personal significance since the characters are still alive today and are known in the relationships of the crucial period described" (1951:35) is nowhere better corroborated than here.

Obviously, Merina haven't the same motivation to respect Antankaraña *fady* as they do to respect *fady* of their own — although supernatural ancestral force threatens to strike any *fady* violator of any background in any place, such threats are inevitably better heeded in cases where they are perceived to emanate from one's own rather than from an other's ancestral authority. Not surprisingly then, there are violations. The *fady* concerning Merina entering the caves, for example, is sometimes broken by Tana-based tour guides leading their clients through the caves.

It seems possible that I'm giving neither Antankaraña themselves nor Graeber's comments on the nature of authority and *fady* enough credit. Could it be that on certain occasions, by means of *fady*, Antankaraña rulers are, in fact, asserting a sort of authority over those groups they restrict? Although subject to a state commonly perceived to be
Merina-controlled, and thus nominally subject to highland authority in many day-to-day contexts, Antankaraña who participate in ceremonies of the type described above might be viewed as asserting a certain autonomy. By this thinking, the *fady* that prohibit Merina from participating in such events ensure Antankaraña propriety of their own past. Not that such sentiments are ever overtly stated by the *Ampanjaka* or other representatives of the polity in public contexts -- the *Ampanjaka*, especially, must be very careful not to offend the many powerful Merina employed by the state and organizations like the WWF. In explaining the above mentioned prohibitions to them, the *Ampanjaka* is sure to explain that they are based on past events, and not on any animosity of the present. In a way, then, that recalls Anderson's take on the relationship between the impossibility of forgetting of past tragedies and the construction of national ideologies (1983:201)⁴, Antankaraña are consistently reminded of things that the *Ampanjaka*'s assurances to state and WWF officials suggest have been long forgotten.

That the sorts of taboo described above recall events of the past is obvious. Once again, though, as in the case of geography and spirit possession, it is a particular past that is recalled -- that of the polity, and more specifically, the royalty at its centre. These mnemonic *fady* might also be considered akin to the great many other *fady* associated with royalty (not discussed here) which individuals in the area are meant to respect -- *fady* such as that prohibiting people to work the land on Tuesdays. In respecting them and, as important in the case of mnemonic *fady*, recognizing their importance and the events they recall, individuals also respect and recognize the polity.

**Media and affiliation**

In the opening passage of his study of how history is "made" in America, Flacks distinguishes between two arenas of human action. "On the one hand," he writes "there is action directed at the sustaining of everyday life; on the other, there is action directed at the making of history" (Flacks 1988:1). On the one hand are the daily chores needed to

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⁴ Anderson writes that "having to 'have already forgotten' tragedies of which one needs unceasingly to be 'reminded' turns out to be a characteristic device in the later construction of national ideologies."
keep self and dependents afloat, on the other are those deeds "relevant to the survival, maintenance and development of society" (1988:2). The division he suggests is here most interesting in how it differs from the case I am describing. From what I have presented above, it should be obvious that in northern Madagascar, personal survival is often linked to "the survival, maintenance and development of society" — i.e., that sustaining action is frequently history making. The land that is farmed on, the prohibitions followed, the curative processes undertaken — all are evident in the daily concerns of people living in the region, and all recalling the past of the polity with which they affiliate.

How important is this connection between practice, history and affiliation? Recent work on neighboring Sakalava groups by Feeley-Harnik, Lambek and Sharp indicates that it is very important. Among Sakalava groups, the two ways of making history noted by Peel (1984:111) — "making history, on the plane of social action directed at realising a future" and "making history, in the sense of giving accounts of the past" — are intimately connected. In northern Madagascar the willingness of constituents to "make history" by experiencing, embodying and respecting it is what ensures that the polity will continue to "make history" through changing times.
CHAPTER 7

Commemoration and Continuity in Antankaraña Ritual

Consider the following two statements concerning the *Tsangantsainy* -- the mast-raising rite introduced earlier:

The *Tsangantsainy* is a symbolic ritual used by the Antankaraña people to protect and conserve their cultural identity. This identity manifests itself in the continuity of the monarchy (Tsitindry 1981, film narration).

and,

This periodic celebration which consecrates the memory of a very old alliance with France, was very moving because of the old memories it evoked (Pain 1962:65).

These quotes suggest fundamentally different understandings of what the event discussed later in this chapter is all about. The first, from the narration (written by an Antankaraña woman) of a film produced by Malagasy state television, asserts that constructing and raising a mast once every five years ensures the continuity of the Antankaraña polity and the viability of a distinctly Antankaraña "cultural identity" in contemporary Madagascar. The second, from a paper written by a French visitor who attended the 1961 enactment of the event, asserts, contrarily, that the mast-raising rite is performed in remembrance of the long-standing alliance between the Antankaraña and the French; i.e., that the *Tsangantsainy* refers primarily not to present cultural identity or the future of the polity, but to events of the past. While I cite only two sources here, corroborations for each of the perspectives they represent abounded in the comments of diverse participants and
observers of the Tsangantsainy I attended in 1993 and 1997. This leaves me with a problem.

How does one begin analysing an event which has been and is now interpreted in such ostensibly different ways? First, it must be recognized that each of these interpretations are, as sure as the one I offer in this chapter is, constructed -- each reveals as much about its proponents (individually or collectively) as it does about the ritual in question (i.e., that the current Ampanjaka suggests that the point of the Tsangantsainy is to celebrate the political order he is a part of is as predictable as the French officer's suggestion that it evokes positive memories of the French). Second, we must appreciate that just as ritual symbols are polyvalent (Turner 1967), so too are the practices and events they constitute. Certainly, part of what makes popular rituals like the Tsangantsainy so significant is the fact that they are open to interpretation and reinterpretation from different perspectives and in different times. Finally, we must allow for the possibility that, when considered in common, these two seemingly distinct perspectives might reveal something quite important about the Tsangantsainy that one or the other of them doesn't suggest on its own -- that its ambiguity is important. Before delving into what I mean by that, I offer a brief review of some of the areas to which I hope this chapter contributes.

Ritual

Before considering a specific ritual or rituals, it is worth considering the two questions which anthropologists, sociologists, theologians and various others in the field of ritual studies seem to be continuously grappling with. To quote Bell, we might ask: "What is ritual?", and "How does [it] do what we say it does?" (1992:169). In asking these questions with a particular case in mind we are necessarily led down some paths and not others. What follows, then, is not meant to be an overview of all theoretical perspectives on ritual but rather an introduction to some of the issues which I have found relevant in thinking about Antankaraña ritual.
"What is ritual?", then. Any attempt at an answer is likely to call forth what Bell calls the "thought-action dichotomy" by which ritual is either considered something done (i.e., "action") in contrast to that which is believed (i.e., "thought"), or is portrayed as a "structural or functional mechanism" which serves to integrate the two. The definer of "ritual" must therefore note first that it is comprised of repetitive, "thoughtless" (Bell 1992:19), action and second that it is the means by which actors externalize collective representations (Bloch 1989:21 referring to Durkheim) and thus allow themselves and others to imagine their connections to social groups (and sometimes the transcendent). Kertzer's very general definition of ritual as "symbolic behavior that is socially standardized and repetitive" (1988:9) captures both ideas. And when the focus is on the political significance of ritual, as it is through this chapter, "recognizing the ways ritual serves to link the individual to society" (Kertzer 1988:10) is of paramount concern.

So, how does ritual do this? How does it "serve to link the individual to society"? One obvious way concerns action. That ritual is something participated in (with all that participation, however defined, implies) is one of its most "obvious aspects" (Rappaport 1979), and, citing Durkheim's seminal contribution to the study of ritual and religion, Kertzer notes that through participation, ritual frequently provides individuals the opportunity to reckon their membership in a collective. "It is by uttering the same cry, pronouncing the same word, or performing the same gesture in regard to some object that they become and feel themselves to be in unison" (Durkheim 1915: 230 cited in Kertzer 1988: 62). At times, ritual even provides the opportunities by which collectives act together in space and time -- where individuals gather to participate in emblematic activities (Bendix 1992), and share in awe of the size of the group (Mosse 1975:168 cited in Kertzer 1988:10) with which they affiliate. It is not just common action, however, that fosters community, and functionalist interpretations of ritual which ignore content in favor of imagined causal connections between particular ritual practices and social or ecological stasis are fated to extensive critique (as in Bloch 1986: 3-8). As Anthony Cohen (1985) notes in an argument to be cited in the next chapter, it is by means of commonly recognized symbols that communities are "constructed". And given the inherently
symbolic nature of ritual practice, ritual plays an important role in the process of such construction.

Turner's work represents an excellent attempt at drawing functionalist (i.e., the "ritual serves a purpose" school) and intellectualist (i.e., the "ritual makes a statement" school) strains of ritual theory together (Bloch 1986:9). In his essay "Symbols in Ndembu Ritual", he does this by recognizing both the unique properties of ritual symbols (1967:27) as well as the way in which "the ritual symbol becomes a factor in social action" (1967:20). "The symbol" writes Turner "is the smallest unit of ritual which still retains the specific properties of ritual behavior" and symbols are thus the empirically observable "objects, activities, relationships, events, gestures and spatial units in a ritual situation" (1967:19 my emphasis). I think it important here to recognize that the "ritual situation" which Turner discusses might itself be considered symbolic in other, extra-ritual, contexts as well. Ritual, in other words, can be objectified and thus can be relevant even when it is not occurring. In northern Madagascar, for example, ritual is not just a means of expressing affiliation with a particular social or political order; it is also a symbol referred to and affiliated with in pursuit of the same ends. And this brings up an important point: Anthropologists are not the only ones who objectify and analyse rituals and ritual practice -- practitioners may do so too. For this reason, the dialectical relationship between particular rituals, as interpretable symbols, and the contexts in which they have and have had meaning must be examined diachronically just as that between ritual practice and the socio-political contexts in which it has taken place (as in Bloch 1986). We must recognize that the link between action and thought, between collective practice and collective identity is one that may be explicitly emphasized (by powerful individuals with particular goals in mind) and not just recognized as implicit from the outside. In the following chapter, I suggest how this is the case in northern Madagascar.

The ritual cycle of the Antankarana polity

While the Tsangantsainy is the most striking and best attended rite associated with the Antankarana polity, it is not the only one. It is preceded by visits to the island of
Nosy Mitsio and the caves of the Ankaraña massif which comprise the preliminary stages in what amounts to a cycle of events that only culminates with the raising of a mast. In this chapter, I describe the cycle as a whole. Where feasible, I supplement my descriptions with points raised in accounts of past realizations of the events I discuss. Although the collection of such primary accounts is nowhere near as rich as that which Bloch (1986) draws upon in his extensive study of a Merina circumcision ritual through time, the few sources I have been able to find suggest that there is a decipherable "core" of Antankaraña ritual practice.

Fundamental to this core is the notion of "manompo" -- the verb used to indicate what those participating in ritual events associated with the polity are doing; fanomboana (a noun linked to the verb manompo) is what events like the Tsangantsainy are generically called. When translating manompo or fanomboana into English, the notion of "service" is frequently invoked -- fanomboana, Feeley-Harnik writes, is "any act in the service of living or ancestral royalty" (1991:592); Sharp defines it as "royal service" or "royal work" (1995:285). That said, it should be noted that in some contexts in northern Madagascar, and when considered from an etic perspective, manompo seems to have as much to do with "service" the verb (i.e., as something done) as with "service" the noun (i.e., as something rendered or provided). By participating in fanomboana, it might be said, individuals "service" the polity in the way one "services" a car -- they provide what is needed to keep it running. And just as there are rules to follow and prohibitions to respect when filling your tires or changing the oil, so too does the servicing of the Antankaraña polity proceed along certain, regulated, lines. I will return to this analogy later.

Although I provide some running commentary on the events described as I go along, the main arguments of this chapter are left until the end. There, my analysis is divided into three sections -- each one devoted to a different perspective in the consideration of what these events mean to people in northern Madagascar. First I suggest (in agreement with those who interpret the Tsangantsainy as primarily commemorative) that the ritual cycle is both an important medium of history (i.e., it is a means by which information about the past is conveyed) and that occasions provided by ritual are important forums for other media of history (discussed in the previous chapter)
such as tromba, taboo and geography. Second, I argue for the perspective which stresses the significance of the ritual cycle to contemporary Antankaraña "cultural identity" by discussing the significance of broad participation in these events, and the diversity of perspectives represented therein. Finally, I argue that by its very nature, the ritual cycle assures the future of the polity with which it is associated — symbolically, all stages in the cycle are charged with recurrent regenerative themes, and in practice, individual events are connected to one another in a way that implies continuity. While each of these perspectives is interesting in and of itself, by way of closing the analysis I suggest that what is most significant, perhaps, is how they are merged and deployed in ways that guarantee the future of the polity that propagates them.

Discussing a cycle of meaningful and connected (and meaningfully connected) events is no easy task. Wherever I begin, I know that while what precedes the first event discussed is as significant as what follows it, the need for coherence dictates that I move only in one direction. Linking an analysis to the movement of the cycle, then, requires that certain key elements go undiscussed until the revolution is almost complete. As far as I know, there is no way out of this dilemma. I can only offer the assurance that what I am describing here (as it exists today) is in fact a cycle, and that it will make some sort of sense by the end. I begin with reference to the event which sets the cycle revolving — the falling of the mast.

The mast

Planning for a Tsangantsainy begins once the mast raised at the previous one has fallen. When this happens, usually after about three years of the mast's standing, those living around it in Ambatoharaña (both royalty and commoners) go into mourning as if an Ampanjaka had died. The comparison of the disposal of the mast to a funeral is apt, for after it has fallen it is treated with the care and reverence that a dead body might receive (cf. Gueunier 1982; Feeley-Harnik 1991:39-43). Older women wail and cry "Jenjeriň izahay!" — "we are left alone" — as they would at a funeral, and men carry the mast to its final resting place in a small lake east of Ambatoharaña. It is referred to by
the same exclusive vocabulary normally reserved for the actions and movements of Ampanjaka. (It does not fall [lavo] but sleeps [miroto] as the Ampanjaka does; it is not thrown in the water [ariana] but is rather let down there [aroñono].) The fallen mast must also never be seen by either Ampanjaka or Ndrambavibe -- just as they must avoid any sort of contact with dead members of their own family, so too must they avoid the fallen mast. To understand why it is that such practices and taboos apply to the fallen mast, we must take a step back and examine what it is that the mast represented and what it was used for while still standing.

Although flags are raised on it the day it is erected, and may be raised on a special occasion at other times, the mast is much more than just a flagpole. One view, suggested in a pamphlet written by Maitre Jacky Rasidy-Mamba and distributed at the Tsangantsainy in 1993, is that:

"The royal mast incarnates royalty and all that is sacred about it -- it is the protector and the benefactor, father of the Antankarana universe. It is seen as all knowing and all seeing. It has the power to reward as to punish. It is Justice personified. " (Rasidy-Mamba 1993: 29, my emphasis)

This is a sentiment commonly expressed about the mast (although usually in less grandiose terms): That it embodies the sacredness of rulers, and is also a potent and very public symbol of the living Ampanjaka's authority in the area. As both, the mast is significant to constituents of the polity in a number of different ways.

First, the mast is used to enstate the Ampanjaka and other title holders in the polity. Recall from chapter 2 that upon being selected, a new Ampanjaka is legitimated by being carried around the mast on the shoulders of polity officials. On such occasions, the mast represents a location where the will of living constituents and the sacredness of royal ancestors converge -- the people (or their representatives) carry the newly selected candidate around an object said to embody the power and sacredness of the royal ancestors. As Dadilahy Said's story regarding the selection of Tsimiharo's successor (see chapter 5) suggests, once an Ampanjaka has been carried around the mast, "there [can be]
no other ruler than that one”. Shortly, we will see how this action is periodically repeated, and the *Ampanjaka* thus periodically re-legitimated, during the *Tsangantsainy*.

Invocations and promises which call ultimately on the royal ancestors for benediction may also be made at the base of the mast. Such acts, requiring the presence of a representative of the royal family from *Ambatoharanana*, are meant to be taken seriously -- those who make requests (to be cured of a malady, for example) are expected to keep corresponding promises (to kill a cow in thanks, for example). On other occasions, the power embodied by the mast is called upon with an eye to its potential to harm. When a constituent of the polity is accused of sorcery by another, for example, the two parties (provided they agree to appear together) may decide to present their case at the base of the mast¹. Seated there along with a member of the royal family from *Ambatoharanana*, they make their statements (*mifanta*) -- one party offering the accusation, the other asserting innocence. If, within a year, the accused party has not fallen ill or died, the assumption is that the accusation was unfounded and the accuser is expected to offer some form of compensation to his/her wrongly charged counterpart (usually involving the sacrifice of cattle). In a system of adjudication not so removed from the "trial by ordeal" administrations of poison (whereby the defendant who lives is innocent) which missionaries in Madagascar railed against in pre-colonial times -- a practice outlawed by the French upon their arrival in Nosy Be in 1841² -- it is the accused party who has the most to lose. Testament to the potentially harmful power of ancestral authority (*tiňy*), calling upon it by presenting a case at the base of the mast is, in fact, akin to ingesting poison. There are no arguments made, no alibis and no deliberations.

As will become clearer through this chapter, the mast is also an important indicator of the authority vested in the living *Ampanjaka* by the constituents of the polity. By participating in the process by which the mast is constructed and erected, they reconstitute their relationship with him (see chapter 2 and below) and assert the legitimacy of his rule in the area. Recall that in Dadilahy Said’s *tantara*, it was the *Ampanjaka* who "carried the

¹The description offered here is drawn from interviews. I have never attended such an invocation of negative ancestral authority, although I have participated in other (positive) ones.
people" (*mitondra vahoaka*) that had the right to raise the mast — thus, Tsalana, the
"child of a royal woman" who usurped the role of *Ampanjaka* from a "child of a royal
man" in the early nineteenth century, was the one to raise the mast in that it was he who
had the support of the people (see chapter 3). Currently, the mast and the occasions on
which it is erected or disposed of continue to indicate the support of constituents of the
polity for the living *Ampanjaka*. In fact, the singularity of the mast is analogous to the
single-mindedness of the people who raise it. The name for the mast — "sainy" — can also
be translated as "mind", and thus the political system of the Antankaraña (with its single
"mind") is fundamentally different from the non-hierarchical system of the related and
nearby Tsimihety who espouse a political philosophy which advocates "rule of many
minds" (*manjaka maro sainy*) (see Lambek and Walsh 1997). To equate the idea of a
single "mind" with a totalitarian regime would be wrong, however, for, as is made
perfectly clear in ritual practice, the *Ampanjaka* actually plays no role in making up this
singular "mind" — it is constituents of the polity who prepare it and bear its weight until it
can be planted. Interestingly, in speaking about the *Tsangantsainy* to a large crowd of co-
celebrants on the night before the mast-raising in 1997, one close advisor of the
*Ampanjaka* (a royal man himself) explicitly evoked this notion. "This is not the sainy of
one person", he exclaimed referring to the wood that would become the mast on the
following morning, "this is the sainy of all Ankarabe [i.e., Antankaraña people — see next
chapter for a discussion of the term "Ankarabe"]!"3

In addition to embodying the authority of past *Ampanjaka* for constituents of the
polity and representing the legitimacy of the living *Ampanjaka*, the mast is also a
powerful symbol of "Antankaraña" identity. Images of it appear on T-shirts and souvenir
sarongs, in primary school readers and brochures describing "Antankaraña customs"
printed by the WWF. Even those who do not participate in the functioning of the polity or

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2Interestingly, a proviso of the French treaty with Tsiomeko on Nosy Be was that the trial by poison so
long associated with the *Ampanjaka* be discontinued (Decary 1960:195). Shortly after statements made to
that effect, the ceremonious raising of the first French flag (described in chapter 4) took place.
3In interesting contrast to the sentiment expressed here, Baré (1980:348) notes that on Nosy Be, the term
"Mananatsaigny" (i.e., holder of the sainy) is synonymous with "Ampanjaka", implying that elsewhere the
sainy (which Baré translates as "drapeau" — "flag") has been, in fact, the sainy of just one person.
who might not consider themselves susceptible to accusations of sorcery, may refer to the mast (and the practices associated with it) as an important marker of what makes Antankarana unique in Madagascar. Not surprisingly, given the significance of the mast both as an embodiment of ancestral authority and as a symbol of Antankarana identity in contemporary Madagascar, the stamp with which the current Ampanjaka's marks all official correspondence features a drawing of it. I will be discussing the mast as a symbol of Antankarana identity further in chapter 8. For the time being, though, let us return to the cycle of events with reference to some specific cases from recent years.

The mast raised in October, 1993 fell little more than two years later, in February 1996. Although it is meant to fall relatively quickly (within 3 or 4 years) -- more on this later -- many thought the two and a half years this time too quick. Some had immediately suggested (quietly) that the quick-falling mast was somehow an indication of a fault of the living Ampanjaka, or the result of its being too thin, but by the time I returned to Ambatoehlerana in June 1996 (four months after it had fallen), the theory which had gained prominence reflected more on the constituents of the polity than on the ruler. It seems, some suggested, that too many people in the area had been using the mast to regulate disputes that might have been solved in other ways. As mentioned above, abuses of the authority embodied in the mast are intolerable (to the ancestors), and, as gossip suggested, the ancestral rulers simply got mad.

After the mast has fallen, plans for the visits to tombs around the island of Nosy Mitsio and in the caves of the Ankaraña massif commence. (Recall that these two places are especially significant in Antankarana history: The caves of the Ankaraña massif are where the rulers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sought refuge from invaders and the island of Nosy Mitsio was where much of the royal family lived in exile through the second half of the last century.) These tombs must be visited, and the royal ancestors lying within them appealed to, before a new mast can be raised. Planning for these visits culminates with the dissemination of precise dates -- to constituents of the polity in the area by polity officials, and to foreign and local dignitaries, administrators and
anthropologists by official invitation. In 1992, one year after the mast raised in 1987 fell, it was decided that the visit to the island of Nosy Mitsio would take place first.

_Nosy Mitsio_

The visit to Nosy Mitsio in 1992 attracted nearly 500 participants. Men, women and children from Ambatoharañana and surrounding villages crossed in a large fishing boat leaving from the coastal village of Ambavanankaraña -- the proprietor of the boat charging 3500 Malagasy francs per head as _passage_. The majority of others crossed free of charge on a barge supplied by SIRAMA not far from the town of Ambilobe. Among those on the barge were the _Ampanjaka_ and his immediate family, a video-cameraman associated with Ambilobe's television station, a French ex-pat intent on photographing the geological wonders of the island, and Lisa Gezon, a social anthropologist from the University of Michigan. Others, from fishing villages along the coast, made the crossing by sailing canoe. Although many of the participants were either themselves members of the royal family, or related to the royal family through marriage (especially in the contingent from Ambatoharañana), other (non-royal) constituents of the polity were represented by the many polity officials -- _rangahy, fahatelo_ and _manantany_ -- who crossed as well. The events I describe here took place in Ampasindava ("long beach"), former site of Tsimiharo I's nineteenth century capital (_doany_) and palace (_zomba_) and currently the second largest of Nosy Mitsio's several villages.

The goats and coconuts promised in the weeks preceding the trip were as plentiful as everyone had said they would be. The goats, which run wild over the island, are considered the property of the living _Ampanjaka_ -- they were spawned by goats belonging to his ancestor Tsimiharo. Similarly, the coconut trees that shade the village of Ampasindava are said to have been originally planted by the African slaves (_Makoa_) of that same nineteenth century _Ampanjaka_, and their produce is thus the property of his descendent as well. Rice isn't as plentiful. The small size and sandy soil of Nosy Mitsio
aren't conducive to large rice fields, and it is not unusual for inhabitants, who subsist largely on fishing (for consumption and for sale to collection boats), to retain fields on the mainland and go there periodically to work them. For the visit in 1992, people from the mainland brought white rice with them (vatsy), and the Ampanjaka himself supplied a considerable amount of what was required to feed those gathered over the three days of their stay.

The purported purpose of the visit, to pronounce an invocation to royal ancestors entombed in caves on smaller islands surrounding Nosy Mitsio, was accomplished on our second morning there. The Ampanjaka, dressed in a long black robe and a hat designed after the bicorne -- a French naval officer's hat -- said to have been given Tsimiharo upon his signing of the 1841 treaty with the French on Nosy Be, made the invocation (joro). Calling first on God and then on the ancestors, he announced that a new mast was to be raised and requested a year of prosperity for constituents of the polity so that they would be able to participate. Given the timing of the invocation (in the period between harvest and the rainy season), his request for plentiful rain was an especially appropriate one.

The attention paid by co-celebrants to this invocation was variable. Some, especially the manantany, rangahy and fahateho in attendance, crouched along-side the Ampanjaka and listened intently as he spoke. Others, men and women, sat further back (out of ear-shot) emulating only the respectful posture (crouched or seated on the ground, arms half-extended, hands cupped palms-up in front of them -- as in greeting the living Ampanjaka) of those closer to the Ampanjaka. Still others were nowhere to be seen -- many of them visiting family or friends on other parts of the small island or sleeping off hangovers. The fact is that although this invocation was the reason for the visit in the first place, it was not the only thing which attracted the participation of such a large group of people. For some, the availability of free passage, the opportunity to purchase salt-fish or coconuts at a fraction of what they would cost in the market in Ambilobe, the party atmosphere, and of course the promise of goat cooked in coconut were factors which influenced their decisions to attend.

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4Gezon (1995) notes that the living ampanjaka's success in attaining this support from SIRAMA was viewed with considerable admiration by those co-celebrants who benefited from it -- they considered the
In addition to this invocation, other acts associated with any rite of the *Ampanjaka* were carried out. Each dawn and dusk of our stay there, royal women (led by the *Ndrambavibe*) sang *rany* -- songs (said to have been taught originally by the prophetess Tsimatolahotra) in which events and eras of the Antakana past are commemorated -- in the plaza north of the *Ampanjaka*'s residence on the island. On the afternoon following the invocation, Dadilahy Said recounted a long story revolving around Tsimiharo's time on Nosy Mitsio. As had been the case with the invocation pronounced earlier, though, this *tantara* was attended to by only some of those gathered. Much more popular were performances of the *rebyky* -- in which dancers re-create the alternately conflicting and cooperative relations between different branches (Zafinimena and Zafinifotsy) of the dynasty. It should be noted that each of these performances (i.e., songs, stories and dance) refer to very different eras of the past -- the *rany* recalling an eighteenth century prophetess, the *tantara* referring to events of the nineteenth century, and the *rebyky* portraying a relationship recognized since even before the seventeenth century -- and each do so in different ways. The significant feature which unified all of them is that all focused on past rulers. The songs sung are for the *Ampanjaka*, the dance recalls a rivalry between two dynastic lines of the royal family, the stories told recount the actions and movements of past *Ampanjaka* -- all performances which contribute to the dominant narrative of past events that accounts for the polity's continuity and longevity in the region.

In addition to these largely commemorative performances, certain basic activities and deliberations necessary for the continuing functioning of the polity (as described in chapter 2) also took place over the days spent on Nosy Mitsio. This, after all, represented one of the few occasions when the *Ampanjaka* could discuss matters with many of the polity's officials at once. On the afternoon following the invocation, for example, a new *manantany* (highest ranking polity official) the son of a *manantany* who had died some years earlier, was named and presented to both royal ancestors and to the polity's constituents. Other matters requiring meetings between the *Ampanjaka* and officials of the polity were also dealt with -- foremost among these were plans for the approaching visits to the caves of the Antakana massif.

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favor a testament not only to the *Ampanjaka*'s power and influence, but also to his "generosity".
The caves of the Ankaraña massif have served Antankaraña well over the past several hundred years. Written accounts as far back as Mayeur's (1912 -- from the 1770s) refer to the fact that the people of the north entombed their rulers there, and no travelers, administrators and historians who have written about the region since fail to mention the significance of the caves as a refuge for the local population. Recall that some of the most dramatic scenes from the Antankaraña past are set in or around the caves. It was there, according to Dadilahy Said's *tantara*, that Tsimiharo promised to convert to Islam if he and his people were delivered from harm; it was there that the traitorous Njakalanitary directed an invading Merina general to Tsimiharo's hiding place; it was there that Hastie's journal sets a meeting between Tsialana and a commander of the Merina army. As I have suggested is the case with Nosy Mitsio, the location is itself mnemonically significant, and it dominates Antankaraña sacred geography just as it dominates the region's landscape.

In the past, the cave-tombs of *Ampanjaka* were visited and ancestral blessing sought there at any time of crisis (Vial 1954:44). In 1940, for example, Tsialana III organized a visit to the caves to request benediction from his ancestors on behalf of the French (represented during the visit by colonial officials and missionaries). On that occasion, the missionary DeConink (1941) reports, the *Ampanjaka* referred specifically to the long-standing alliance between Antankaraña and French in requesting blessing for efforts at ending (Vichy) Mother-France's wartime tribulations. In the present, and in recent memory, however, the cave-tombs are visited only in the year preceding the *Tsangantsainy*, much like the cyclically re-occurring visits to Nosy Mitsio. On such occasions, the *Ampanjaka*, accompanied by a large contingent of constituents, recites an invocation in which he "remembers" the ancestors entombed there and informs them of the impending *Tsangantsainy*.

In 1992, preparations for the visit to the caves began shortly after our return from Nosy Mitsio. The area near the massif in which the crowds expected would be camping had to be cleared first. Fueled by beef and rum from the *Ampanjaka*, young men (both
royalty and commoners) from a number of villages around the massif disposed of 5 years
of bush and constructed the temporary zomba in which the Ampanjaka would be staying. Later, the site of Tsalana's early 19th century capital, where the Ampanjaka would be pronouncing a preliminary invocation on his way to the caves, was also cleared.

Soon after these preliminaries, the various objects and substances required for the visit to the cave-tombs were prepared in Ambatoharañana. While men brewed a potent bark-based alcohol in a clearing just south of the village, women wove mats, made incense burners and prepared gourds just outside the zomba. Their efforts were complementary, and the two groups came together in the afternoon to mix the men's alcohol with the honey that the women had boiled down in gourds. This mixture, called barisanantely ("honey-alcohol"), along with the incense burners and specially woven baskets and mats, would be necessary elements in the visit to the caves, and were guarded in an enclosure constructed specifically for them until the visits actually took place.

The procession to the campground began on a Thursday morning so as to ensure that the visits to the cave-tombs would occur on the Friday and Saturday (two especially "good" days in Antankaraña cosmology) following. Many joined the Ampanjaka, Ndrambavibe and Dadilahy Said in leaving from Ambatoharañana and stopping along the way for the preliminary invocation at the above mentioned site of Tsalana's doany (capital). With this procession traveled goods (the barisanantely, incense burners, baskets and mats) described above, as well as the drums (ajolahy) and costumes required for the requisite performance of the rebiky. Others came directly to the campsite from Diego, Ambilobe and nearby villages by foot, bush-taxi, car and Land Rover. Among these were school teachers, tourists, and a number of representatives of Diego's World Wildlife Fund office. The last of these participated with good will despite, as Gezon (1995;1997) rightly points out, the contradictions inherent in their condoning the event. The Ankaraña massif is, in addition to being an especially salient landmark in Antankaraña sacred geography, the center of a large natural reserve first established in the 1950s, and the locus of much of the WWF's recent conservation efforts in the region. By clearing land, constructing temporary shelters, entering the caves, and even lighting cooking fires, co-celebrants were in fact breaking rules that had been established by the WWF.
Following an afternoon of settling in and rebiky performances, the first night at Ampanahabahiny was meant to have "no lying down" -- tsymanandrimary -- and although some co-celebrants managed to stay awake with songs (antsa), dancing (to a kazoo like instrument of Comorian origin called the kabiry) and drinking, others sought the shelter of trees or the warmth of a fire to steal a few hours sleep. Early the following morning, preparations began for the first round of visits to the caves. In keeping with taboos that had the effect of recalling the lifestyle of the ancestors, men braided their hair (four small braids in the front), and both men and women removed their shoes and wore no pants or undergarments beneath their sarongs. Burning palm fronds were the only source of light allowed into the caves as flashlights, which like shoes and underwear are deemed too modern, were tabooed.

Although explicitly intended to allow the living Ampanjaka to pronounce an invocation to his ancestors, there is no doubt (as had been the case on Nosy Mitsio) that the visit to these caves served as much to recall (and reproduce) events of the past. The taboos referred to in the previous chapter, which restrict participation of the living members of the groups considered responsible for having driven Tsimiharo into and then out of hiding there, were certainly in effect. Neither Merina nor the descendants of the traitorous Njakalaoiery were allowed to participate -- they risked getting lost (or worse) if they dared enter the caves. 5

An interesting corollary to the attention given all of these taboos, during the visit I attended in 1993, were the seemingly lax attitudes towards taboo violations by the foreign tourists and WWF employees -- they wore shoes and carried flashlights with them. Although the concerns of the Ampanjaka were doubtless true, that the soft feet of the foreigners wouldn't have been able to handle the sharp sharded limestone floor at the cave entrance, there is more to the lifting of restrictions on their actions than just that. It revealed at once the privileged position of these foreigners and the Ampanjaka's acceptance of it. What is more, given that the long-standing alliance between Tsimiharo and the French was cited by some as justification for the taboo violation, it recalled the

5 De Conink (1941) notes in his account of the 1940 event that his assistant, a Merina man, was not allowed into the caves.
still powerful image of that mid-nineteenth century fatidra between Antankaraña and the French, as well, of course, as the asymmetrical nature of that alliance. These taboo violations by foreigners also established a fundamental distinction between them, as audience, and those who did go barefoot by the light of natural torches, as participants.

The first tombs visited on that first day were those of the earliest Ampanjaka in the area -- Andriansirotsi, Lamboeny I and Tehimbola. Having passed through a precarious entry way (made all the more precarious by the thick smoke given off by ineffective torches), and along several hundred metres of underground passageways, we came to a large sunken forest in the center of the massif. Once there, the majority of the more than 2000 participants sat in a large sandy clearing on the edge of the forest, and listened as a fahatelo (a polity official) spoke of the significance of the event we were attending. He mentioned both the importance of the visits to the tombs (as a necessary precursor to the approaching Tsangantsainy), and also the importance of the location in terms of the Antankaraña past. And this is an interesting feature of ritual practice associated with the polity – here, as at other stages in the ritual cycle, the event is interpreted by a representative of the polity for those in attendance. What is more, given that video recordings of these events are seen by thousands more on television in Ambilobe and Diego, these interpretations reach an even wider audience. I will return to this point in my discussion of the Tsangantsainy.

While rebiky (the earlier mentioned dance depicting dynastic conflict of the seventeenth century) performances were carried out in a small clearing set aside for them, Dadilahy Said and several young men, carrying the gourds of barisanantely (honey alcohol), incense burners and baskets, climbed into the forest and up to the tombs to prepare things for the Ampanjaka’s invocation by lighting the incense and cleaning debris from around the cloth covered remains of the corpses (What I refer to as “tombs” here are not closed structures of the sort common elsewhere in Madagascar [as in Bloch 1971], but are rather sheltered openings in the cave wall into which a body could fit). The Ampanjaka himself followed shortly after them and recited much the same joro that he recited on Nosy Mitsio, informing the ancestors of the upcoming mast-raising, and requesting a year of prosperity so that the people would be able to contribute the rice,
cattle and time necessary for its successful completion. After the invocation had been
pronounced, those who chose to climbed up after the Ampanjaka, saw the tombs and
partook of the gourds of honey alcohol that had been left during the last visit, five years
previous. The gourds brought to the tombs in 1992 were left and would not be drunk
until 1996 when the subsequent visit to these tombs occurred. In a way that clearly
establishes the links between previous visits and present ones and between present visits
and future ones, old gourds of barisanantely are always consumed and replaced by new
ones which lie in wait for the future.

As during the visit to Nosy Mitsio, the location of the invocation itself was
noticeably imbued with mnemonic significance. Upon leaving the caves visited on that
first day, Dadylahy Said pointed out certain especially significant spots within the caves
which recalled the time of the nineteenth century Ampanjaka Tsimiharo's hiding there --
the secret doorway through which Tsimiharo and his followers found their way into the
system of underground caverns, the water-hole from which they drank while hiding there,
and the rock around which the sorceress Tsiambelaña disappeared having informed the
Ampanjaka that he must escape to Nosy Mitsio. Although the purpose of the mass
pilgrimage was to invoke ancestral blessing for the approaching Tsangantsainy, there was
also a strong (and explicitly stated) commemorative element to the visit. Above all, it was
the period of Tsimiharo's hiding in the caves (in the mid nineteenth century) that was being
recalled, and all co-celebrants recognized that in addition to supporting the Ampanjaka's
efforts at ensuring their well-being over the coming year, they were also following, quite
literally, in their ancestors' (bare) footsteps.

On the second day, following another night of "no lying down", the tombs of
Tsialana and Tsimiharo (two nineteenth century Ampanjaka) were visited. These tombs,
more accessible than those of the day before, were approached with the same taboos in
effect. Given that natural light was sufficient, no torches were required. The procedure
followed was much as it had been on the previous day -- Dadylahy Said preparing things
ahead of time (while rebiky were danced to entertain the crowd gathered), and then the
Ampanjaka following to pronounce his invocations. The gourd that had been left there
previously was broken open and passed around. The second tomb visited, that of
Tsimiharo, required that both *fomba'gasy* (Malagasy customs) and *fomba'sifamo* (Muslim customs) be performed. Tsimiharo, as with all succeeding *Ampanjaka*, was Muslim, and upon dying requested both that he be entombed alongside his father, and that he receive a proper Muslim burial. His attendants accomplished this by burying him and building a covered tomb over his grave on a rise a few metres above Tsialana's rock-face tomb. At this second tomb, the *Ampanjaka* performed the first invocation (along the same lines as the previous one), in Malagasy, and an adept of *fomba'silamo* performed the second in Arabic verse. Unlike the tombs of other Muslim *Ampanjaka* just outside of Ambatoharañana, which are visited at least once a year at the *ziara*, Tsimiharo's hadn't been visited in five years and the Muslim invocation performed there was thus long overdue.

The final visits and invocations took place the following morning at the Muslim cemetery (*zomba vola*) south-east of Ambatoharañana. There, the tombs of Tsialana II, Lamboeny II, Tsialana III and Tsimiharo II were visited in order of their reign from earliest to latest. Given that these tombs had been visited several months earlier during Ambatoharañana's *ziara*, there was no need to repeat Muslim prayers here. Once again, the *Ampanjaka*, this time joined by the *Ndrambavibe* (who had not been well enough to enter the caves) and a number of *rangahy*, *fahatefo* and *manantany*, performed a *joro* very similar to the one offered in the caves — informing the ancestors of the need to raise a new mast, and requesting a year of plenty so that all could participate in carrying it out. As in the caves, the *rebiky* was performed while the *Ampanjaka* was pronouncing these invocations.

The following day, all who had descended on Ambatoharañana for the trip to the caves had left, and life returned to normal. The rains that came the first night at Ampanahabahiny did not come again in the area until late December, and although the late rains meant lower yields for some, the mast-raising of the next year went ahead as planned.
The Tsangantsainy

It is difficult to classify the Tsangantsainy. As I have referred to it up to now, the reader may think of it as an event at which a mast is raised. This is certainly the impression given by the two quotes with which I opened this chapter, and is also how many in Madagascar would tend to think of it. That said, such a view can be misleading. The Tsangantsainy is more a ritual process than a ritual event (Turner 1969) -- it is composed of meaningful practices and movements connected to one another in a formulaic way. Many participants, then, might be described as moving through a process as they participate in the events that constitute it. This point will be clarified throughout the following sections in which I break the Tsangantsainy down into its component parts.

Carrying out something as big as the Tsangantsainy requires more than just ancestral blessing, and it is in the year leading up to it that the Ampanjaka excels in his role as organizer (see chapter 2). In consultation with polity officials he sets a date for the mast-raising (at the end of the dry season with the moon on the rise) and then oversees the dissemination of necessary information. While villagers in the region are likely to receive word from their local rangahy or fahatelo, others asked to attend are informed with official invitations (in French and Malagasy) in the Ampanjaka's own writing.

Selecting and cutting the trees

The first to prepare for the raising of the mast are those of the region from which the wood that it will be made from is procured. Anadoany (representatives of royalty) there, in villages like Ankiabe, Manehoko and Matehipako are descendants of Boanahajy (the early 19th century Ampanjaka from whom Tsialana -- the apical ancestor of royalty in Ambatoharaiana -- wrested power; see chapter 3) and Andrianjalahy (Tsialana I's collaborator in that takeover who accepted a subordinate role to that of his cousin much to the chagrin of his descendants; see chapter 4). As such, they are, as their ancestors
have been, potential usurpers of the current *Ampanjaka*’s role. That it is these potentially dissident members of the royal family who must act first if the *Tsangantsainy* is to be successfully completed is significant. It indicates that they, like the bulk of constituents (royalty and commoners) who join them in completing their tasks, publicly recognize the legitimacy of the current *Ampanjaka*. Unsurprisingly, then, the one line of the family from this southern region that is publicly recognized as not accepting the legitimacy of the current *Ampanjaka* (Antiberantsana from the environs of the village of Beramanja -- halfway along the road from Ambilobe to Ambanja) play no role throughout the *Tsangantsainy* even though they are meant to and have done so through the past (They ceased participating following a split precipitated by differing loyalties during the rebellion of 1947 -- see Chapter 5).

Preparations of the wood begin a full two weeks before the date slated for the actual erection of the mast. In the forest of Antsamahavelono (15 km south of Ambilobe), two trees must first be selected and cut. Two commoner men from the village of Ankiabe (near the forest) go first to look for suitable trees. Contrary to the tendency of some groups in Madagascar to value hard wood for its durability (e.g., Bloch 1991), here it is a soft and fast-rotting wood (called *hazoambo*) that is sought. Given that a new mast may be raised only after the previous one has fallen under its own weight, the selection of a softer wood means that the *Tsangantsainy* takes place now with greater frequency (every 4-5 years) than it did in the past when a more durable wood (called *lenintoňono*) was used. Having selected four trees on this first trip into the forest, the two commoners return a week later with a *rangahy* and an *anadoany* from Ankiabe. Much like the way in which *Ampanjaka* or *Ndrambavibe* are selected, the four of them confer and then, having reached consensus, choose the two trees which will be cut. The following week they return accompanied by a *manantany* and a large contingent of polity constituents from the region (both men and women) and, provided the *manantany* agrees with their choices, the

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*Some still claim that the living descendants of Boanahajy are the true inheritors of the ruling line in that they are the children of royal men (zanakany/lahy) whereas Tsalana I was, and by extension his descendants thus are, the child(ren) of a royal woman (zanakany/avavy). It should be noted too that living descendants of Andrianjalalahy are also the descendants of those who sought a degree of autonomy in the face of Tsimiharo’s mid-nineteenth century efforts at consolidating his support, and they too, thus, have a history of checkered relations with the current ruling line.*
trees are cut down. Recall that the few manantany in the polity are the highest ranking of non-royal officials. For this reason, it is they, with the cooperation of rangahy, fahatelo and anadoary, who oversee the preparations and transportation of the wood that will become the mast.

The term used to refer to the cutting of the trees -- mampiravaka -- is the same one used for the first cutting of a child's hair (an important milestone in childhood development). It might be translated as "to make wear the silver chain" -- referring to the silver chain (ravaka) that is placed both around the neck of the child and the trunk of the tree at the time of these respective operations. The chain, like other objects in silver, is an important symbol of the dynasty (Zafinifotsy -- "the grandchildren of silver") to which Antankaraña royalty belong. In addition to the silver chain, the base of the first tree is also treated with a honey-alcohol mixture (barisanantely) of the sort described earlier, and an invocation is made by the anadoary from Ankiabe. As in other such invocations, first God and then the royal ancestors are "remembered" and informed of the actions about to take place. The first felled tree is considered female/woman (viavy), the second one male/man (lehilahy).

From the time of their cutting, the pieces of wood are treated as sacred, and are considered akin to the Ampanjaka himself. They are referred to as "hazomanjaka" -- "the wood that rules" -- and when they are carried out of the forest to the clearing where they will be further prepared, they are not said to "go" (mandeha) as would some profane object being transported, but are "made move" (mamindra) just as the Ampanjaka is when he travels from place to place. In the past, one informant told me, it was the male piece which was brought out first, but since the switch from the rule of the children of men to that of the children of women (with the accession of Tsialana I in the early nineteenth century), it has been the female piece which leads. To some, then, the male and female pieces of wood represent the bilaterality of royal descent and it is only through the union of male and female elements (i.e., the descendants of royal men and the descendants of royal women) that the Tsangantsainy can take place.
Preparing the wood

Initial preparations of the wood that will become the mast are carried out just outside of the forest where the trees are felled. One important consideration when readying the wood is that the mast to be erected must be taller than the one raised at the previous Tsangantsainy. Consulting measurements from the past then, carpenters must ensure that at least one of the pieces is longer than it had been previously. Although most measurements throughout the Tsangantsainy are taken in metric, the measure of the increase in the mast's length is documented in 'fingers' -- i.e., four or eight fingers (always an even number and thus not including thumbs) laid flat on the surface of the wood. The female piece of wood, which will form the base of the mast, is left longer than the male so that when planted in the metre deep hole, the mast will seem to be made of equal parts. In 1997, the female piece measured 7.95 metres and the male piece 7.26 metres; the mast as a whole was intended to be four fingers taller than that raised in 1993. The precision of these measurements (dictated by memory to me by carpenters working on the mast) attests to the importance of this feature of the Tsangantsainy. As indicated earlier, and as I will be bringing up again shortly, nothing associated with the Ampanjaka or the polity ever "ends" (vita), it only "grows" (tombo) -- even if only by a matter of fingers.

Following these early preparations near the forest (lasting 4 days), the two pieces of wood are then carried northwards in a sling of vines attached to cross-bars borne on the shoulders of men. The weight of the wood is considerable, and the men bearing it (barefoot) frequently succeed (misolo) one another as they follow the asphalt road north. Barefoot women follow along beside them singing songs to encourage and taunt them; one translates as "those who don't make it there [i.e., to the destination] aren't men"7, another as "men are monsters [i.e., strong, powerful]"8. Leading the procession are the few royal men and women whose job it is to keep watch over the gourds of honey alcohol, clay braziers and baskets of incense (prepared in the week before the cutting down of the trees) that will be used in treatments of and invocations over the wood over the next

7"Ilay tsy ahy tsy lehilahy."
8"Kaka lehilahy."
weeks. All travel direct, and but for the occasional stops to accept drinks of water from supportive inhabitants of road-side villages, are meant to have no respite from their suffering in the day's heat.

"Suffering" (fijalaina from the verb mijaly -- "to suffer"), although evident in people's expressions and on the blistered soles of their feet, is referred to publicly only to indicate what people are not doing. In a way that stresses the willingness of participants, the notion of suffering is noticeably downplayed in official discourse (that produced in the speeches of officials and organizers) concerning the proceedings participated in. While none would dispute the difficulty of the tasks they undertake, they are not meant to whine about them -- suffering is part of serving. And so even as heavy rain fell during the preparations of the wood in 1997, and the clearing where the mast lay was transformed into a mud bowl, singing, dancing and working the mast continued as in temperate weather. As a manantany told me at the time, "if you don't suffer, you don't get anything good".

The ultimate destination of those bearing the wood at this point is Ampasibe ("the great beach" on the southern bank of the Mahavavy river, opposite Ambilobe), where a clearing has been made and temporary shelters constructed in anticipation of their arrival. In both 1993 and 1997, all roads leading into this clearing were lined with stalls from which local entrepreneurs sold rum, beer, soft-drinks, snack-food, cigarettes and souvenir T-shirts. When the pieces of wood arrive, they are set down on supports (to keep them from touching the ground) on the eastern extreme of the clearing. The female piece first (on the outside) and the male second (on the inside)§. No more than ten metres south of the wood's resting place is a small house constructed especially for the manantany who will oversee preparations of the following weeks. It is there that the previously responsible manantany relinquishes his duties to his successor.

Over the next days the wood is prepared. A hole is bored through the top of the male piece (the end which will become the top of the mast) to allow placement of the pulley by which flags will be raised once the mast is erected. That piece's base and the top
of the female piece are also modified — each is cut on a diagonal to ensure that a strong joint will be formed with their coupling. As at earlier stages, such preparations are accompanied by songs (*antsa, rary*), dance (*rebiky*) and the appearance of royal spirits (*tromba*), all of which draw regular audiences. Many, especially those who had accompanied the wood from its point of origin, establish temporary households at Ampasibe. Under a single shelter anywhere from 5 to 15 members of a particular family or inhabitants of a certain village may sleep and eat while the wood is being prepared. Others attend to the preparations during the day but return to their homes in nearby villages or Ambilobe nightly. For these, the expression generally used in parting Ampasibe each evening — "just going to drink some water ..." (*"mandeha migiaka rano"*) — is a convenient fib which allows them to leave with no sense of shunning their obligation to the polity.

Throughout this time at Ampasibe, the *manantany* receives visits from those attending these preparations and oversees the collection and recording of the contributions of money, cattle, rum and rice which they bring with them. When required, he also authorizes the dispersal of these — rum to the carpenters working on the wood, rice and meat to the cooks of temporary households preparing for their evening meal, money to purchase cooking oil or other of his own basic provisions, etc. The basic rule followed in 1997 was that any person or group who had contributed some reasonable amount of rice, money or cattle was entitled to a share of meat and rice throughout their time at Ampasibe. Because of rumors that some who had not contributed were taking a share of meat and then turning around and selling it in their snack stalls and bars as *brochettes*, however, detailed records of who had given and who had received were kept by the butchers as well as by the *manantany*.

It is worth pointing out the irony in the presence of these snack stalls and temporary bars around the mast. *Ideally*, all the food and drink that participants require should be provided by the *manantany* from the stock contributed by polity constituents themselves — gatherings like the one I describe here are imagined as being fundamentally

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9 This arrangement was said by some to be analogous to the way in which men and women sleep in a single bed in their homes. The woman sleeps by the wall and the man sleeps on the open side. The idea
redistributive. All should have plenty of rice and meat to eat, and the bottle of rum kept alongside the wood is meant never to go "dry" (the bottle itself is called "tsimaely" -- "not dry"). The food and alcohol consumed is considered necessary fuel for those who "serve". That precautions have to be taken to regulate the distribution of these goods is an indication that not all in attendance at Ampasibe (or at any point throughout the Tsangantsainy) share the same understanding of what that 'service' implies (if they consider 'service' a part of what they are doing there at all). That such precautions can be taken (i.e., that redistribution is controlled by representatives of the polity) is an indication of where the ultimate authority in determining what comprises 'service' is.

Division of ritual labor

Practices carried out during the Tsangantsainy effectively draw normally peripheral groups to the political center with which they identify (cf. Kertzer1988:23). From the beginning of the preparatory phase described above, and through the following weeks, there is an organic division of ritual labour. Representatives of certain descent groups and/or villages are responsible for particular tasks associated with the wood and the mast it will become. Some (from the village of Antsatraña), for example, care for the hatchet used to fell and remove the bark from the trees mentioned above. Others (belonging to a commoner descent group called Antamboroko) tend to the gathering of the honey from which the barisanantely (with which the wood is bathed) is made. Still others are responsible for making the natural ropes which are kept alongside the wood to be used later to raise the mast. These roles are largely prescribed by descent -- their ancestors carried out these tasks, and so must they -- but the system is flexible enough to allow for changes as necessary (the tasks meant to be carried out by those who do not participate out of principle -- see above -- for example are carried out by others). This division of labour is in effect throughout the weeks leading up to the erection of the mast, meaning that as the wood moves and more preparations need to be made, so more representatives of diverse descent groups are called into action. Ultimately, the

is that if someone enters the house in the middle of the night, it is the man they will encounter first.
Ampanjaka and Ndrambavibe are alone in having no role in the preparations of the wood and then mast. And this is one of the most important features of the Tsangantsainy.

The conspicuous absence of the Ampanjaka during the preparations of the wood might be discussed in a number of ways. First, it highlights the fact the constituents of the polity "serve" (manompo) not by his order and under his supervision, but by their own will. I must stress, as in Chapter 2, how this is metonymic of the significant contribution made by constituents to the ongoing functioning of the polity generally. Although their regular dealings with the Ampanjaka are marked by a degree of adopted humility and servitude, in the weeks leading up to the Tsangantsainy, it is they who willingly carry his fate.

Much of this suggest Gluckman's seminal analysis of the "license in ritual" (1970(1956)) exercised at times in other African political ceremonies. Although not "rejected" or "hated" in the overt ways Gluckman has suggested other rulers were at times, the Ampanjaka's absence from the proceedings does nonetheless imply an upheaval of sorts. During the weeks leading up to the erection of the mast the Ampanjaka is particularly vulnerable to any who would seek to usurp or disrupt his rule. Before the pieces of wood are joined and planted, they are seen as being especially susceptible to theft (by rival members of the royal family)10 or sorcery, and the Ampanjaka must rely strictly on the constituents of the polity (including his potential rivals) to transport them safely to where he is. That responsibility for the wood and its preparations is in the hands of different (rival) lines of the royal family at different stops as it moves north only renders the journey more perilous — although it is never said to have happened, these rival lines (who, remember, have claims of their own) could potentially hijack the wood and claim the right to rule. Of course they would have to have the support of the bulk of polity officials and constituents to do so. That the wood makes it to Ambatoharañana and becomes the mast at all is a sure sign of popular recognition of the legitimacy of the currently ruling Ampanjaka. From yet another perspective, it is that the mast is such a

10 Gezon (pers. comm.) notes that during the 1993 event, fears were expressed that the line of royalty living in Beramanja were planning to steal the wood to make their own mast to be planted in their own town.
powerful symbol, and the focus of so much potentially negative attention (i.e., that of sorcerers intent on doing harm to the Ampanjaka) that makes it dangerous and thus something to be avoided (Theodore 1987:26).

When asking participants in the Tsangantsainy to explain the Ampanjaka's absence, the answer generally given recalls that he shares the same sacred essence as the wood. And this is an important point. The Ampanjaka must avoid the wood because, as indicated earlier, it is hazomanjaka, "the wood that rules", and until planted in the plaza north of the zomba in Ambatoharañana, it is the living Ampanjaka's rival (rafy). It is not that it represents a living person (and thus a rival to the current Ampanjaka's profane role in the region), but rather that, from the moment of its cutting, the wood embodies the "sacredness of rulers" (hasiny Ampanjaka) that is also embodied by the living Ampanjaka.

Even when in hiding from his "rival", however, the Ampanjaka is by no means inactive. Although he is meant to be confined to his zomba (like a patient to a hospital, one informant suggested), the prescription only really restricts him to Ambatoharañana (at least until the wood arrives in the southern end of the village on the day before the mast-raising). Paramount among his duties there is to oversee the readying of the village for the expected onslaught of participants on the few days surrounding the actual erection of the mast. In the weeks leading up to the 1993 mast-raising, this meant calling on officials of the nearby plantation (SIRAMA) for assistance with, among other things, the clearing of all open areas around the village (to make it look cleaner), and the repainting of the zomba. In 1997, a team of seven plantation carpenters and workmen spent several weeks in Ambatoharañana performing those same tasks as well as constructing a covered platform off the north end of the zomba (for the comfort of invited guests) and a large open shelter where invited guests would enjoy cocktails and eat their lunch immediately following the mast's erection. Outside of the village, still more SIRAMA employees busied themselves with temporary repairs to some of the less passable segments of the dirt road which links Ambatoharañana to the main highway running between Diego and Ambilobe. Without such efforts few from those urban centres (or more precisely, few

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11Theodore (1987) notes that throughout these preparations, spirits may act as mediators between the absent ampanjaka and the constituents. They communicate both instructions on proper procedure to the
from those urban centres unwilling to walk) would be able to attend to the mast-raising. On both occasions, as on numerous others, SIRAMA also supplied several large cisterns (and a tractor to pull them) so as to ensure a water supply to Ambatoharañana's many visitors, as well as a gas powered-generator and lighting.

Just as the earlier described contributions indicate that living representatives of particular descent groups continue to respect ancestral obligations to the polity, so does SIRAMA's participation here (as during or leading up to other events associated with the polity) recall the original compact made between the plantation's founders and the *Ampanjaka* Tsialana III (see chapter 5) in the 1950s. As sure as those who gather the honey with which the mast is washed or weave the rope by which it is raised, SIRAMA is pulling its weight in preparation for the mast-raising, and in so doing publicly recognizing the *Ampanjaka'*s legitimacy. More than that though, as a state-run concern it also expresses its recognition of the legitimacy of the *polity itself* through its participation. The money and resources expended by SIRAMA are testament both to the state's (earlier discussed) conciliatory and interested stance on local *fombandrazaña* ("ancestral customs") and to the importance of the *Ampanjaka* as a negotiator of local interests.

*Transporting the wood to Ambatoharañana*

Following the preparations made at Ampasibe (which can last from one to two weeks depending on the lunar cycle – the mast must be erected with the new moon on the rise), the pieces of wood are once more bathed in honey alcohol, raised in their vine slings and carried still further north. At this point, large numbers of people from in and around Ambilobe join in the procession. As before, men carry the wood and women walk alongside them, singing songs of encouragement. Hundreds (at times thousands) more follow close behind, singing their own songs to furious clapping rhythms and occasionally jogging *en masse* to catch up with the procession's leaders. Upon arriving in Antsaravibe (a village halfway between the Ambilobe-Diego highway and Ambatoharañana) in the late afternoon the wood and accompanying objects are set down for the night. In this village,
it is representatives of the line of the royal family called Antibemarivo (descendants of Andriansirots's brother Andriantsifahaana who settled in Bernarivo -- see Chapter 3) who are responsible for the wood -- they clear the space where it will rest overnight and ensure that all who come along with it are properly provided for. Once again, then, the "wood that rules" imbued with the "sacredness of rulers" passes into the hands of living rivals who, although themselves descendants of the line of who may partake of the sacredness, accept the legitimacy of the current ruler make no attempt to depose him by stealing it.

The following morning the wood is carried the last 15 km to Ambatoharaana where, for days and weeks already, people from around that village and the vast area north of it have been gathering and waiting. Just as the rice and cattle consumed at Ampasibe had been supplied by those from the south, so at Ambatoharaana it is these northerners who supply the foodstuffs necessary to sustain the incoming crowd over the following days. Not only are such donations practically significant, in that they enable mass participation in the Tsangantsainy, they also reflect the nature of the relationship between the Ampanjaka and polity-constituents. Although it is the Ampanjaka whose authority is reestablished through the Tsangantsainy, it is they who voluntarily provide the means to make it happen. Even those who do not attend themselves (the trip from the far north of the region is a very difficult one), send cattle and rice as a sign of their continuing support. And these contributions are no mere tokens -- in 1993 a cow might have sold for more than 200,000 fmg (two months salary of a menial laborer at SIRAMA at that time); in 1997 the price was almost double that.

Just as participation is said not to be motivated by coercive means, so too these donations are said to be given of constituents' free will. This does not mean, however, that the relative generosity of donors is not carefully scrutinized. When contributions arrive (as at Ampasibe or any fanonpoana for that matter) records are kept -- cattle, distinguishable by sex, size and markings, and rice, measured by number of sacks, are traced to the individuals or groups who have brought or sent them. In 1993 many (including members of the royal family close to the Ampanjaka) complained that most donations of cattle and rice came from commoners, and that hardly any were offered by members of the royal family. That such complaints, which might indicate broader
concerns with divergent patterns of investment, were voiced at all reveals (as indicated in chapter 2) that it is *all* constituents of the polity (i.e., and not just commoners) who are expected to support events such as the *Tsangantsainy*. In current practice, it is not royalty who are served by commoners, but rather the *Ampanjaka* and polity who are served by all. In return, contributors receive public recognition and, when they meet with the *Ampanjaka* after the mast-raising's successful completion, blessing and benediction of royal ancestors.

Great notice is given these contributions (of cattle especially) in the days leading up to the mast-raising, and once it is all over, the size and success of the event is in some eyes measurable by the number of cattle killed. In 1993 this figure was reportedly in the 70s. The increase in the number of cattle contributed in 1997 (from 1993) was remarked by all. Explanations for the increase varied. Some suggested that it was the growing popularity of the current *Ampanjaka*; others thought it an indication of the growing popularity of the event. One man jokingly proposed that it was because so many spirit mediums had died over the past year (cattle received by spirits in return for services rendered to the living are meant to be handed over to the living *Ampanjaka* at the death of the mediums that host them — see chapter 6). Regardless of the reason for the increase, the result was obvious: In 1997, there was even more meat to go around than at the previous *Tsangantsainy*. This, as noted in chapter 1, is an important reminder to all both of the *Ampanjaka*'s ability to draw support and, in that this tribute is immediately distributed to co-celebrants, of his generosity as well. Recollections of past enactments at which *hundreds* of cattle are said to have been killed indicate either the relative largesse of ancestors, the difficulty of current economic times or a sense of nostalgia for a time when constituents held greater respect for the notion of service.

*The arrival of the wood*

As the procession carrying the wood approaches Ambatoharana, a group of men and women walk out to meet it. It is brought into the village and laid on supports in a clearing in the southern end of the village where it will remain overnight. This spot,
marked by a tree acting as memorial (toñy) to the woman who once occupied it, is said to have been the location of the cattle-pen of Volamary (the royal woman who, in the mid nineteenth century, stayed behind on the mainland with her cattle when Tsimiharo and so many other members of the royal family fled to Nosy Mitsio). By one version of events Volamary was living here when the Ampanjaka Tsialana II returned to the mainland from Nosy Mitsio at the end of the last century. That the wood now must rest overnight in the place where she once lived is meant to recall that she, who like Tsimatahodrafy is sometimes referred to in retrospect as a prophetess (moxsy), was consulted before the location was deemed an appropriate one for the Ampanjaka to live.

When the wood arrives, a key transaction takes place. The manantany, his many rangahy and fahatelo assistants, and the anadoany who had overseen the preparations and protection of the wood up until this point hand their responsibilities over to the manantany, rangahy, fahatelo and anadoany who are meant to succeed them. In 1997, this transition of responsibility took place in the shade of a mango tree not far from where the wood lay. For their part, the newcomers (represented by a fahatelo from south of Ambilobe) noted all that had been done, and all those who had contributed up to this point. In response, the receiving party (represented by a manantany from the far north) thanked them for all they had done, noted how all had participated as expected and invoked God and the royal ancestors to provide blessing for all they were about to do. Although there was nothing secret about this meeting (the term used to refer to these speeches -- mirasa volañia, translatable as "to distribute speech" -- hints at how they are in fact meant to be quite public), it was remarkable how, in both 1993 and 1997, so little attention was given the words of each side as they, respectively, passed on and accepted responsibility. Most attention, especially among those who had been awaiting the arrival for days, was focused on the wood itself and on the loud singing, dancing and clapping that surrounded it. Here, then, we see the great variability in how people participate in the Tsangantsainy. While some give and take responsibility for the mast, others simply watch and follow it.

Through the rest of that afternoon the wood's new protectors sit alongside it as rebiky (the earlier described dance), rary (the songs of royal women) and antsa (songs)
are performed. In the evening singers (individuals and teams), some from as far away as Diego, perform the songs that are meant to help keep everyone awake until morning. These songs, which are topical, frequently self-referential and stylistically feature the singer's vocal dexterity, are meant to draw participation (in the form of clapping and singing along to choruses) from the crowds that gather to observe them. Subject matter varies. Many, unsurprisingly, offer standard lines of praise for the Ampanjaka and his ancestors. Others are more topical. In 1993, one well known female song-leader received kudos for leading a song focusing on the Tsangantsainy itself -- retelling the events that had unfolded over the previous weeks. In 1997, another repeated a song he had improvised some weeks earlier concerning the generosity of a politician who had made a personal contribution to the carrying out of the Tsangantsainy. On both occasions particularly ardent admirers sat in the midst of the crowd holding tape recorders above their heads, recording the songs later to be played in Ambilobe's sitting rooms, bars and on local radio. Song leaders receive money both from the audiences they perform to (individuals make a big show of such donations) and, less publicly, from the Ampanjaka as well. That the Ampanjaka sponsors the appearances of particularly popular singers is important -- the performances they offer the crowd are among the most popular features of any fanompoana. They are, ultimately, a big draw.

At about midnight, when the crowd gathered to hear the singers is at its height, a speech is made. In 1993 it was an erudite fahatelo who spoke; in 1997 it was a male member of the royal family close to the Ampanjaka. On both occasions, the speakers outlined all that had been happening over the past weeks in remarkable detail: The search for proper trees, the cutting of them, the preliminary preparations, the walk to Ampasibe, etc. In 1997 this speech included reference to precise dates, place names and, most importantly, practices which many of those gathered and listening had no part in carrying out. In effect, all those gathered were being let in on parts of the preparation process from which they were restricted access (recall the ritual division of labour), and it was thus there, on the night before the mast-raising, that all gathered were quite consciously provided an important means of imagining themselves a collective.
It is said by some that sexual promiscuity reigns among co-celebrants through the night preceding the mast-raising. In popular discourse especially, rumours fly about how "no one has a spouse" (tsisy manaña vady) on that night -- so much so that several weeks before the mast-raising in 1997, a royal man close to the Ampanjaka went on local radio to explain how this is not the case (he feared that rumors of this sort would attract the wrong sort of attention and, as importantly, scare off many who might have attended otherwise). As it was explained to me, this rumor stems from the fact that some taboo violations committed on the night preceding the mast-raising go unpunished. I should point out, though, that from what I observed in 1993 and 1997 there seemed little more or less promiscuity going on than one might have expected at any large gathering.

*Raising the mast*

Despite what I have written above regarding the importance of understanding the entire ritual cycle and all of the preparations leading up to the erection of the mast, there is no doubt that a key moment in the Tsangantsainy is the actual raising of the mast. Among other things, it is on the day of the mast’s raising that the greatest number of people are observably involved. In the hopes of giving some sense of this climax, I here offer a detailed account of the events of the morning of the mast-raising in 1993\(^\text{12}\).

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The village is packed with bleary eyed celebrants. Only children seem to have been able to get any sleep after last night's 'no lying down' festivities. Road-side vendors sell breakfast food, cigarettes, sarongs and cheap cardboard visors stamped with the date of the event. A dancing two-dimensional marionette hangs from the outside of a rum-seller's stall and dances erratically to a tiny salegé. Some watch intently. Others, wearing the clothes and hairstyles of Diego, observe from a distance, impatient for things to get under way.

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\(^{12}\text{Special thanks here to Rebecca Green for access to her video-taped account of the event.}\)
Among the earliest activities to take place is the digging of the holes (into the dry hard ground of the plaza north of the zomba) in which the supports meant to hold up the mast (in the moments before it is erected) will be planted. Few seem inclined to help, but the job gets done. The zomba, festooned with small Malagasy flags, has a large canopied platform off its north entrance. There, in the shade, the best seats are already reserved for visiting dignitaries, and government and military officials. The Ampanjaka remains in hiding, having emerged over the past two days only to bathe.

By 9:30, a line of royal men stand in the middle of the courtyard, waiting for the mast to arrive. The surrounding crowds wait too. When it finally arrives (the male and female pieces of wood had been joined early in the morning in the south end of the village), chaos. The plaza is swarmed; tourists and film-makers struggle for clean sight-lines; shotgun blanks are fired in the air. Dadilahy Said yells directions, and the mast is jockeyed into the cruxes of the three Y-supports in which it will rest, facing east, waiting for its erection. As in the weeks leading up to this moment, the wood is not meant to touch the ground. With the drums sounding, 6 royal women walk around it counter clockwise sprinkling it with white rice and a solution called mandresirafy -- "that which defeats rivals".

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Following a formula first proposed by the prophetess Tsimatahodraf, mandresirafy is produced by combining water, collected from a flowing freshwater source in the middle of the night (rano tsidikamboroño -- "water not flown over by birds" -- a term which reveals how the water used is meant to be pure), with a variety of potent substances (white rice, honey, a piece of silver -- some of which are said to have been handed down since the time of Andriansirotsy) in a white plate. It is used here to protect the mast from any "rivals" who might attempt to sabotage what is about to happen. Interestingly, mandresirafy is also used to bathe the Ampanjaka periodically in the weeks leading up to the raising of the mast.

The guns fired in the air (here as at other key points throughout the Tsangantsainy) are said to serve a double purpose. First, they are meant as a signal to the ancestors that something important is going to happen. Second, they are meant to make
the event more *maresaka* — "lively". Having observed their effects in both 1993 and 1997, I can attest to the latter if not the former.

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The hole in which the mast will be planted is begun by Dadilahy Said. With the first strike of his shovel he informs god (*zaña*ahary), with the second, the ancestors (*razaña*). "This is your *fanjakana*" he yells to them above the clamor of the crowd surrounding him. He calls out the first name in the genealogy of Antankaraña *Ampanja*: 

"*Anao Dady* ... *Anao Andriamahitso!* — You ancestor! ... You Andriamahitso! *Avia mañaatriky, avia mangomboatra!* — Come take part, come prepare!"

and then works his way down the list.

*Anao Dady! Anao Andriamanampelana ... avia mañaatriky, avia mangomboatra.*  
*Anao Dady! Anao Andriansirots ... avia mañaatriky, avia mangomboatra.*  
*Anao Dady! Anao Lamboenibe ... avia mañaatriky, avia mangomboatra.*

"Bring your sacredness [*hasiňy]*" he implores, "There are many people gathered here, men and women, from all over. The people [*vahoaka*] are looking for you [to arrive] here!"

*Anao dady! Boanohajy ... Avia mañaatriky, avia mañaamboatra!*  
*Anao dady! Tstialana Be ... Avia mañaatriky, avia mañaamboatra!*  
*Anao dady! Tbialana deux ... Avia mañaatriky, avia mañaamboatra!*  
*Anao dady! Lamboenibe deux ... Avia mañaatriky, avia mañaamboatra!*  
*Anao zoky (older brother)! Tbialana trois ... Avia mañaatriky, avia mañaamboatra!*

"Here is the mast [*saiňy]*" he shouts, "Here is the sacredness!"

*Anao dady! Tsimiharo ... Avia mañaatriky, avia mañaamboatra!*
He ends the list with reference to the current Ampanjaka, recalling for all gathered that the living ruler is in fact a member of a younger generation than he:

Anao zanaka [child]! Tsimiharo deux ... Avia manatriky, avia manamboatra!

By the end of the invocation he has outlined a two by two foot square in the hard soil. Those gathered behind him dig, taking turns with the single shovel much as others had shared the burden of carrying the wood. As they do, royal spirits (tromba) appear in the bodies of mediums in a clearing set aside for them just west of the mast. Others appear haphazardly in the crowd. They are called not by the twang of the valiha (a stringed instrument) and the rhythm of the farey (rattle), as they would be at a spirit possession ceremony, but by the rhythmic pounding of drums and the singing and clapping of the crowd surrounding the mast.

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While tromba spirits appear intermittently throughout the preparations leading up to the mast-raising, it is here, in the moments leading up to it, that they are most prevalent. Of the spirits that appear here, many are Antandrano -- those spirits of royal ancestors who had committed suicide en masse in the seventeenth century (the same ones that appear to bathe during the fisehara described in the previous chapter). Others, appearing for the first and perhaps only time in mediums who don't normally act as such, are unidentifiable; and this marks an interesting break from how possession usually works. As noted in the previous chapter, having a spirit that wants to possess an individual identify itself through that individual is an important first step on the medium's path to a cure for what ails her. Under normal circumstances, it might take months for this to happen. In the moments before the mast is raised, however, it is said that virtually anyone (myself included some told me) could become possessed instantly and without any of the symptoms that generally precede such an occurrence. For this reason, some women (who are generally the ones
possessed by spirits) attend the mast-raising with trepidation -- they fear that they may become possessed whether they like it or not.

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While spirits dance and play in the bodies of their mediums, rebiky are performed alongside them. Chaotic as it may seem to have a 17th century conflict between two branches of a royal family recalled (by the rebiky) alongside mediums possessed by spirits of rulers of the past 300 years and within hearing distance of the names of more recent local rulers (called out in Dadilahy Said's joro), the one thing they all have in common, the thing which makes this event an acceptable and effective forum for them, is that all revolve around the (sometimes distant) past of the royal lineage represented in the present by the Ampanjaka.

As the hole nears completion, royal women circle the mast again, sprinkling it with mandresirafy. This time they also sing a rary ("mahery andriana mahery" -- "royalty is hard/tough") that asserts the strength of royalty. They are followed by a single (male) manantary.

When the hole is big enough (about a metre and a quarter deep), Dadilahy Said climbs down into it. He drops a silver coin at his feet, kneels down and recites an invocation informing his ancestors of the imminent mast-raising, and asking them for their blessing. When finished, he is helped out of the hole and given mandresirafy to drink. Men attach the ropes that will be used to raise the mast and women begin another tour of the mast. They begin a new rary -- this time in recognition of the power of the substances they carry in the plates on their heads: "mmn manjakanay try resy .... oo mandresirafyééé" -- "our rule cannot be defeated ... it defeats rivals".

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In the moments before the mast is erected, the scene in the plaza north of the zomba is a symbolically charged one. You have the hazomanjaka -- "the wood that rules" -- resting at the edge of the hole in which it will be planted, being held aloft in the cruxes of three y-joints (normally sampaña -- "y-joint" -- but on this day referred to as "rangahy" -- a
polity official) representing the officials of the polity. At the same time, you have royal women circling the mast, spraying it with a sacred formula meant to protect it from rivals, and Dadilahy Said crouched in the hole, requesting ancestral benediction for the event about to take place, the living *Ampanjaka* and the constituents of the polity alike. The whole scene recalls the constitution of the polity as described in Chapter 2: The mast, embodying the sacredness of rulers, supported by the "rangahy" (representing constituents of the polity), and protected by a spiritually powerful force and the benediction of royal ancestors. Like the *Ampanjaka*, then, whose rule is simultaneously guaranteed by the support of polity constituents and the blessing of his ancestors and potentially threatened by the lack thereof, in the moments before its raising, the mast is poised in a precarious position. Through its raising the relationship between the *Ampanjaka*, his ancestors and constituents (and thus the polity) is reconstituted.

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With concerted effort, a group of men raise the mast off of its supports long and high enough for those holding the ropes on the other side to gain some leverage and pull it upright. Guided by a large plank of wood poised on the hole's edge (like a giant shoe horn), the mast falls into place and once it is oriented properly, its base is packed with dirt. Royal women with *mandresirafy* circle again, sprinkling the mast and the men holding it up. In the background, drums and song resonate, while *tromba* spirits and *rebiky* dancers compete with the newly upright mast for the crowd's attention.

Shortly before noon, the mast is deemed sturdy enough, and a climber begins his ascent of it carrying in his mouth a rope which he must pass through the hole at the very top. As the flags are meant to be raised and the *Ampanjaka* carried around the mast at precisely 12:00, the wiry old man has only a few minutes to accomplish his task. He begins strongly, his arms and legs smeared with honey to ease his task, and after only several metres of climbing, things look promising. To the crowd's delight, he stops and sways a dance in time to the rhythm of pounding drums. He continues (a little slower now) and makes it halfway up the mast before he dances again, driven to even wilder gyrations by the sound of guns firing and the excited trills of women.
surrounding the mast. He makes his way still further up, but his progress is slow and his grip on the mast seems uncertain. "He's just taking a rest" says one hopeful man, staring up at the climber and into the harsh light of the sun directly overhead. Noon has already passed. Three quarters of the way up, the old man, his arms and legs slick with perspiration, surrenders and slides back down.

A second, younger, climber (the grandson of the first) seems sure to make it, and even shows off halfway up with a more affected version of the first climber's swaying dance. As he approaches the top, however, he too gets stuck and must give up and return to the ground.

A third climber is given the task, and he completes it with seemingly little effort. The rope in his mouth, he scampers up easily, barely giving the crowd time to react to his feat before he has pulled the rope through the hole in the top and returned back to the ground for his reward. As Malagasy (first) and Antankarana (second) flags are being raised on the mast, he is carried through the crowd to on the shoulders of two young men to collect money from the outstretched hands of everyone gathered. Grubby 500 and 1000 Malagasy franc bills abound, but the climber goes first for flashes of crisp 5 and 10 thousand Malagasy franc bills held up by wealthier admirers. Even the dignitaries seated on the covered platform south of the zomba offer money. The climber collects so much that someone has to bring him an old rice sack to stuff it in.

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The flags hoisted on the newly erected mast hold different meanings for different people. For some they are immediately obvious and important symbols of particular political orders. For others they represent a relatively insignificant flourish on the down-side of the climax that is the raising and successful climbing of the mast. For me, they exemplify what are two central features of ritual practice in northern Madagascar -- its syncretic nature and adaptability. Just as the 5 franc silver pieces and manufactured beads that have found their way into local curative formulae indicate that medicine has changed through time, so the flags raised on the mast are sure indicators of the mutability of ritual practice. While practices associated with the cutting, construction and raising of the mast itself might be
considered akin to documented practices involving the use of wood in other parts of Madagascar, the practice of raising flags on the newly erected mast is almost certainly traceable to an exogenous source of the past 500 years\(^\text{13}\).

In Maroantsetra, a town on the east-coast, where mast-raising rites similar to the *Tsangantsainy* took place in the years leading up to and immediately following the turn of this century, descendants of 19th century royalty note that the only flag that had ever been raised on their mast was the white one of the Zafinifotsy line of royalty. This, some might say, is what might be expected in a ritual meant to legitimate the rule of a single ruler or line over an area, and yet this is not what happens in current manifestations of the *Tsangantsainy* in Ambatoharana. When the mast was erected in 1993, the Malagasy State flag was raised above the Antankaraña one. In previous enactments, during the colonial era, it had been the French *trois couleurs* that had been raised above the Antankaraña sickle moon and star. How might we account for this?

Keesing (1989) has noted how flags have been among the symbols employed in expressions of resistance to colonial rule in the Pacific. He suggests that certain colonized groups adopted the European "semiology of sovereignty" (of which flags are prime example) in reaction to changing times and political climates, his general point being that "counterhegemonic discourse pervasively incorporates the structures, categories and premises of hegemonic discourse" (1989:23). It would be difficult to make a similar argument concerning the use of flags in the enactment of the *Tsangantsainy*. Implicit in the raising of two flags is the recognition that the polity exists within the state (and, given that the state is raised above the Antankaraña flag, is in fact subservient to it) -- raising the flags then is not necessarily indicative of resistance, but is rather a way of expressing local authority in a way that is (supposedly) unthreatening to the state (in this, of course, it may well be considered counterhegemonic in the way Keesing suggests). This statement is only reinforced by the presence of those invited government officials (currently of the

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\(^\text{13}\)Grandidier (1958:341) suggests that *hazomanga* had long been a signifier of authority in many parts of Madagascar. He describes, for example, how some Sakalava rulers had pieces of wood of great height raised in recognition of their royal status. Interestingly, Grandidier states quite clearly that Antankaraña had no *hazomanga*. Another potentially fruitful comparison might be made between the mast and the *tohy* — memorial tree — found in the north and elsewhere among Sakalava groups (as described, for example, by Feeley-Harnik [1991]).
Malagasy State, previously of the French colonial administration) who watch on and condone it (in the eyes of all gathered) with their attendance. Is this not a significant sacrifice on the part of local authority? Is something not lost in the process? The answer, of course, is yes; but only to those who think the flags important\(^\text{14}\).

When asking those in Ambatoharaına about the history of the flags (especially regarding the switch from the French to the Malagasy flag), I was taken aback by how little people knew (or seemed to care) about it. I was particularly surprised when one particularly knowledgeable answered me by asking me whether the French or the Malagasy flag is raised in current practice. Even Dadilahy Said was unable to specify any debate (which I suppose I expected there would have been) that occurred when the change from raising a French flag to raising a Malagasy one actually took place. He only ever said what logic had led me to understand -- i.e., that the French flag was raised during the colonial era and the Malagasy one after independence. The fact is that for many of the people I lived with in Ambatoharaına, the flags were of little importance.

What invited guests who left soon after lunch on the day of the mast-raising never saw is that the flags were removed almost as soon as they are put up and were stowed away until

\(^{14}\text{In 1982, Noël Gueunier was among several representatives of the University of Madagascar overseeing the production of the above mentioned film-documentary of the event. Reflecting on that experience recently, he described a particularly important incident which I had missed in my second-hand viewing of a poor video-transfer of the film they had made. He told me that his seat on the balcony of the ampanjaka's palace afforded him a view that most of those gathered there missed. After the mast had been raised and successfully climbed, the two flags to be hoisted were brought out of storage in the zomba. In 1982, twenty years following Madagascar's independence, it should have been a Malagasy flag and an Antankaraña one. They were attached to the rope on the mast, and as they began their ascent, the first unfurled slightly. It was the French tricolour. After some confusion, both flags were removed from the mast, and a proper, Malagasy, flag was brought in to replace the French one. I asked Gueunier if it couldn't have been an honest mistake. If it wasn't possible that the French flag was leftover from the colonial era, and mistakenly picked up instead of the Malagasy one. No, he assured me, the tricolour which unfurled momentarily was new. There is no doubt that the individual (or group) who oversaw the near-raising of it had an agenda. Although I can only hypothesize in retrospect, it seems likely that it represented an expression of the widely held nostalgia for the long-past colonial period. By 1982, after all, Madagascar was well on its way to becoming one of the poorest (and most poorly administered) countries in the developing world, and some in the north undoubtedly longed for faňavazaha (the time of the French) just as many do today. Attempting to raise a tricolour in 1982, then, was most certainly a politically charged act undertaken by some individual or group with a point to make. It indicates that to some, the flag was a symbol of sufficient power to make that point. The fact that the mistake was remedied so quickly is a testament to the prudence of certain representatives of the ampanjaka's concerns overseeing the proceedings. Gueunier was not alone on the palace's porch -- alongside him were visiting officials of the Malagasy State and military.}
the next mast-raising\textsuperscript{15}. More important than the flags to many of those who participate in
the \textit{Tsangantsainy} is the fact that the mast itself incarnates the authority of \textit{Ampanjaka}
past and present. It is there, over the 2-3 years that the mast stays standing, that they
request ancestral benediction, swear promises and make accusations of sorcery. To fulfill
such functions, the presence or absence of flags is immaterial.

Even in the midst of this detailed description of what happens on the day of the
mast-raising, it is important to remember that the mast-raising is only the culmination of
the weeks of preparations and years of planning that have already been carried out. If the
purpose of the thing is to allow constituents to express their "cultural identity" by serving
the polity with which they identify (as the first quote cited at the beginning of this chapter
indicates), then the purpose is accomplished even before the flags are flown. It is the
\textit{building and raising} of the mast, and not its standing or appendages, that is critical.

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With the two flags now flying, the \textit{Ampanjaka} emerges from the \textit{zomba} dressed in a
long dark robe and wearing a hat based on a 19th century French design (as at Nosy
Mitsio). Seated in a palanquin, and shaded from the sun by a large red umbrella, he is
carried around the mast on the shoulders of twelve \textit{rangahy} and \textit{fahatelo}. Royal
women follow closely alongside him, spraying him, as they had the mast, with the
water of \textit{mandresirafy}. After 8 tours around it, he is carried back to the \textit{zomba} where
he receives visits from the \textit{tromba} spirits who had appeared throughout the event.

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Immediately following the mast-raising, food is prepared and served to
participants. In 1993, visiting dignitaries, soldiers, government officials, WWF employees,
and some tourists and researchers were provided cold drinks and elaborately prepared
food (cole-slaw, fried beef and liver, fresh vegetables, etc) in the shade of a shelter built

\textsuperscript{15}Although it was stated to me that the flags could be raised on other important occasions (a recent visit
by the Malagasy President was cited as an example), following the 1993 event as overzealous participants
alongside the school-house on the outskirts of the village. In 1997 some representatives of these same groups ate in the newly constructed school house in the same part of the village. Of the thousands of others in attendance, some were served mass quantities of rice and beef broth (with much less urgency) from large basin-like dishes, while others fended for themselves — eating with family in the village or purchasing a meal at one of the many temporary snack-stalls or restaurants that had been set up for the event. Still others held off until they could return home to Ambilobe, Diego or their own villages. In the afternoon following the mast-raising, two pieces of wood (hazomahity) are cut and planted in the plaza south-west of the newly erected mast. The first, no more than 3 metres tall, is straight and sharpened at one end. It is referred to by some (including Dadilahy Said) as male. The second piece, the correspondingly female one, is of the same height but in a Y shape. Once again, then, we see the necessary complementarity of male and female elements in practices associated with the polity. As the wood from which these are constructed is more durable than that used to make the mast, these new additions stand alongside others that had been planted following previous mast-raisings. Thus, alongside the mast that must fall are (relatively) permanent markers of events that have taken place in the past.

As discussed earlier, when the Tsangantsainy ends, it has not been "finished" (vita) as some other task might be, but rather it has "grown" (tombo) as a child or a plant does. One souvenir waist-cloth sold in 1993, in fact, stated as much. "Tombo ny Tsangantsainy, Ravoravo atsika Ankarabe", read the inscription, "the Tsangantsainy has ended/grown, we Ankarabe are happy".

The circumcision (savatra)

In the afternoon and evening following the mast-raising, preparations are made for the circumcision of young boys that is to follow during the night. The practice of circumcising boys on the occasion of the Tsangantsainy is one that goes back to at least the 1950s (and probably much earlier), although it seems to have become less popular

removed not only the flags at the prescribed time, but also the rope upon which they were raised.
through time. One older man I spoke with in 1997 recalled how he was one of over 280 boys circumcised after the Tsangantsainy in 1956. In 1997 only 62 boys underwent the operation. This dramatic decrease in participation might be attributable to a number of factors. First, many parents in proximity to hospitals or clinics (especially those from Ambilobe) have their male children circumcised there where, as one Ambilobe friend gracefully put it, conditions are more sanitary. In these cases, the boys are circumcised at a very young age (less than 2 years) and, it is thought by some, are thus not traumatized by the operation. Boys circumcised during the night following the Tsangantsainy range in age from 3 to 7 years (the age at which they are circumcised depends, obviously, on the age they are when a Tsangantsainy rolls around -- if deemed too young one year they have to wait the four or five years until the next one), and, judging by comments of older men who recalled going through the process, they are thus old enough to remember the tiredness, crying, screaming, pain and dark of the event. Another possible reason for the savatra's decline in popularity concerns the investment of time required. The boys circumcised after the Tsangantsainy are expected to stay in Ambatoharanana for a week along with the adults (one male, a mother's brother, and one female, a father's sister) who accompany them through the process. In 1997 some, who might have participated, found these requirements too much. Interestingly, the drastic decline in participation in the savatra does not correspond with a drastic decline (in recent years anyhow) in attendance of the Tsangantsainy. That in mind, it seems possible that another likely explanation for the relative dearth of popular participation in the savatra is the fact that it is not the focus of the Ampanyakaka's designing gaze as the mast-raising has been -- in 1997, no discernible attempt was made at encouraging mass participation in it. Had this traditional form of

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16 Vial (1954:17) notes that earlier in this century circumcision was "obligatory for all Antankarana males before the age of 7", and that savatra took place in 1927, 1933 and 1945. In 1949, it was decided that the savatra would take place at the same time as the raising of the mast (154 boys were reportedly circumcized that year). It may be that this marked the first time on which the two practices took place together.
circumcision been encouraged in the way that attendance of the mast-raising had been, there may very well have been more boys there that night.

As noted above, each boy to be circumcised is accompanied by one of his mother's brothers (zama) and one of his father's sisters (angovavy). In the afternoon following the mast-raising these generally young men and women prepare themselves and the boys in their charge for the night to come. Women weave rafia hats for the boys to wear, while men fashion their own headgear from white cloth and long strips of malleable bark. Later, these uncles, carrying their nephews on their shoulders, stand in line to hop over a bull (virile and uncastrated -- called jaolahi ny savatra) lying tied and prostrate on the ground. Their procession complete, the newly re-legitimized Ampanjaka recites an invocation over the bull, and it is set free. The young men are then encouraged to wrestle and play with the bull (to the delight of those left behind after the morning's activities) before it is allowed to run off into the savanna east of the village. The bull will roam freely for the next three or four years eating whatever and wherever it wants, even if that means damage to the sugar-cane or rice crops of local farmers. Nobody may take action against the bull (i.e., try to tie it up or kill it) nor may they make claims (against the Ampanjaka, for example) for the damages it has caused\(^1\). It is captured, killed and eaten a week before the next visit to the cave-tombs (and thus following the collapse of the mast just raised) when the men prepare the alcohol necessary for that visit (see above). Yet again, we see how past phases of the ritual cycle are connected to present and future ones.

After midnight, the uncles (who will have been drinking rum and palm wine since the afternoon) begin roaming the village in a group, singing, clapping and pounding on the roofs and doors of the houses where the boys lie asleep. By 2 or 3 AM, all (the boys as well as their uncles and aunts) gather outside of an enclosure constructed especially for the event. It is here that the man who will circumcise the boys has been staying in seclusion for the past several days, and it is here, in an enclosure within the enclosure, that he will

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\(^1\) In August 1994 the bull released following the circumcision of 1993 was discovered eating the sugar cane of a non-royal man from a nearby village. The owner of the field, intent on receiving compensation for his losses, brought the matter to the attention of Dadilahy Said and others in Ambato Hiroa. Dadilahy Said informed him that he could not request compensation in that the bull had no owner (it was certainly not the 'property' of the Ampanjaka). When I asked him later whether he wasn't concerned about
perform the operation. This man, whose role has been inherited from his father, is not a member of the royal family — he is, rather, representative of one of the descent groups which inhabited the region before the arrival of royalty. He is brought to Ambatoharañana from his home village 20 km away under cover of darkness where he and his entourage are set up in a small hut within a 20 by 30 foot enclosure just west of the zomba. While there, he is served food cooked in new pots which he eats from the new plates and bowls bought specifically for him. This precaution, like the prescription which keeps him hidden until his work is complete, is meant to protect him from those who would seek to sabotage his significant work by having him eat something harmful (haody ratsy — bad medicine).

In both 1993 and 1997 attempts were made to keep the circumcision procedure orderly. In both cases, a list of all the boys to be circumcised had been made in the afternoon so that each could be called out in order. Significantly, the first boy to undergo the operation is meant not to be royalty. The idea, recounted with a cringe by one royal man who recognized its obvious implications, is that the first boy is there "to test the sharpness of the knife". It is only after this test case has gone through that a royal boy follows. In contrast to 1993, where attempts at organization seemed to break down almost immediately, in 1997, strict control was kept over the adults participating. When the names of boys were called, their uncles handed them into the enclosure through its north door and were directed immediately to walk around the enclosure to the south door to wait. The aunts and other men and women, meanwhile, stayed outside the north door chanting in unison: "soliay, soliay, tsara fanapahana ... soliay, soliay, tsara fanapahana" — "rub it, rub it, it's easier to cut ... rub it, rub it, it's easier to cut". Once inside the enclosure, the boys are carried into a sub-enclosure where the operation is performed. The moment of circumcision is marked with a yelp of pain from the boy and an exclamation from the man performing the operation. "Veloño!" he yells — "Alive!" — inciting a change in the chant from outside the enclosure: "veloño atsika aty ... veloño atsika aty" they intone, "we are alive here ... we are alive here". With the operation
complete, the boy is handed over to his uncle at the south exit of the enclosure who in turn carries him to the house from which he had been taken a few hours earlier.

The following morning, the Ampanjaka tours the village seeking out the houses (marked with banners hanging from their doors) where the newly circumcised boys are to be found recovering. In an interesting reversal of regular practice, where it is the Ampanjaka who receives visitors and the gifts they bring him, on that day it is he who visits and brings gifts (of candy) to them. Other well-wishers visit too, and the boys soon learn that if they lift their tunics for visitors who ask to see where they've been cut, they're likely to receive candy or a token sum of money in return. Some of the boys stay indoors, unable to get around, for days. Others are up and walking around (albeit bow-legged) in a short time, wearing the white tunics and silver chains that mark their status. In the past, these tunics and silver chains worn by the boys were obtained from either the Ampanjaka's or Ndrambavibe's stock of dead spirit mediums' possessions, but in more recent years this practice has ceased for a lack of these goods.

That the circumcision follows immediately after the Tsangantsainy is important. While it is true that the link between the two may be one of convenience -- what better occasion to carry out a collective circumcision than immediately following an event which attracts so many? and how convenient that it occurs once every 4 or 5 years -- there is more to be said. This is, after all, not just any kind of circumcision taking place. It is a circumcision at the hands of a specialist called upon in recognition of his ancestors' relationship vis à vis the ancestors of an Ampanjaka who has just been ritually re-legitimated by the raising of a new mast. The circumcised boys are being drawn towards recognizing the saliency of the polity as are their parents, uncles and aunts. That the Ampanjaka breaks from tradition and brings gifts to each of the boys on the day following the circumcision is further indication of the link being forged here. Significantly, upon leaving Ambatoharañana on the day following the circumcision, the man who performed the operation is authorized to do the same in villages he passes through on his way home. Even those unable to attend the savatra, then, are potentially able to connect themselves, as well of course as their nephews or sons, to the polity in a similar way.
**Analysis**

The following analysis of the ritual cycle is divided into three sections. First, I suggest how the cycle might be seen as commemorative and how the elements that comprise it might be seen as substantiating locally powerful commemorative narratives. Second, I discuss the significance of participation in the ritual cycle, and suggest how such participation (varying as it may be) is an important way of marking affiliation with or recognition of the polity. Third, I propose that the continuity of the ritual cycle is intimately connected to the continuity of the polity in a number of ways. The titles of these three sections are comprised partly of excerpts from the quotes cited at the opening of this chapter -- my goal in presenting this analysis as I do is to demonstrate important connections between various interpretations of what the ritual cycle might mean.

*The ritual cycle and "the old memories it evoked"*

In a story recounted by Dadilahy Said (transcribed in Tsitindry 1987), it was the prophetess Tsimatahodrafy who oversaw the first mast-raising in the late 17th century. Having followed the *Ampanjaka* Andriansirots0's return from the east coast to Ankaraña as she had promised, she agreed to stay and help him re-establish himself in the area. Part of this re-establishment project was the enactment of the first *Tsangantsainy*.

Tsimatahodrafy sent several of the *Ampanjaka*’s representatives to a forest (Analamahaveloño -- "the forest that gives life") south of the Mahavavy river. They were instructed to ask the people living there (Antañana -- "people of the forest") to show them where to find a tree called *tsitakonal* ("that which the forest cannot hide") and to cut down two of them -- one male and one female. The two pieces of wood were brought back to Mahavanono where they were joined and planted as a mast. No mention is made in this story of whether flags were then raised on the mast or not.

Tsitindry's analysis of this story suggests many of the themes discussed earlier in this chapter. First, she describes the erection of the mast as a symbolization of political authority in the area. Having returned from exile on the east coast, Andriansirots0 re-
established himself through this particularly potent means. By equating the distinctive characteristics of the trees chosen (they are taller than any others in the forest -- literally "that which the forest cannot hide") with those characteristics which differentiate royalty from commoners, she also sets up an image of the mast as representative of the transcendency of royal power. Tsitindry then points out the prevalence and significance of reproductive imagery in the rite, describing how male and female sections are joined to form a mast which is then itself planted in "mother-earth". Most significantly, though, Tsitindry's analysis of the Tsangantsainy suggests that at its origin, the practice of building and raising a mast was intended to legitimate the Ampanjaka's position in the area and ensure the continuity of his rule. What is more, she describes how this was accomplished in a very particular way -- it was not the Ampanjaka but rather his representatives who actually carried out the construction and raising of the first mast. In a sense then, and this is a point that I will be returning to shortly, at its origin, as today, successful completion of the Tsangantsainy represented the fulfillment of the parallel interests of the Ampanjaka and the people. Both, she implies, sought to ensure the continuing existence of the relationship between them.

When one examines current ritual practice in light of the story Tsitindry analyses, its commemorative nature becomes apparent. Consider, for example, the many references made to Tsimatahodrafy throughout the Tsangantsainy. She is the prophetess unequivocally linked to the formula (mandresirafy) which is used to protect both the mast and the Ampanjaka from their "rivals", and she is the one said to have insisted that the Ampanjaka's followers (and not the Ampanjaka himself) carry out the mast's preparations. Even more directly, Tsimatahodrafy is referred to as the author of the Tsangantsainy in one of the more commonly heard rary songs performed by women in the weeks leading up to the mast's erection. Some say that another rary sung during this period -- "Atsika holy Ankarañééé" translatable as "Let's return to Ankara" -- also refers to the time of Andriansirotso's return to Ankaraña. In participating in the Tsangantsainy, then, following its formulae and singing appropriate songs (among other things), people recall the events recounted in the above discussed story of the rite's origin.
A second origin theory suggests that it was the French, and not Tsimihodrahy, who provided the formula for the first enactment of the Tsangantsainy. Here, there is no single "story" which can be analysed (as above), but snippets from written accounts do offer hints of evidence to suggested cases. It is said by some, for example that the Tsangantsainy may have originated at the time of Benyowsky's late 18th century contact with the royalty in the north. Recall (from chapter 3) that at that time of the Polish Count's alliance with various Ampanjaka of the north (the alliance which saw him raised above all others as "Ampanjakabe" of Madagascar) these others vowed to erect a monument to commemorate the newly forged alliance. Recall too that both Benyowsky and his envoy, Mayeur, had spent several months as a guest of Lamboeny on the west coast. Given these encounters, it is plausible that the first mast-raising took place at his suggestion, and given Benyowsky's own knowledge of and ease at manipulating locally powerful customs and rules of legitimacy, it seems possible that even some of the elaborations on a simple mast-raising could have been first undertaken at his advice.

Descendants of royalty in the east coast town of Maroantsetra, where Benyowsky had first established himself in the north, indicate that this is in fact the case. Others who consider the Tsangantsainy to have originated in more recent times suggest that it first occurred after the Ampanjaka Tsimiharo had established his treaty with the French on Nosy Be (see Chapter 4). By this thinking, the mast-raising commemorates the alliance (fatidra) between the Antankaraña Ampanjaka and the French. Once again, written accounts from the time in question would seem to back this suggestion up. The ceremony that accompanied the first raising of the French tricouleur on Nosy Be on the day on which the treaty with the Ampanjaka Tsiomeko was signed, for example, is in many respects similar to current practice of the Tsangantsainy. Recall too that at the same time that they planted their first mast on Nosy Be, the French also outlawed trial (for sorcery accusations) by royally administered poison ordeal — a practice which, for Antankaraña today, has been replaced by accusations made at the base of the mast in Ambatoharanana. Certainly, the flags raised on masts were significant markers of alliance in mid to late nineteenth century northern Madagascar. Flying the tricouleur, the union jack, or the flag of the Merina sovereign, as the Antankaraña Ampanjaka did at one time or another...
through that period, was intended as a sign of where the Ampanjaka’s loyalties lay (Decary 1960:50-51).

Despite such speculations, it is virtually impossible to prove that the idea of raising a mast came from the French. All that can be stated with certainty is that the Tsangantsainy is reported by some to be commemorative of cooperative relations between the French and the Antankaraña. In a short article written for the Bulletin de l'Academie Malagache in 1962 (two years following Madagascar's independence), Pain claims this quite clearly. "This ceremony", he writes, "is repeated every 5 or 6 years in remembrance of the unity of the Antankaraña race and of the alliance established with Benyowsky in 1776 — the alliance later re-established by the captain of the Colibri in 1840" (1962:65). Later in the same short article, he states that the joining of the two pieces which make up the mast is symbolic of the continuing alliance between the Antankaraña and the French. Although currently not the "official" one (I will explain why this is so shortly), this theory of the origin of the Tsangantsainy is none the less prevalent in popular discourse surrounding the event as well. Even Dadilahy Said, the same man who recounted how the Tsangantsainy originated at the time of Tsimatahodrafy, told Lambek and me (in an interview in 1992) that the Tsangantsainy is commemorative of the alliance between Antankaraña and French. Here, then, is another way in which the Tsangantsainy might be considered commemorative -- the difference, of course, is that, by this interpretation it is the relationship between an Ampanjaka of the past and the French that is being recollected, and not that between an Ampanjaka of the past and the people he returned to.

Given that some refer to the Tsangantsainy as commemorative of cooperative relations with the French, the above discussed mnemonic significance of the preliminary visits to Nosy Mitsio and Andavaka is worth considering again. Recall that over the several days spent on Nosy Mitsio in 1992, reference was often made to Tsimiharo’s nineteenth century exile there. The ruins of his zomba, the platform that had been built for him, the bay in which French boats had anchored when their officers paid him visits, etc. -- all were commented upon. In the caves too, all participants were made aware of what had occurred there before: the doorways entered by, the paths followed, the landmarks passed.
all recalled Tsimiharo's hiding there. What is more, the taboos in force recalled just whose treachery had driven him into the caves and whose betrayal had forced him out. As if these indicators weren't enough, the historical significance of these locations were explicitly stated through stories told while there.

Although the visits to these locations were not intended to be primarily commemorative ones, there is no doubt that events of the past were evoked through their occurrence. When considered in conjunction with the Tsangantsainy they might even be seen as recalling an important narrative -- that which recounts Tsimiharo's enmity with the Merina, hiding in the caves, flight from the mainland and treaty with the French. In a sense, participants in these events actually retrace the movements of their ancestors of a century and a half ago. What is more, they may see and refer to themselves as doing so. They recognize not only that past events are being recalled by their visits, but that they are in fact at times being "re-presented" (Connerton 1989: 43) through their own practice. Given that the narrative referred to here is also the one most commonly referred to (as indicated in the opening pages of chapter 4) when non-specialists recount local history, certain questions beg to be asked: Is there a connection between the narrative "re-presented" through ritual practice and that commonly referred to in discourse concerning the past in non-ritual contexts? Does re-presenting history through ritual practice have some effect on the way practitioners represent it to inquisitive researchers? Based on my experience, such a connection can be drawn, but I must note that my experience was in no way typical of the region. I was, after all, frequently considered a representative of one of the sets of actors (the French) who are favorably portrayed in the narrative so frequently repeated to me.

*The ritual cycle and "Antankarana cultural identity"

I am borrowing part of this section title from one of the quotes which opened this chapter. That quote, which the reader might recall is drawn from the narration of a film produced for Malagasy state television, referred to the Tsangantsainy as something "used" by the Antankarana people to "protect and conserve" their "cultural identity". An
important first step in discussing how this is so, or at least why it is that such a sentiment came to be expressed in the narration of a film broadcast throughout Madagascar, is to profile the "users" in question — the participants. It should be noted from the start, that I will be considering all those in attendance at events associated with the polity "participants".

As before any event that requires constituent participation (recall the Ampanjaka's preoccupation with the ziara in chapter 2), before the Tsangantsainy the Ampanjaka must send word to villages throughout the region via the polity's officials. These officials may be asked to make extensive tours of the regions in which they live to ensure that all are informed of the upcoming event. In one case, those visited on such a tour by an official in 1997 were even asked to verify that meetings had taken place by signing a notebook he carried with him (later to be shown to the Ampanjaka). As noted earlier, among the first to be informed in this way are those to the south of Ambilobe whose task it is to cut down the trees and transport them (part of the way) northward. From the time they receive this information, they must begin organizing their contributions of time, labor, money and goods (cattle and rice especially). Among these participants, of course, are those expected to carry out certain tasks — this notification, then, propels rope-makers, honey-gatherers and tree-seekers into action. All will contribute in concrete ways — they will give their time, labor, resources, and in the case of spirit mediums, their bodies to ensure that the Tsangantsainy will occur.

While these participants are getting word and preparing themselves, the date of the impending Tsangantsainy is also being disseminated in other ways — through the local media especially. In 1997 announcements were heard on local and national radio, and television news programs in Ambilobe and Diego featured reports and re-broadcasts of the films and videos made of previous enactments. Ambilobe's television station even broadcast an advertisement for a local shop which reminded viewers of the upcoming event and promoted, what can only be called, a Tsangantsainy sale. This saturation of popular media had an effect. In the weeks leading up to the mast-raising, most of the people I spoke with in Ambilobe and Diego, even those who did not consider themselves "Antankarana", were aware of the impending Tsangantsainy and expressed an interest in
attending. Many from Ambilobe made the half-hour trek to Ampasibe during the weeks of the wood's stay there to take in performances of the rebiky. Gezon (personal communication) notes that in 1993, classes of school children were taken there on field trips. Capitalizing on this interest, many of Ambilobe's bush-taxi drivers ran shuttles to Ambatoharaiana on the day of the mast-raising starting at 4 AM. I would estimate that by 9 AM on the day of the mast-raising in 1997, the population of Ambatoharaiana had doubled since the previous night. In other words, half of those in attendance at the Tsangantsainy were day-trippers.

Why did these people come? Why is it that, if, as I stated before, the Tsangantsainy must be considered a drawn out process and not just an event, some viewed the mast-raising alone as important? We can say for certain that many of them did not come with the same intentions as those who had been informed through the polity's infrastructure -- many did not cite the Ampanjaka or the polity in explaining their attendance. These attendees were more likely to note the attractive superficial features of the event -- its party-like atmosphere, dramatic unfurling, colorful performances, and aura of the spectacular -- which is perhaps response enough to the second question posed above. The mast-raising itself is a spectacle not easily forgotten. The crowd, the guns, the TV and film crews; the buzz about VIP's on the platform out front of the zomba while women and men hosting spirits flail wildly about them; the tension as the mast is dropped into its hole, raised to precarious erection and climbed; the raising of the flags; the elaborately garbed Ampanjaka circling the mast. That said, these one-day participants are more than just spectacle-seekers. In attending, I would argue, they are also responding to the objectified images of the event that dominate public discourse in the weeks leading up to it.

In asking "Why did these people come?" (above) I am insinuating a second question -- What does the Tsangantsainy "mean" to these people? -- in which, I think, is prefigured a way of approaching the answers to both. If we are to discuss the "meaning" of the Tsangantsainy to the people who attend it, then we must begin by recognizing that it, in addition to being comprised of various symbolic practices, is itself symbolic. In writing all I have above I myself have objectified ritual practice and, inasmuch as I suggest
that such practice represents more than just people doing things, in the analysis that follows am approaching it as polyvalent symbol. But I am not the only person to do this. Others -- film-makers, reporters, shop-owners, academics, politicians and even the Ampanjaka -- objectify ritual practice as well, and interpret it in their own ways just as I do in mine. That they too indicate that it has "meaning", however that meaning is construed in the films, news reports, writings and speeches they produce, is evidence of this. People confronted with these objectifications interpret them as they will — whether that means buying a particular interpretive line from a particular source, responding or objecting to the same, or developing their own interpretations based, perhaps, on their own objectifications. And their interpretations of what the Tsangantsainy "means" has a lot to do with the reasons they attend it. Let us look, then, to how it has been objectified and interpreted.

In northern Madagascar, and in the region of Ambilobe especially, the Tsangantsainy is most evidently objectified in popular discourse through popular media. The date of its occurrence appears on T-shirts and cardboard visors, films of it are shown repeatedly on local television, images of and information about it are included in high-school readers and proclamations concerning it are stated by politicians and intellectuals. Such representations ensure that even when the event is not occurring, it is none the less ubiquitous. And what do these representations "say"? The T-shirts feature slogans on one side which, while they may refer in content to fundamental ideas concerning the Antankaraña polity, are slogans first and foremost. Things like "Andriana Manesy Arivo" ("Royalty directs a thousand") which, although an important idea (as noted in chapter 2), is employed here largely because it is the chorus to a song heard throughout the Tsangantsainy. The images on the other sides of these T-shirts invariably depict a mast and/or flags. The films, as mentioned is the case with one already, stress the significance of the event to Antankaraña "cultural identity". Politicians, meanwhile, talk about the Tsangantsainy as a shining example of fombandrazania ("ancestral customs") or, with the intention (perhaps) of promoting nationalism, fombagasy (Malagasy customs). In 1997 a representative of the President spoke eloquently about this in a speech (given at Ampasibe and broadcast on the evening news). The state officials who attended the mast-raising

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itself expressed much the same ideas in interviews conducted with television reporters afterwards. In all cases, and at the very least, the *Tsangantsainy* is portrayed in these interpretations as something positive and worthwhile. What is more, in many of these, it is portrayed as something unique — something that only "Antankaña" have. I will return to this discussion in the next chapter in an attempt to decipher just what that term (i.e. "Antankaña") refers to.

The point I am trying to make here is that the attendance of this second category of participants (the day-trippers who receive no notice from the *Ampanjaka*) is to a degree spurred by an image of the *Tsangantsainy* as an important symbol of local identity. Whether this is a new phenomenon or not, I can't say. It seems likely that continuous and concurrent trends in communications infrastructure development and urbanization have wrought a context where objectifications are more easily produced, disseminated and attended to than they may have been in the past. And, with that in mind, it also seems likely that the oft heard complaint of old men and women in Ambatoharaña that "people don't respect *fomba* [customs] like they used to", is a comment on the dwindling proportion of participants who actually take part in the preparations and arduous transportation of the mast and *not* on the relative size of the crowd that shows up for the erection of it. If anything, the *Tsangantsainy* is observed by far more people today than at any time before. Imagine my surprise when in meeting and talking with an elderly Chinese-Malagasy woman outside of a rice supplier's shop in Bretagne, France in 1995, I learned that she knew of the *Tsangantsainy* not by virtue of a childhood spent in Diego, but because she had seen a documentary about it on *France Deux* a few months earlier. I will return to this discussion of the *Tsangantsainy* as a symbol in the next chapter. For the time being, though, I return to my discussion of participants. It remains only to discuss the third category of participants, what the *Tsangantsainy* "means" to them, and why it is important that they attend.

While individuals in the loop of the polity's infrastructure are being informed of the upcoming event by official word from the *Ampanjaka* and others in the region are finding out about it from radio, TV, and the general buzz of interest, printed invitations to the "*couronnement du mât royal*" -- "the coronation of the royal mast" -- are being delivered
to representatives of the Malagasy government in Ambilobe, Diego and Tana, the French consulate in Diego, French and American embassies in Tana, foreign development and conservation agencies including USAID and the World Wildlife Fund, the directors of SIRAMA and a variety of French ex-pats, coopérants, local notables and, of course, anthropologists. Also informed in this way are distant relatives of the Ampanjaka -- Sakalava royalty from other parts of the island especially. Written in French and accompanied by a program of events scheduled to take place on the two days for which attendance is suggested, these invitations have desired effects. In 1993, the mast-raising was attended by a variety of foreign and Malagasy government and NGO officials (including representatives of the WWF office in Diego), representatives from SIRAMA and JIRAMA (the state-run electric company), and a French documentary film crew. In 1997, several state ministers and the French Ambassador to Madagascar also came. Although, like the day-trippers, none of these invited guests participate in the way the first sort of participants did (some of them flew or drove into the area the day before it and left almost immediately afterwards), they do nonetheless contribute something essential to the proceedings: a powerful audience.

To put it crassly, the Tsangantsainy represents the best opportunity for the Ampanjaka to exhibit himself as an influential individual in the region to a variety of powerful figures. These people are so obviously not invited to attend on the day of the mast-raising in order to meet with the Ampanjaka and discuss specific issues with him -- there is no time or place for this sort of thing on that day. Rather, they are invited to witness the kind of support he can garner and, by extension, his influence in the area. Once they have seen him carried around the mast, with a crowd of 10 000 people around him, the thinking might go, how can they but recognize his importance. I would argue that the fact that he is as highly thought of as he is, and is courted for his support by Presidents, approached for his approval by conservation and development organizations and sought for interviews by visiting researchers and film-makers, is largely attributable to the popular support he garners at events like the Tsangantsainy.

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\(^{18}\)The ampanjaka's own account of how Michael Lambek (and consequently I) became interested in the Antankaraöl suggests that he was initially "amazed"/ "overwhelmed" ("gaga") at the incredible crowds
This said, it is important to recognize that what may seem to be done in the self-interest of the *Ampanjaka* is actually meant to be good for the whole polity. His claims to being a man of influence in the area, after all, are only justifiable (and exhibitable) as long as those over whom he is meant to hold influence re-legitimize him periodically through their participation at the *Tsangantsainy*. In a sense, his claims are only as powerful as the crowds are numerous on that day. Once again I must stress how the *Ampanjaka* occupies a precarious position — he is simultaneously threatened with a dramatic loss of popular support if he splashes too much in contexts beyond the local, and with irrelevancy in contemporary Madagascar if he focuses too much on his "traditional" role at the expense of others (especially that of negotiator of local interests). The *Tsangantsainy* is so important in that it marks one of the few occasions on which he can act as both.

A key question, I suppose, is: Does it work? Does the *Ampanjaka* impress these powerful figures sufficiently to bolster his own position as a negotiator of local interests? All I have to work from is my understanding of what has occurred in the interim between the *Tsangantsainy* of 1993 and that of 1997. In those four years, Ambatohara'iana has seen both a new school-house and clinic built with state and NGO funds respectively. Unsurprisingly, perhaps given the above statements, high ranking representatives of the institutions that supplied these funds were present for the enactment of the 1993 *Tsangantsainy*. In noting this, I do not mean to suggest a facile causal connection between observation of the mast-raising and the loosening of government and NGO purse strings — in northern Madagascar, as elsewhere, there are many things at work in the development of development. I am only suggesting, knowing that the *Ampanjaka* played an important role in securing the funding for these projects, that one of the major qualifications which suggested his involvement in the negotiation process at all was the support he was seen as having at the *Tsangantsainy*. The simple answer, then, to the above question is: yes, it does seem to work.\(^{19}\)

\(^{19}\)Following the 1997 event, I asked the *Ampanjaka* about projects still in store for Ambatohara'iana. He answered that, among other things, he would be seeking funding for a new well for the village from an organization that was well represented at the mast-raising just passed. When I asked whether he thought portrayed in the filmed *Tsangantsainy* of 1982. "I have to find out what's going on!" he is said to have said.
Another significant point to make with reference to these invited VIPs, is that, in attending, they are in fact condoning the existence of a political order separate from the state. The reader might recall, from the accounts of disputes recounted in Chapter 4, that, in Madagascar, attending a rite associated with a ruler (and respecting the prohibitions which that ruler places on you) is tantamount to subjecting oneself (and one's followers in some cases) to that ruler's rule. Recall efforts made by the Merina court to have Tsimiharo attend a royal bath in Tana. While historically this may have much to do with the "tribute" one was expected to bring to such an event, there is no doubt that in contemporary northern Madagascar the capital handed over at events like the Tsangantsainy is symbolic. By attending, barefoot and wearing sarongs, state politicians and officials are recognizing the legitimacy of the polity.

By way of closing this section let me return to a point made at the beginning, and offer a more complete justification for how it is that all of the variable attendees just described might be considered "participants". As noted earlier in this chapter, the word used to describe what people are doing when they attend a rite associated with the polity is manompo -- a term that might be translated as "to serve". Saying that people "serve" during the Tsangantsainy seems reasonable. Consider the trees getting cut, the way they are transported, how they are guarded, etc. -- all indicators of how people "serve". The people who carry out these tasks call themselves by the local term that denotes the "doer" of the above mentioned verb -- they are "ampanompo". That said, the day-trippers -- the people who come on the day of the mast-raiseing having played no part in the mast's preparations -- are also called ampanompo. As are, in the minds of some, the invited guests seated on the platform out front of the zomba. These people are obviously not "serving" in the way the rope-makers, honey-collectors and tree-choppers are, but they are in a sense providing a service -- their presence legitimates his claims to importance. Similarly, although they may not be serving the polity by acting out its primordial constitution and re-establishing the symbol which guarantees its continuity, their very presence condones its existence and establishes its viability in contemporary northern

his attempt likely to succeed, he answered me with a conspiratorial grin, telling me something like: "Of course it will ... they just saw all that."
Madagascar. I should note that this way of thinking about the verb manompo and the idea of participation became abundantly clear to me when, preceding the 1997 event, I asked a manantany just who it is that is ampanompo? He indicated, with little reflection, that everyone, including me, with my notebook and pen, who shows up might be considered as such.

Whether they have been called to attend by word from the Ampanjaka, a TV advertisement or an official invitation, all who show up are "servicing" the polity -- they are (to return to the analogy suggested earlier) in effect, keeping it running. They are maintaining it through participation. The first category of participants, responding to ancestral duty with willing contributions of their labor, time and material resources, "maintain" the polity by recognizing their particular roles within it, and, in the process of carrying these roles out, symbolically reconstituting it. The second category, responding to objectifications of the event and the notion that it is to be considered an important source of local pride, "maintain" the polity by recognizing the significance of an event associated with it to local "cultural identity" through their attendance. Finally, the third category, responding to invitations and the promise of "traditional" practice, photo-ops and cocktails, "maintain" the polity by condoning its existence and recognizing the man at its centre as an important negotiator of local interests.

So, what does all this have to do with the protection and conservation of Antankarana "cultural identity"? The answer to that is as difficult to come to as a model of what Antankaraña cultural identity is. I will discuss this issue at greater length in the following chapter. As a necessary precursor to that discussion, however, I must establish how it is that the ritual cycle is linked to the idea of the polity's continuity.

The ritual cycle and the "continuity of the monarchy"

As with the previous one, part of this section title is drawn from the film narration quoted at the beginning of this chapter. It was noted there that Antankaraña cultural identity is manifested in the "continuity of the monarchy". While I will be discussing this
again in the next chapter, I should note here how the ritual cycle just described is connected to the continuity of the polity.

In my descriptions of some of the practices carried out through the course of the ritual cycle, I pointed out how different phases are connected by practice through time. In the caves, for example, I noted how the gourds of honey alcohol drunk during one visit were the same ones left (five years earlier) at the previous one. The gourds that get left are then the ones broken open and drunk at the next. I also noted how, later in the cycle (the following year), the bull that plays an important part in the savatra is set free to roam the countryside until it is captured and eaten (three years later) before the trip to the caves. In both cases, we see current practices (i.e., leaving the gourd and setting the bull free) that quite obviously anticipate future ones (i.e., the drinking of the gourd and eating of the bull), and current practices (i.e., the drinking of the gourd and eating of the bull) that quite obviously recall past ones (i.e., leaving the gourd and setting the bull free). To some degree, then, the continuity of the ritual cycle is built into the practices that comprise it.

An even more obvious feature which ensures the continuity of the ritual cycle is the fact that, despite the availability of numerous sorts of hard woods in the region, the wood used to make the mast raised during the Tsangantsainy is a very soft one that rots quickly once planted in the ground. Instead of standing for decades, the mast stands for only a few years, and the Tsangantsainy (preceded by visits to Nosy Mitsio and the caves of the Ankaraña massif) must therefore take place once every four or five years. Given all this, it is not surprising that Philbert Tsiranana's (the Malagasy Republic's first President) offer to have a metal mast constructed outside of the zomba in Ambatoharañana was soundly rejected by the Ampanjaka of the time. One older royal woman, reflecting on the ridiculousness of this offer, noted that the installation of a permanent mast would defeat the whole purpose (as she saw it) of the Tsangantsainy -- it is meant to occur frequently. The paradox evident here -- where continuity is ensured by what appear to be periodically reoccurring symbolic breaches of it -- points, yet again, to the particular nature of the polity discussed in this dissertation and the importance of ritual to ensuring its continuity.

The promotion of continuity is also evident in certain symbolic features of ritual. Most obvious is the mast itself. Recall that from their first cutting, the two pieces of
wood which eventually make up the mast are called man (lehilahy) and woman (vihavy) respectively. Not only is a sexual and reproductive union implied in their joining, but also a sense of the necessity of complementary male and female elements for the proper execution of rites associated with royalty. This need for complementarity is also reflected in other conventions associated with royalty such as the prevalence of even numbers and completed pairs:\textsuperscript{20} When the trees from which the mast is made are first cut, each individual wielding the ax is meant to make an even number of cuts, and when the wood is then bathed, it is done by two individuals (one male the other female) with honey alcohol poured from two gourds; when the Ampanjaka is taken out of the zomba, he is carried around the mast eight times; when the rebiky is danced, two lead dancers (both male or both female) are always flanked by two sets of two supplementary dancers (of the opposite sex of the lead dancers) and performances must always be carried out in sets of two or four; etc.

The continuity of the ritual cycle, then, is promoted by certain practices, precepts and symbolic features inherent to it. In a sense, the "continuity of the monarchy" (i.e., the continuity of the polity) is guaranteed by the continuity of the ritual cycle. How is this so? A return look at the three categories of participants discussed above reveals much. I have already discussed how participants of the first sort, the ones involved in the mast's preparations and transportation, play significant roles in the symbolic re-constitution of the polity, and the re-legitimization of the figure at its centre. Without their efforts the mast would not be made and erected, the Ampanjaka would be illegitimate, and the polity, itself based on the set of relations enacted through ritual practice, would be naught. In this sense, these participants might be seen as being in "collusion" (Bloch 1986:193) with the forces that govern and restrict their activity -- in re-constituting the polity and re-legitimating the Ampanjaka, after all, they are acknowledging their subservient role in it. Regardless of their conscious or unconscious motivations, however, the fact is that by participating in the ritual cycle as they do, they are also guaranteeing the continuity of the polity -- for it is the polity, and their position in it, that they re-create through practice.

\textsuperscript{20}In describing the significance of pairs to royalty, Waast writes that "in royal ceremonies, objects and actors exist in pairs: the intrusion of all that is 'odd' (in both senses of the word) threatens the re-
Participants of the second type, the day-trippers, also promote the continuity of the polity through their attendance of the mast-raising. As noted above, by just attending they are recognizing the significance of a symbol associated with the polity as a marker of local identity and, in so doing, are giving powerful impetus to the continued existence of both. Without the Tsangantsainy, I would argue, there would be little reason for them to link local identity to practices associated with local royalty, and few would be inclined to link their own tribulations and possible fate to those of the polity. Remember, that for many of these day-trippers, the Tsangantsainy marks one of the few times in which they will have any sort of dealing with the polity. They too, therefore, guarantee the continuity of the polity simply by requiring referents for notions of who they are in contemporary Madagascar. Finally, participants of the third type, the invited guests, also promote the continuity of the polity through their participation. I have already argued that in attending they condone the existence of a political order distinct from the state. Let me add that they guarantee the continuity of that order by accepting a vision of the future that includes it, and by acceding a position to the Ampanjaka (whose significance is so apparent on the day of the mast-raising) in the negotiations over the terms of that future's unfurling.

Integration

In the previous pages, I have outlined some of the ways in which the ritual cycle described in the first half of this chapter might be thought of. I suggested in the first place that it might be considered commemorative — either of the polity's primordial constitution, or of the relationship Antankarana have had with French through the past. I then proposed that it might be seen as an important nexus of the disparate motivations and interpretations of the various people who participate in it, and the people who invite or promote that participation. Finally, I noted that it guarantees the continuity of the political order with which it is associated. To close this chapter I examine one way in which these three might be seen as interacting. To do so, I must return to the question of origins.

establishment of cosmic and social order that is effectuated on these occasions"(1973:6).
The *Tsangantsainy* of 1997 was widely billed as the rite's tercentennial. By the estimation of the *Ampanjaka* and those close to him (and based on the narration of the above mentioned film, itself informed by a 1954 *Bulletin de l'Academie Malgache* article which dated the first *Tsangantsainy* to 1697) it had been three hundred years since Tsimihodrafy directed the late seventeenth century *Ampanjaka* Andriansirotso to erect the first mast in the area. The significance of this anniversary was so well and widely recognized that when I visited Ambilobe for a short while in the summer of 1996, more than a year before the momentous event was to take place, few failed to remind me of it as I hummed and hawed over whether I would be able to return the following year. "How could you miss it", the generic admonishment went, "it will be the three hundredth anniversary!". I did return for it, and was not surprised to see that the tercentenary hoopla had only grown more intense. The above mentioned television and radio coverage featured it prominently, as did the *Ampanjaka* and other representatives of the polity in the interviews I saw them carry out. Even the invitations sent to VIPs featured the dates -- 1697 and 1997 -- of the first and (soon to be) most recent mast-raising just above the names -- Andriansirotso and Tsimiharo III -- of the *Ampanjaka* ruling at the time of the enactment of each. Of the two origin theories discussed earlier, the one being recalled was obviously the one concerned with Andriansirotso's re-establishing himself in Ankaraña after returning from the east coast. I will suggest a reason why in a moment. First, though, we should consider why the other origin theory, the one which stresses the influence of the French, was not referred to in such explicit ways.

In discussing how the *Tsangantsainy* has been considered commemorative of cooperative relations between the Antankaraña and the French, I mentioned a short paper concerning the *Tsangantsainy* written by a Frenchman (Pain) who attended the mast-raising in 1961. The impression that the reader of this article is left with is that the *Tsangantsainy* is performed to commemorate past alliances between the French and Antankaraña (Benyowski's alliance with Lamboeny as well as that between Tsimiharo and the French on Nosy Be midway through the last century). Pain notes, for example, that the joining of the two pieces of wood into one mast "symbolizes" the alliance between Antankaraña and French. That this physical joining takes place with such frequency, he
adds, indicates that the symbolic one is periodically renewed as well. He ends his reportage with the quote which appears at the beginning of this chapter: "This periodic celebration which consecrates the memory of a very old alliance with France, was very moving given the old memories it evoked." What is most significant about Pain's article, for the time being, is how different the interpretation it pushes is from that (described above) proposed by the *Ampanjaka* and other official representatives of the polity in 1997. To explain this discrepancy it is worth considering how Pain, who arrived on the morning of the mast-raising and presumably left soon after it was complete, came by his interpretation.

Given the detail Pain offers on matters other than the symbolic significance of the mast-raising (he includes, for example, a detailed genealogy of past *Ampanjaka*), it seems unlikely that he was without informants. While I recognize that there is no way of determining exactly what Pain based his paper on, I have seen enough of how visitors like Pain are educated about the event in the present to suggest that his interpretation represents the "official" one of that time -- i.e., he wrote what he did of the mast joining and raising because that is what he *was told* it meant. This is not to suggest that there were minions running about Ambatoharaiàna in 1961 with explicit instructions to feed a certain line to all white foreigners encountered. Rather that then, as now, people are more likely to draw on and refer to interpretations prominent in popular discourse than they are to expound theories of their own when asked what is going on. And it seems likely that the interpretation prominent in the discourse of Pain's (surely bilingual and educated) interlocutors was the one which he wound up suggesting himself. Whether the tone and content of this discourse emanated originally from the *Ampanjaka* and those close to him is impossible to determine, although it seems very possible that it did. What I am suggesting, then, is simple: Pain's paper indicates that the interpretation of the *Tsangantsainy* communicated to people like Pain was one that stressed the history of cooperative relations between the Antankaraña and the French.

Let us turn now to a consideration of how the same phenomenon is apparent today. Among the foreigners participating in the *Tsangantsainy* of 1997 was Brooke -- an American university student doing a semester of studies in Madagascar. Having
completed three months of study and travel around the island, she decided to focus on the
Tsangantsainy for her independent research project. Toward the end of her stay in
Ambatoharaiana she expressed an interest in interviewing the Ampanjaka in order to get
his version of what the event she had just witnessed was all about, and, curious to see
what the Ampanjaka would say to her, I agreed to set the meeting up under the condition
that I come along. When we arrived at the zomba, the Ampanjaka had me first explain to
Brooke how to render a properly respectful greeting to him. Then, after proposing the
line of questioning that would follow, he indicated that she should start her tape. The
questions asked, which he himself suggested with whispers as the interview progressed,
were broad enough to allow him to make the points he wanted. This year's Tsangantsainy
marks the event's tercentenary; many notables, including high ranking government
ministers and the French ambassador, were present; the purpose of the Tsangantsainy is to
celebrate the monarchy and local identity, etc. Interestingly, at no point did he mention
the French, or alliances of the past between them and the Antankaraña. After about ten
minutes, we had exhausted all lines of appropriate questioning, and after Brooke shut her
tape recorder off, we continued with casual conversation about the success of this year's
enactment and his plans for the future development of Ambatoharaiana (the two topics
were unsurprisingly connected). Before we left he insisted that we take a close look at a
plaque he had been given by one of the foreign admirers who had attended this year. On it
was engraved: "Tricentenaire du Tsangantsainy — Tsimiharo III Ampanjaka des
Antankarana".

It is tempting, based on the above description of Brooke's encounter with the
Ampanjaka, to infer a scenario of how Pain came by the interpretation of the
Tsangantsainy in 1961. There are, after all, many interesting similarities between the
visiting Frenchman and the visiting American (their motivations, their research methods,
etc). What sets the two apart, however, is perhaps even more interesting. Why is it that
Pain was told the Tsangantsainy was commemorative of a history of cooperative relations
between the Antankaraña and the French, and Brooke was told that it was about
celebrating the monarchy and local identity? Why, in other words, is it that the one left so
"moved" by the memories of past alliances that the rite evoked, and the other left so
impressed by what she perceived as an important statement of local identity? To answer these questions, we must recognize first that the Tsangantsainy does not take place in an atemporal vacuum, and second that people like Pain and Brooke are not your average participants. We must consider the interpretations offered these two individuals (and the discourses those interpretations represent) as they relate to the social, economic and political contexts of northern Madagascar in 1961 and 1997 respectively. Keep in mind that although the examples I am referring to here are quite specific, the points which I am trying to make are much broader.

In 1961, the suggestion that the Tsangantsainy was commemorative of cooperative relations with the French was not just the product of innocuous speculation on the origins of ritual practice. Even though Madagascar had gained its independence two years earlier, the French were still very much involved in the island's development as a sovereign nation and the interpretation offered Pain might be viewed as an assertion of an historically founded claim to privileged status in that development. Throughout the colonial era and well into the 1960s, certainly, various Ampanjaka referred to the history of cooperative relations between the Antankaraña and the French extensively in public speeches, and there is evidence that the stands they took at key times through that time (during the 1947 revolt and the 1958 referendum for example) reflected the esteem with which they held the French. But then, they were not necessarily acting (or interpreting) without self-interest. Ampanjaka of the colonial era were granted appointments in the local administration of the colony, and recognized as important negotiators of local interests (as in the development of SIRAMA in the 1950s). What we see then (as noted through chapter 5) is a dynamic whereby Ampanjaka supported the French (publicly at least) and the French supported the Ampanjaka (publicly at least) -- each side referring to the long history of cooperative relations (where Antankaraña are pictured as stalwart allies of the French -- and enemies of the predatory and rebellious Merina -- through thick and thin) as justification for their perspective regarding the other. The notion of the Tsangantsainy as commemorative of cooperative relations between Antankaraña and French might be seen as arising from this dynamic. It may even have been that such an interpretation was in some insidious way required given that other Sakalava polities were
not permitted to conduct large scale events for fear that they would serve to strengthen regional affiliations and promote rebellious behavior (Feeley-Harnik 1991).

As noted above, although not the "official" interpretation, the ideas espoused by Pain are still expressed by some of the Tsangantsainy's more recent participants. And in the post-Independence north, where perceived unfair treatment of northerners at the hands of the Malagasy State is often considered akin to Merina domination of the area in the 19th century, statements to that effect might also be considered charged. To some, the claim that the Tsangantsainy recalls past relations with the French emerges from a nostalgic perspective on the colonial era. As I have noted previously, many even interpreted the attendance of white foreigners, such as myself, in the present as an indication that, like Antankaraña, the French never forget their past alliances. What is more, when stated to foreigners considered akin to the French (ambassadors, visiting dignitaries, NGO employees, tourists, etc.) such claims also underline, just as they must have during the colonial era, the unwavering loyalty of the Antankaraña people and their distinctiveness among other Malagasy vying for attention and assistance.

The official interpretation in 1997 (the one referred to by the Ampanjaka and those around him in interviews) was not that of 1962, however. It was, rather, the one told Brooke in her interview with the Ampanjaka. What are we to make of that? Let me begin by presenting a near duplicate of the statement offered above: in 1997, the suggestion that the Tsangantsainy was celebrating its three hundredth anniversary was not just the product of innocuous speculation on the origins of ritual practice. It was an important assertion of long-standing rights in the region at a time when those rights were (are) held to be particularly meaningful. In chapter 2, I noted the efforts of the current Ampanjaka and those around him to establish a viable negotiating position vis à vis various governmental and non-governmental organizations in northern Madagascar. As part of these efforts, they produced a document (which I will be discussing further in the conclusion) in which they asserted claims based on their ancestral occupation of the region. What is being said, ultimately, in this document is that any individual or organization (whether Malagasy or foreign) involved in the future development of the region must recognize the group with the deepest roots there -- the Antankaraña, or more
specifically, constituents of the Antankaraña polity. And they do. If they didn't, presumably, they wouldn't attend events like the Tsangantsainy when invited. Analogous, then, to the situation in northern Madagascar in 1962, in 1997 we see a dynamic of relations whereby the Ampanjaka and those around him make claims to ancestral occupation of the region which outsiders recognize and (to lesser or greater degrees) figure into their development, conservation and entrepreneurial schemes. And, to adapt yet another of the above made statements, the claim that the Tsangantsainy is three hundred years old arises out of that dynamic\(^{21}\).

To conclude, let us recap: We have Pain, a Frenchman basing his work on the official interpretation of 1961, writing an article that states (to a largely French audience) that the mast-raising commemorates and ensures the continuity of cooperative relations between the Antankaraña and the French. Then we have the current Ampanjaka and those around him recounting the official interpretation of 1997 (itself based partly on an article by another Frenchman which appears in an earlier issue of the same journal that Pain wrote for) to invited guests, reporters and a visiting American student in which the idea that the event is now three hundred years old and counting is stressed. What is most evident in this sometimes ironic \textit{mélée} of representations and interpretations is the point of this last section: In both cases, in 1961 and in 1997, we see how particular interpretations of a sacred ritual practice are deployed in contexts where the historical narratives they (i.e., the interpretations) recall are important justifications to the claims some hold to negotiate local interests. Or, to return to the quotes which seemed incompatible at the opening of this chapter, we might say that interpretations delineating just what "old memories" the Tsangantsainy "evoked" were suggested with particular interests in mind -- interests tied up with efforts at ensuring the "continuity of the monarchy" and that political order's centrality to notions of "Antankaraña cultural identity". It remains to be said just what it is about ritual itself (i.e., its performative element, the emotions raised in it, etc.) that makes such assertions so "moving" to participants. In \textit{Purity and Danger}, Mary

\(^{21}\)See Gezon (1997) for how this is particularly true with regard to the \textit{fisehana} (tromba bathing -- described here in chapter 6).
Douglas writes that "no experience is too lowly to be taken up in ritual and given lofty meaning" (1966:114). It strikes me that no claim is either.

Conclusion

Maurice Bloch has suggested that one productive way of analysing a particular ritual practice is to think about it "in history" -- a procedure he considers analogous to the way in which physicists study particles not by analysing their apparent structures, but by looking at the traces of their movements in an accelerator (1986:183). When considering ritual as such, we are led to ponder two questions: What has changed through time? and, what has stayed the same? In the case of the Merina circumcision ritual that Bloch describes, what has changed has been the "use" of ritual -- its function in relation to wider socio-political contexts -- and what has stayed the same has been the ideological message found at its symbolic core -- one that contrasts the timelessness of descent with the relative insignificance of life. The resulting tension between the stability of symbolic statements and the "plasticity" of how those statements are mobilized is, Bloch argues, one of the central features of ritual practice everywhere. This certainly seems true in the case of the Tsangantsainy.

Throughout this chapter, I have described several features of the Tsangantsainy that have changed through time. First, there have been superficial changes in the symbolic content of rite. The most obvious and telling one concerns the flags raised on the newly erected mast. Whereas Antankarana and French flags had been raised during the colonial era, since Madagascar's independence it has been Antankarana and Malagasy flags which are raised. I have also described the changes that have occurred in how these events have been interpreted "officially" and how such interpretations have been deployed in different socio-political contexts. All of these changes reflect the "plasticity" of Antankarana ritual -- how ritual practice and purposeful interpretations of it have been shaped by the forces of history. Indeed, Lan's observation that:
in a changing world, ideology and ritual must constantly seek out new raw material to feed upon, to ingest and absorb in order to grow and meet the challenges changes bring and in order to remain essentially unchanged (Lan 1985:225)

seems well corroborated in the case just described. It remains only to consider what it is that has remained "essentially unchanged".

The stable "core" of the Tsangantsainy (Bloch 1986) consists of the symbolic practices which serve to legitimate and sanctify the Ampanjaka and the political order he represents (which includes his ancestors) – the construction, transportation and erection of the mast especially. Through "service" -- consisting both of freely given labor (cf. Feeley-Harnik 1986, 1991), and, in contemporary thought, willing participation -- people periodically re-establish the centrality of the fanjakana (polity, government) in the region, and publicly and collectively assert their own relationship to it. It is perhaps misleading to describe them as "in collusion" (Bloch 1986:193) with their "superiors", for through the Tsangantsainy participants show themselves to be the sole propagators of the system that they serve. They are not made subjects of traditional authority through prescribed ritual formulae, but rather subject themselves to it through willing practice. Although for many this willingness (and the discourse surrounding it) is undoubtedly the product of hegemonic forces associated with the polity, I think it important to recognize that there are many catalysts to participation and, thus, "service" in contemporary northern Madagascar. As I have attempted to point out in this chapter, not all provide willing "service" for fear of the consequences if they don't (although some certainly do). For many, willingness arises from the desire to assert and propagate a unique collective identity through affiliation with certain powerful, even "sacred", symbols like the Tsangantsainy, the political order it celebrates and the historical narratives it recalls. And as I stressed in chapter 6, affiliation is something frequently marked in northern Madagascar by regulated participation. In the following chapter, I will explore the question of 'Antankarana' identity further.
CHAPTER 8

"Antankaraña" in Contemporary Madagascar

Throughout this dissertation I have been skirting certain questions which are generally among the first ones asked in an account of this sort. Although I have referred extensively to the "Antankaraña" polity, the "Antankaraña" past, and "Antankaraña" ritual practice, I have yet to set out in any detail just what the term "Antankaraña" actually refers to. Is it the name of a "tribe" as travel writers and colonial ethnographers of the past would have one think, or is it better applied to one "ethnic group" among many in contemporary Madagascar? Are "Antankaraña" born into the term, or is the term a situational coat -- now worn, now shed in favor of some other? While I am wary of the perceived need to classify "the Antankaraña" as anything at all, I do recognize the value of establishing at the very least a basic understanding of the links that exist among individuals who refer to the term in common. I should point out, from the beginning, that my concern with terms like "ethnic group" and "community" comes from the fact that they are among the terms employed by individuals (of a variety of backgrounds) in discussing what it is to be "Antankaraña" in contemporary Madagascar.

As mentioned at several points in past chapters, the term "Antankaraña" has most commonly been translated as "people of the rocks" -- the rocks in question being those of the Ankaraña massif which dominates the region's landscape. Translating the term as such suggests a model of classification common throughout Madagascar whereby people identify themselves and become identified by others in terms of the distinctive features of the landscape on which they live. Essentially, terms derived from this sort of model refer more accurately to where someone is from, than to who they are. Just as Antanosy are "of/from the island" (nosy meaning island) and "Antanala" are "of/from the forest" (ala meaning forest), "Antankaraña" is an adjective applicable to anyone "of/from the rocks". Thus the statement "izaho Antankaraña" ("Izaho" best translated here as "I am") might be translated as "I am a person of/from the rocks". All that said, in contemporary northern
Madagascar the term "Antankaraña" refers to much more than just where one lives, and in actual practice, the statement "izaho Antankaraña" is really only translatable as "I am Antankaraña". It is this second, untranslatable, sense of the term "Antankaraña" which concerns me here.

In this chapter I suggest three ways of considering the "Antankaraña". First, I describe "Antankaraña" as a term associated with the traditional polity described in Chapter 2. In this sense "Antankaraña" are those people who recognize the "sacredness of rulers" and the practices devoted to propagating the traditional authority to which they are subject. I propose that these "Antankaraña" recognize their links to the collective by supporting and participating in the ritual reconstitution of their relationship to the polity at events such as the Tsangantsainy. Here, I stress the theme of inclusivity -- whereby individuals are considered Antankaraña not by virtue of descent, but by their willingness to participate and contribute as co-members of the polity are ideally meant to. Second, I discuss "Antankaraña" as an ethnonym referring to one of Madagascar's (18 or 20) official ethnic groups. I argue that the existence of a particularly "Antankaraña" ethnic consciousness is attributable to two fairly recent historical trends in the region: the first involves the recognition of the Ampanjaka by powerful outsiders as a leader of a particular collective known as "Antankaraña", the second has to do with the unprecedented influx of migrants to the region. In discussing "Antankaraña" as an ethnic group, I stress the theme of exclusivity -- the fact that individuals may be and seek to be classifiable as one thing exclusive of another. Finally I describe "Antankaraña" as a term that might be best applied to a "community". With reference to A. Cohen's (1985) work on how such communities are constructed, I suggest something of a compromise between the models of identity suggested in the two preceding sections -- one in which the inclusivity which characterizes polity membership and the implicit exclusivity of ethnic affiliation need not be paradoxical. Here I point to the polity, the past and certain practices as particularly powerful symbols which all sorts of "Antankaraña" recognize in common.
"Antankaraña" as polity-constituents

As noted at the opening of chapter 2, contemporary Antankaraña might be viewed as a subset of the larger "Sakalava" group which has historically dominated the entire west coast of Madagascar. In Dadilahy Said's understanding of it, the term first came into use when a particular line of the family settled near the "rocks" to which the name refers. Whether or not the groups living in the region at that time were ever themselves referred to as "Antankaraña" we can't say. We can however infer, again from Dadilahy Said's account, that the indigenous population's recognition of the "sacredness of rulers", and their willingness to subject themselves to it for whatever benefits it offered, established them as constituents of the polity I describe in Chapter 2, and thus, in retrospect, as "Antankaraña". In claiming this, he does not mean to suggest that this indigenous population forfeited all other affiliations, but rather that individuals accepted a new sort of association focused on the political model.

The "Antankaraña", as Dadilahy Said understands them, do not only exist in the past. By extension (and inclusion), the term also refers to the living descendants of those indigenous groups, that incoming royalty, and the prescribed marriages between members of the two. In effect, the term has come to refer to all constituents of the polity described in chapter 2. Included too, then, are the living descendants of African slaves (Makoa), Comorians (Adjodjo) and other Malagasy who, though they came later (even into the 20th century) to the rocks and royalty, nonetheless recognized the polity and accepted certain obligations towards it. The fact that the descendants of such disparate groups are today considered (by themselves and others) to be "Antankaraña" is testament to the permeability of the bounds of the group imagined by Dadilahy Said.

By way of clarifying how it is that individuals are "Antankaraña" in this way, I should say that I too was often "included" among "Antankaraña" by friends, adopted family and even relative strangers in the region. In stating this, I mean to call attention to a point raised by Astuti (1995) in her discussion of the nature of identity in the South-West of Madagascar. Astuti describes how she was considered "Vezo" by the people she lived with based on her skill at doing characteristically "Vezo" things like swimming,
fishing and sailing. Although I lived in a village, grew rice, went fishing and carried out all of the other chores of daily life that my neighbors did, none of these activities was perceived of as being exclusively "Antankaraña" in the way Astuti describes "struggling with the sea" as being exclusively "Vezo". In my case (as in the case of Lisa Gezon who was also considered "Antankaraña" in this way), the performances which established my identity as "Antankaraña" were those carried out in ritual-context associated with the polity -- the performances in which I displayed my recognition of the prominence of the Ampanjaka and his ancestors: With hundreds of others, I visited the cave-tombs of past rulers and stayed up through all-night "no-lying down" (tsoymandrimandry) festivities before them; I followed the procession carrying the two large pieces of wood that would become the mast erected during the Tsangantsainy, clapped along and sang the choruses of songs praising the ancestors of the current Ampanjaka and danced the rebiki. These were the sorts of activities which made me, and more importantly which made the people I carried them out with, "Antankaraña".

A term commonly used to refer to those who are "Antankaraña" in this way is "Ankarabe" -- an abbreviation of "Antankaraña" (or "Ankaraña") with the suffix "-be" added to denote that it is something of great size. Although difficult to translate literally, this term is generally used with reference to an imagined mass of polity-constituents. While I have heard it used by some in a somewhat pejorative way -- as referring to the backward rural folk of the region -- I have also heard it used in public contexts by high ranking members of the royal family to refer to what all people participating in events like the Tsangantsainy (themselves included) are. Hence, the official sarong of the 1993 Tsangantsainy -- "Tombo ny Tsangantsainy, Ravoravo atsika Ankarabe" translatable as "the Tsangantsainy has Grown [been accomplished], We Ankarabe are Happy" -- expressed a sentiment that all participating were meant to identify with. Many (with a few notable exceptions -- i.e., the Merina especially), then, are invited to consider themselves "Ankarabe" and thus "Antankaraña". As had been the case (according to Dadilahy Said) when royalty first arrived in the region, all that is required is the recognition of and respect for the "sacredness of rulers".
Nowhere has what I described above been more evident, recently, than in the rhetoric employed by a polity spokesman in the weeks leading up to the mast-raising of 1997. While answering questions from TV and newspaper reporters one afternoon in Ambatoharaïana, this man eloquently described how everyone is welcome at the Tsangantsainy. He backed this point up by referring to the words of one of the rany that women sing at any fanompoana: "tsisy rafy Ankarânêe" he exclaimed into the video camera a Diego reporter had with him, "Ankarâna has no rivals". I was surprised at his reference to this song in particular for it is one that had always struck me as an expression of local bravado. I thought it a patriotic song which was fundamentally exclusionary. "Ankarâna has no rivals"; i.e., it is strong and singular and cannot be defeated. As the spokesman meant it, though, and as TV viewers and newspaper readers were expected to understand it, "Ankarâna has no rivals" meant that all were welcome; i.e., that since Ankaraña has no rivals, Antankaraña feel enmity towards no-one. No-one, that is, who recognizes the "sacredness of rulers" by respecting the many prohibitions in effect at the event -- prohibitions that the spokesman listed immediately after his wide-open invitation.

Having read the previous chapter, the reader will recognize the strategy at work in the above described interaction between polity spokesman and press. That said, the idea communicated is not unprecedented. Although I have heard others interpret "Ankarâna has no rivals" in the way that I have always been inclined to, there is enough in Dadilahy Said's description of how the polity was first established in the region to suggest that the spokesman's interpretation is more than just empty rhetoric. As noted in the previous chapter, the propensity to include and accommodate individuals and groups (including the French and representatives of the Malagasy State) is one of the features of the polity that has ensured its continuity through changing times. It is evident in the story of the polity's founding, in the relationship between the polity's leaders and powerful foreigners and in current efforts at encouraging mass participation at events like the Tsangantsainy. That said, as noted earlier, not all people in the region today are included among "Antankaraña". As the next section shows, many are, in fact, excluded as well.
"Antankarana" as members of an ethnic group

In Tana and Diego's craft markets one can purchase "ethnic maps" of Madagascar -- wooden cut-outs in the shape of the island on which photocopied photographs of 18 (or 20) faces have been glued in a seemingly irregular pattern, and labeled with each of 18 ethnonyms. The implication is that these 18 faces represent 18 commensurable units of population in Madagascar, and that each of these units exists (in reality) in a particular region on the island. It is essentially a representation by which the population of the island is divided into discrete, ethnic, units. It is also the sort of representation of identity in Madagascar that anthropologists working there have sought to deconstruct and examine. Indeed, it seems that Linnekin and Poyer's critical assessment of "ethnicity" as "a western ethno-theory" which "may ignore significant distinctions recognized by local people themselves" (1990:10) is nowhere better heeded than in recent Malagasy ethnography. Recent work by Eggert (1986), Astuti (1995) and Larson (1996) among others suggests in fact that the ethnonyms associated with this 18 unit model refer to anything but ascribed ethnic identities.

Although problematic, the 18 unit model upon which the notions of ethnic identity in Madagascar are based is nonetheless ubiquitous. One sees it in innumerable guides and popular accounts of travel on the island, and within the pages of relatively recent studies of Malagasy Society and History (for example, Jaovelo-Dzao 1996, Allen 1995, and Kottak et al. 1986). More importantly, this model colors the way many people living in northern Madagascar (if nowhere else) identify themselves and others on the island -- it is seen as relevant to many of the people categorized by it. My notebooks are rife with examples. I recall a conversation in Antsiranana, for example, in which the "ethnicity" of the Malagasy wife of a prominent foreigner (vaaza) was debated -- some said she was "Tsimihety", others claimed "Betsimisaraka". Another conversation, this time in the town of Ambilobe, revolved around the brutality of the public beating of an itinerant "Antemoro" thief. In still another, in a village far from either of the above poly-cultural centres, a local shopkeeper, identifying himself as "Merina", told me all that was wrong with the lazy "Antankarana" people to whom he sold cigarettes, soda pop and buckets.
These encounters, and innumerable others like them, attest both to the poly-culturalism of the North (see Sharp 1993) and to the prominence of a discourse concerning identity in which ethnicity is significant. The fact is that in addition to referring to constituents of a polity, the term "Antankarāña" also refers to a particular (and exclusive) ethnic group. In order to explain how and why this is so, especially given all that has been said in the previous section of the inclusivity of the polity to which the term "Antankarāña" applies, we must look to the past and the development of a particularly "Antankarāña" ethnic consciousness.

'Antankarāña' by treaty

I begin this section with reference to certain details of the Antankarāña past discussed in greater detail in chapters 4 and 5. Recall first that in the mid 19th century, Tsimiharo, then living in exile on Nosy Mitsio, established a treaty with the French that is most commonly remembered locally today as a blood-brotherhood (fatidra) between him and the French Ampanjaka (i.e., king) of the time. In this treaty, Tsimiharo, acting as representative of both his "subjects" (as they were imagined to be in translation -- as "sujets") and his ancestors (with their long-standing "rights" over the North), ceded land to the French requesting in return that they assist in driving out the highland invaders who had forced him off the mainland entirely. The French, who had settled on Nosy Be with the intention of developing alliances such as this, accepted the status of protector. Although the English had already recognized the sovereignty of the Merina royalty over the entire island by this point, through the second half of the nineteenth century, the French would frequently deny that that sovereignty in fact existed, holding fast to their claims to "ancient rights" in the north and citing their treaties with autonomous "tribus" like "les Antankaranes" as justification. Later, on the eve of colonization, the image of these "tribus" as peoples under the yoke of Merina oppression was called upon (by interested parties) to secure support for the military action which in turn secured France’s role as colonizer.
The important point here is that through this period, it was the *Ampanjaka* who claimed to represent and was recognized as representing a group of people called "*les Antankaranes*". *He* signed the treaties, *he* ceded land and *he* accepted the monthly stipend, ration of provisions and (on behalf of his family) the benefits of Jesuit education offered by the French. The fact that he spent the best part of this period in exile on an island from which he exerted only limited authority over the polity's supposed constituents on the mainland was obviously of little importance to the French. The population on the mainland, many of whom had accepted their position within the Merina empire with little resistance, were portrayed as an exiled chief's oppressed "subjects" in need of rescue. To some degree, the notion of a discreet, "ethnic" or "tribal" unit was by the mid-Nineteenth century well-embedded in the French imagination. When Gallieni introduced the *politiques de races*, the choice of who would govern the area surrounding the Ankaraña massif was an obvious one.

We cannot downplay the importance of the French in the re-figuring of the *Ampanjaka*'s position *vis à vis* the constituents of the polity (cf. Ranger 1983:242). Not only was he the sole mediator between living constituents and his royal ancestors (as was and is his traditional role -- see Chapter 2), he was also an important mediator between the colonial administration and residents of the region. Later, he fulfilled both of these mediatory roles on occasions provided by ritual. At such times, he was simultaneously "ruler" (*Ampanjaka*) to those constituents whose attendance and actions constituted his traditional authority, and "ruled" to those dignitaries, *colons* and administrators who were invited to watch as they did so. Without reiterating too much of what has been presented in previous chapters, it is fair to say that the role of *Ampanjaka* as representative of a bounded group of people was continually reinforced from all directions -- the *Ampanjaka* himself claimed the role, the French both honored and reinforced his claim, and the constituents of the polity supported his unique status, and thus his claim, through cyclical ritual reconstitutions of their relationship to him.

This alone, however, is not enough to account for the rise of an Antankaraña ethnic consciousness, and the centrality of royalty to it. For the rest of the picture, we
must return to the years immediately following colonization, and the development of the poly-ethnic North.

*Development of the poly-ethnic North*

The North's rivers, bays, large natural harbor, fertile land, cattle and abundant natural resources made it an obvious target for rapid incorporation into the functioning of the new French colony of Madagascar. In his *Rapport d'Ensemble sur la Pacification, l'Organisation et la Colonisation de Madagascar* Gallieni called for a rapid "pacification" of the North, writing that "these lands have perhaps the greatest future from the point of view of colonization" (Gallieni 1899:82). Foremost among their goals were the development of the port at Diego-Suarez — site of the largest natural harbor in the Indian Ocean — and the institution of a plantation economy on the region's fertile lands. By 1904, the French had begun to encourage migrants from other parts of the island to come north. And they came — initially in fulfillment of obligations to the colonial government and then at the prospect of wage labor that offered security unavailable in the regions they had left behind. With the opening and continuous operation of several gold-mines in succeeding years, the trend only got stronger. Although some did integrate themselves (mostly through marriage) into Antankaraña society, many more did not. They retained ties to the lands, and the tombs, to which they hoped to eventually return. Not surprisingly, perhaps, these newcomers were stigmatized by French and Antankaraña alike. It is generally they who were blamed for the increases in crime, instability and anti-French sentiment which characterized the north in the early part of the century (Fremigacci 1987).

It is important to note that this "poly-ethnic North" was not just an urban phenomenon. The new migrants made themselves known in rural areas as well. It seems that many of the Antemoro, Antandroy, Antesaka, Betsileo, Tsimihety, Betsimisaraka and representatives of numerous other groups, who came North in the service of the administration, settled and set about growing rice or manioc and raising cattle in the area. Later, especially following the development of a large sugar plantation and refinery in the
1950s and into the present, whole villages of migrant laborers (attracted North by employment in the cane fields) sprouted up. Although only seasonally employed in the cane fields, many of them stayed — and today stay all year round. To some extent these migrant villagers were and are characterized by what they did and do. They harvested sugar cane, they grew manioc, they cut planks of wood. They were also often Christian, and many raised pigs for their own consumption -- a foodstuff doubly taboo to many Antankaraña (as Muslims and as members of particular descent groups). Such obvious markers, however, couldn't have been enough (and today aren't enough) to truly distinguish them from their Antankaraña neighbors, for after all a great many (though certainly not the majority of) Antankaraña also grew and grow manioc, cut planks of wood, practiced and practice Christianity and even ate and eat pork.

What made and makes many of these migrants different from Antankaraña, and different from other outsiders who were and are today "included" as such, is that they did and do not recognize the significance of the Antankaraña polity in their lives. They certainly do not have their own rangahy (as Antankaraña villages did) nor do they contribute to or participate in the rites associated with the polity. In other words, they do not do like the tandraka tary mena of Antankaraña proverb and blend into their new environment like a "tenrec on red earth". Instead, they brought enough of their own social and political environments not to have to do so. What is more, many retained strong connections to the "ancestral lands" to which they would return in old age or at death. The fact that their access to the region's productive land, and thus their livelihood, did not require that they recognize the polity or taboos associated with it is important. Since the introduction of a migrant-dependent plantation economy, the mediation between the rights of insiders and the exploitative interests of outsiders has been carried out by the management of local plantations. Ultimately, then, SIRAMA's management serves the polity with big contributions (noted in the previous chapter) so that its employees don't have to. These migrants retain their own fombandrazaña, their own ritual practices, their own taboos, their own ways of speaking, their own forms of religious expression and connections to the land of their ancestors. Essentially, they retain those characteristics so often privileged (in Madagascar and elsewhere) as the criteria of ethnic classification.
Nowhere is what I am calling the poly-ethnic North currently more evident than in the town and area surrounding the sugar plantation mentioned above. At SIRAMA, clubs and mutual-aid associations exist whereby diasporic "Antandroy", "Antemoro" and "Tsimihety" (and others) meet for a number of reasons. Most practically, these associations serve to organize assistance (financial and otherwise) for the transfer of the bodies of dead co-members back to the lands and tombs (in other parts of the island) where they are meant to rest. At other times, the members of these associations meet to plan cultural events (including demonstrations of their particular fombrandazaña -- "ancestral customs" -- on the annual celebration of Madagascar's independence from colonial rule). It seems that at SIRAMA, as John Comaroff suggests is the case elsewhere in Africa, "the asymmetric incorporation of structurally dissimilar groupings into a single political economy" (1992:307) has forged a context where "ethnicity" is of great importance.

Numbered among these associations, and this might seem unusual given the location of the plantation (only 20 km from Ambilobe and 30 km from Ambatoharañana), is one for the "Antankaraña" who live and work in the area. Like others, members of this association sometimes raise money to help offset the cost of the funerals of other members or their families -- though this function overlaps (especially with Muslim funerals) with other institutionalized ways of raising money for such events. More often, the Antankaraña association at SIRAMA organizes contributions (usually of money but also of cattle and rice) which go towards the carrying out of certain large-scale ritual events considered to be particularly Antankaraña fombrandazaña. It just so happens that the most often recognized of Antankaraña fombrandazaña are the ones associated with the polity. In both 1993 and 1997, the association of Antankaraña at SIRAMA was a major contributor of rice, cattle and money to the Tsangantsainy.
'Antankaraña' as members of a community

Who are Antankaraña then? to reiterate the question suggested at the beginning of this chapter — constituents of a polity?, members of an ethnic group? The material presented thus far would seem to indicate that they are in fact both. And yet this answer - that the term "Antankaraña" is construed simultaneously in such fundamentally different ways — is somehow unsatisfying. I cannot shake the feeling that those who identify themselves with the term might consider my excavation of it pointless. I am sure they would tell me that individuals who would identify themselves as "Antankaraña" do have something more in common than the use of a term; that there is some single thread that runs through their lives regardless of age, gender, or social, political or economic status; that there is something significant that links Antankaraña who toil in the rice fields around Ambatoharainana to those who fly airplanes between Tana and Paris for Air Madagascar; that their identity is more than just a keyword by which they may be indexed within some classificatory system. The following section is based on the assumption that these imagined critiques are real and right. In it I suggest that the term "Antankaraña" might be considered applicable to a community of individuals bounded by the common appreciation of certain potent symbols associated with the polity. In stressing, following Cohen (1985), that this community is "symbolically bounded" I argue that variations in the way symbols recognized in common are interpreted need not preclude the idea of a collective. The fact that meaning is attributed is far more significant than is the particular meaning attributed. I begin, in the following pages, by reviewing some recent thinking on the idea of "community".

Community

Anthropologists have used the term "community" with reference to a chosen unit of study for decades now. In a recent paper on "Fieldwork in the Postcommunity", Sherry Ortner (1997) briefly documents the development of this tradition. She states that doing fieldwork in, and writing about, "communities" dominated in American anthropology for
many years. While some supported Robert Redfield's (1955) notion of the peaceful and homogeneous community, others criticized the "community studies" perspective's tendency to overemphasize the cohesiveness and immutability of social groups. In an attempt at "resurrecting" the term from its dated mire, Ortner suggests a compromise whereby the term might be kept though with a new definition. She writes that "community is well worth keeping, so long as we do not identify the concept with harmony and cohesion, nor imagine that the sole form of community is a group of people in one place." (1997:63). Ortner rightly notes that the term "community" carries good baggage too. She writes that:

"The importance of community studies [...] is this: such studies have the virtue of treating people as contextualized social beings. They portray the thickness of people's lives, the fact that people live in a world of relationships as well as a world of abstract forces and disembodied images." (1997:64)

I too would argue for this broader understanding of the term "community". While "the polity", "the past" and "the rituals" I have termed "Antankaraña" in previous chapters might seem significant on their own, I hold that they are most significant, ethnographically, in that they interrelate with each other and affect the "real lives, practices and systems of relations" (1997:76) of people living in northern Madagascar. In a sense, "community" suggests an appreciation for the fundamental inter-relatedness of culture and context.

In carrying out the research for which she has resurrected "community", work in which she has traced the lives and social networks of the members of her high school graduating class, Ortner encountered much the same dilemma that I described having encountered in chapter 1. How does one carry out research among a group geographically dispersed and yet linked? Her solution was to travel the country and interview her former classmates, and in doing so, classify them as members of different sorts of community -- some characterized by the actual face-to-face interaction of members, others the result of transplantation and invention, still others based simply in the
nostalgia for high-school. While I recognize the value of Ortner's method for the project she has undertaken, I will not attempt to subdivide the thing I am calling the Antankaraña community. To do so, I think, would be to betray my intent in suggesting the use of the term in the first place. What I refer to in the next pages bears closest resemblance to what Ortner calls a "community of the mind" (1997:73) -- that is, the community which exists most vibrantly in the minds and memories of its members. What is interesting about Ortner's community of the mind from my perspective is the way in which it is periodically reestablished through practice. What the graduates that Ortner describes hold in common other than their association with a certain high-school and a certain year, is the fact that they recognize this association through participation in "the rituals that briefly pull them all together -- reunions" (1997:75). Shortly, I will be arguing that rituals such as the Tsangantsainy serve much the same purpose in northern Madagascar -- they draw individuals from all the settings described in Chapter 1 (and others) together.

Anthony Cohen's thoughts on "community" are also relevant to the case at hand. He begins The Symbolic Construction of Community with the simple proposition that something called "community" actually does exist. "We are not concerned ... with the positivistic niceties of analytic taxonomies" he writes, "We confront an empirical phenomenon: people's attachment to community. We seek an understanding of it by trying to capture some sense of their experience and of the meanings they attach to community." (1984:38) It is the consideration of meanings that Cohen focuses on. For him, "community is a phenomenon of culture ... which is meaningfully constructed by people through their symbolic prowess and resources" (38). Following Cohen, I would argue that the Antankaraña community is constructed in just this, symbolic, way. The great advantage to this perspective is that it allows for an understanding of how individuals of diverse backgrounds and sensibilities come to share in a sense of solidarity without losing their individuality or "subordinating themselves to the tyranny of orthodoxy" (21). Ultimately, it allows me to refer to Maitre Jacky, the Amparjakaka, Dadilahy Said and Marie-Reine as "Antankaraña" (as they do) despite the gaps between their understandings of what the term actually refers to. It is worthwhile to quote Cohen's argument at length here:
In this approach, then, the 'commonality' which is found in the community need not be a uniformity. It does not clone behavior or ideas. It is a commonality of forms (ways of behaving) whose content (meanings) may vary considerably among its members. The triumph of community is to so contain this variety that its inherent discordance does not subvert the apparent coherence which is expressed by its boundaries (1985:20).

He later writes that:

Just as the 'common form' of the symbol aggregates the various meanings assigned to it, so the symbolic repertoire of a community aggregates the individualities and other differences found within the community and provides the means for their expression, interpretation and containment. ... It continuously transforms the reality of difference into the appearance of similarity with such efficacy that people can still invest the 'community' with ideological integrity (1985:21).

Just as Ortner reconciles the notion of community with the reality of geographic diffusion, in noting the "inherent discordance" that exists within communities, Cohen's view allows for the social chasms which separate individuals. Individuals are members of communities by recognizing symbols in common. Their affiliation with these symbols is ultimately what differentiates them from others (who don't associate with them), meaning that symbols are the key indicators of the bounds of the community they belong to. At the same time, and this is (to me) the most attractive feature of Cohen's formulation, they retain their individuality by interpreting those symbols however they are inclined to.

By introducing the idea of an Antankaraña community, I do not mean to negate what has been stated above regarding the existence of models of Antankaraña identity based on notions of inclusivity and exclusivity. I still hold that "Antankaraña" is a term under which some are included as co-constituents of the local polity and from which
others are excluded given their different ethnic affiliations. With "community", I intend only to suggest that there is a way of subsuming these seemingly disparate modes of identity reckoning under a single term. Cohen notes that "community" is a particularly appropriate one given that its use "would seem to imply two related suggestions: that the members of a group of people (a) have something in common with each other, which (b) distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other putative groups. 'Community' thus seems to imply simultaneously both similarity and difference." (12)

How does this differ from ethnicity, which, it would seem, is based on the same implication? "Community" is something one participates in, and contributes to whereas "ethnicity" is something one refers to only in certain contexts and holds by virtue of birth. Nowhere is it assumed that "community" is ascribed or primordial.

In Benedict Anderson's (1983) *Imagined Communities* we see many of the themes raised by Ortner and Cohen at a new level -- that of the nation. While I do not mean to imply that the Antankaraña form a nation in Anderson's sense, I have found many of his ideas helpful in my own understanding of how the term "community" might be applied in northern Madagascar. Anderson's work implies that members of a community (even if they are geographically dispersed as Ortner's subjects are) need not actually know and interact with one another -- "imagining" the link is enough. He writes that the nation "is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (1991:7). Especially significant, I think, is the attention Anderson pays to the significance of the vernacular languages as the basis of the media of print capitalism. In his understanding, language is not a symbol of national identity, but rather a purveyor of it (1991:133-34). His assertion that "in this late twentieth century ... advances in communication technology, especially radio and television, give print allies unavailable a century ago" (1991:134-35) is particularly apt when considering the situation in northern Madagascar. I would only advance it somewhat (in these late 1990s) by noting the pervasiveness of relatively cheap audio and video cameras and players, and the ease with which these media are employed by individuals not sanctioned by the state (as national television and radio stations are). To focus only on those media, though, is to fall short.
It is also worth considering the sorts of media that involve individuals as participants as well -- ritual especially.

In commenting on the nature of nationalist sentiment (in the preamble to a discussion of Swiss political ritual), Regina Bendix writes that "unless persistently fueled, the capacity to generate emotion for the 'imagined' national community is limited as individuals tend to invest most of their emotional energy in human communities and issues that affect them on a daily basis" (1992:770). Periodically re-occurring rituals, she argues, provide the opportunity for individuals to look beyond their quotidian concerns and local social networks, and towards that "imagined community" to which they also belong. Although she draws inspiration from Anderson's notion of what binds individuals as members of nations, she also criticizes his view as being focused too much on elite culture-brokers who purvey nationalism, and not enough on the people who hold nationalist sentiment. She notes that political ritual in particular

is a medium in which [nationalist] sentiment is constructed and enacted, for unlike print, which is available exclusively to the literate, ritual invites and even necessitates broad participation. In enactments of and discourse about political ritual, it is possible to capture the intertwining of intellectual ideas with popular expressions and receptions of the notion of nation (1992:782).

To recap, I have chosen to use the term "community" with reference to the Antankaraña in that it is broad enough to subsume the models of identity reckoning discussed in the first half of this chapter ("Antankaraña as polity-constituents" and "Antankaraña as members of an ethnic group"). The image I mean to portray is not the idyllic and cohesive "community" imagined by early proponents of the community studies approach, but rather a community "of mind" (Ortner) or one that is "imagined" (Anderson). This sort of community is bounded not by fences, rivers or other natural or man made limits, but rather by the symbols recognized in common by members of it (Cohen). The fact that members attribute sometimes very different meanings to these
symbols is interesting (and something I approach in the next section), but it does not eradicate the links that draw them together.

In the final sections of this chapter, I discuss three particularly potent symbols recognized by members of the Antankaraña community: the polity itself, a particular narrative concerning the past of the polity and the rituals associated with the polity. As symbols, these three provide Antankaraña the means of including themselves and those others who recognize them in common as members of a single group. These are the symbols considered unique to Antankaraña, and as such they are thus called upon in defining the conceptual boundaries which separate the Antankaraña community from others. It is with reference to these symbols, then, that individuals are either included with or excluded from the Antankaraña community.

As symbols they are also polyvalent -- they mean different things to different people at different times. While much can be said of the fact that these meanings are not randomly attributed -- they might rather be seen as pragmatically constructed from within differing social, political and economic contexts and frequently deployed with specific intentions -- I will not be focusing on this here. For the time being I stress only that great variation in interpretation of these symbols does exist. Thus, when I write that "some" individuals interpret a symbol this way, and "others" interpret it another, I am using a shorthand of my own construction which allows me to consider how interpretations vary. Behind the "some" and "others" that I refer to are not classifiable individuals per se, but varying interpretations. Again, I must stress that I seek primarily to establish that variable interpretations do exist, and not to essentialize or classify individuals as proponents of particular and mutually exclusive interpretations. One of the most interesting things about symbols, after all, is that they are not just interpreted in different ways within a society (or "community") -- they are also subject to varying interpretations by the same individual, through time and by the same individual through time.
The symbols to which members of the Antankaraña community refer are all ones associated with the polity described in Chapter 2. Some of the most obvious of these will be discussed shortly. Before that, though, it is worth noting that in a sense, the polity itself is a symbol which members of the Antankaraña community recognize in common but interpret differently. To some, especially those who participate in its daily functioning, the thing that I call "the polity" (in its key figures, institutions, taboos, rites, etc) symbolizes the significant presence of the "sacredness of rulers" in their lives. For these it is a symbol that is continuously reinforced in that they "experience" in their daily lives -- when they encounter the *Ampanjaka* or *Ndrambamvibe* and offer them expected respectful greetings, when they consult a *ranahy* or *fahatelo* in the hopes of resolving a land dispute, when they swear promises at the base of the *maa* in Ambatoharañana, when they don't dig a hole on Tuesday out of respect for royalty's taboo, etc. For these members of the Antankaraña community, the polity is most significant as it functions as a force in their lives, and, as such, essential to their interpretation of it as a sense of their own link to ancestral authority and its power to help or harm them.

To others, especially those whose daily lives are not as affected by their association with it, the polity symbolizes something quite different. For them, it is more the idea of the polity (and the mere fact of its continuing existence in contemporary Madagascar), I think, rather than the component parts of it, that is significant. As such, the polity symbolizes the power and longevity of the 'traditional'. Many who state, with pride, that their *fombandrozaña* ("ancestral customs") -- those associated with the polity in particular -- have survived for hundreds of years despite the radical changes that northern Madagascar has undergone through that time, do so not so much because they value the presence and influence of the functioning polity in their daily lives, but rather because it (and the "ancestral customs" associated with it) represents what is unique to Antankaraña in Madagascar. Within a state that fosters local *fombandrozaña* (as noted in the introduction and in chapter 2) as part of an ongoing policy aimed at reconnecting the
population of post-colonial Madagascar with its pre-colonial roots, linking oneself to a 300 year old polity is a potentially powerful statement.

Again I must stress, as above, that these varying interpretations and understandings of the polity (as symbol) are not random, nor are they constructed out of or expressed into vacuums. Indeed, a closer examination of these varying interpretations will reveal a great deal of what practical forces might be seen as motivating assertions of one sort or another. Again, though, this is not my focus here. My point, in an effort to reinforce my depiction of the Antankaraña as a symbolically bounded community, is merely to suggest that such varying interpretations and understandings do exist. The common symbol, in this case that of "the polity", is the important thing.

In discussing the prevalence and symbolic nature of certain historical narratives among inhabitants of the Melanesian island of Santa Isabel, Geoffrey White writes that "for societies whose recent history is one of accommodation with colonial institutions of mission and government, stories of past encounters with 'outsiders' reproduce understandings of community structured by oppositions of 'inside' and 'outside'" (1991:7). His statement is one that is almost entirely applicable to the case of the Antankaraña -- as noted at the beginning of Chapter 4 and in the last chapter, there is a particular narrative of the past which dominates popular discourse. This narrative stresses the conflicting nature of relations between Antankaraña and the Merina and the cooperative nature of relations between Antankaraña and the French.

As many have pointed out this popular narrative is not a particularly accurate depiction of what happened in the mid to late nineteenth century in northern Madagascar. Official archives, travel writers and even Dadilahy Said's tantara all paint a far more complex picture of the time. And yet there is no denying the prevalence of the version described above. In a sense, this narrative has become something akin to a "screen memory" (Freud's term cited in Antze and Lambek 1996) which subsumes accounts of events that hold no real place within its temporal bounds. Thus, it is not unusual to find people discussing events of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as though they had taken place at the time of Tsimiharo -- in these cases, it was generally the similarity of theme (escape from highland invader, for example) which caused temporally unassociated
events to be considered alongside one another. This, the reader might recall, is the case in
how many interpret the demise of the Antandrano spirits portrayed at the annual tromba-
bathing. I have even heard some interpret the rebiky -- the dance generally considered
commemorative of the conflict between two related royal dynasties -- as a
commemoration of the conflict between the Antankaraña and the Merina.

Perhaps the most significant thing to remember when considering the power of the past as a symbol in the present is that, as Cunnison notes, "histories are about people of whom representatives are still alive and known"(1951:34)1. Interpretations of the past have very real implications in the present and are frequently deployed with particular intentions in mind2.

The ritual cycle which culminates with the Tsangantsainy brings together the two symbols described above (the polity and the past) in a way that nothing else can. The particular events which make up this cycle are among those by which we (and the Antankaraña) may gain "empirical access" to these symbols (Geertz 1973:17). As should be abundantly clear by now, the visits to Nosy Mitsio and to the caves of the Ankaraña massif as well as the Tsangantsainy itself are inextricably linked to the polity. The ancestors invoked on Nosy Mitsio and in the caves are those of the living Ampanjaka. The Tsangantsainy which follows a year after these events is even more strongly associated with the Ampanjaka. It might, in fact, be interpreted as a ritualized re-establishment of the primordial partnership between the Ampanjaka and the constituents of the polity. While these events are invariably a showcase for the polity as symbol (see above), they are also, when considered as the cycle that they are, significant mnemonically in that they recall the basic narrative which I have described as another significant symbol which Antankaraña hold in common. As described in the previous chapter, there is no questioning the evocative nature of the visits to Nosy Mitsio and the caves of the Ankaraña massif. Visitors to Nosy Mitsio are reminded (although they already know it)

1Cunnison further states that "such relationships which exist today are present witnesses to events in history which themselves justify the present social situation ... the event is remembered and seen through the presence of the relationship it brought about, among the people today." (1951:34)
2Both Buckley (1989) and J. Rappaport (1990) have noted similar uses of the past as symbol in their work with Ulster's Protestants and Andean peasants respectively. See also Carstens (1991) for an historical study of the uses of history in the construction of community in Canada's Okanogan.
that the island was the place where Tsimiharo was forced to live in exile for 40 years during the last century. They know, furthermore, just who it was who forced him there (i.e. the Merina) and who it was he sought for assistance (i.e. the French). Similarly, during the visits to the caves, stories are told of the time of Tsimiharo's hiding there. What is more, the connection to the past is rendered even more vital by the mnemonic taboos which recall the predicament Tsimiharo found himself in. For those who would seek closure to the cycle of events recalled by the visits to Nosy Mitsio and the caves of the Ankaraña massif, the *Tsangantsainy* represents the union (between Antankaraña and the French) which allowed the repatriation of the mainland to occur.

Stating this is only half of the story, however, for what ritual provides, other than a playing field for varying interpretations of the polity and the past, is an array of additional symbols which members of the Antankaraña community may refer to in common. Primary among these, of course, are the actual events, such as the *Tsangantsainy*, which they support and participate in. As Connerton notes in his discussion of commemorative ceremonies, rites are held to be meaningful because [they] have significance with respect to a set of further, non-ritual actions, to the whole life of a community. Rites have the capacity to give value and meaning to the life of those who perform them (1989:45).

As indicated in the last chapter, events such as the *Tsangantsainy* do have significance to a "set of further, non-ritual actions" in northern Madagascar. It is only the nature of that significance, and the way it is evident and expressed, that is variable.

Bendix's earlier discussed assertion that ritual provides the milieu for broad participation while allowing a variety of experiences of that participation is especially pertinent to my consideration of ritual and the Antankaraña community. Apparent in her work, aside from the critique of Anderson's focus on "elite-driven print-capitalism, which supports the distribution of 'forms of imagining' such as the novel and the newspaper" (1992:768), is an understanding of the tendency of ritual to draw individuals together in
common appreciation of certain symbols. In a sense, participation itself is something, as my comments on the subject in the previous chapter suggest, individuals interpret in different ways.

The *Tsangantsainy* is symbolic in another way too. While I would never deny the propensity of ritual practice to draw people together and infuse them with that Durkheimian sense of solidarity, the *Tsangantsainy* is significant to members of the Antankaraña community even when it is not taking place and drawing them together physically. For some, recounted memories of past events are enough to lead them into reflections on the nature of the polity and their membership in it. For others the *Tsangantsainy* represents (as I have already argued the polity and the past represent as well) something unique to Antankaraña in contemporary Madagascar and is to an extent significant in that alone. The fact that it has also become a focus of local and foreign historians, anthropologists and film-makers only further establishes its value in contemporary Madagascar. In 1997, the Ampanjaka himself stressed this link between the *Tsangantsainy* and collective identity whenever people visited him in the weeks before and days after the mast raising. "This [i.e., the *Tsangantsainy*], he frequently commented to them, "is what makes us us ['mahatsika atsika']".

In closing this discussion of the Antankaraña community, I should note, as Ortner (1997) would have me do, that this is not a community without dissenters. While many establish and exhibit their membership in the Antankaraña community through their participation in events such as the *Tsangantsainy*, some others do so through abstention — notably, some members of the royal family from the town of Beramanja (see Chapter 3) who consider themselves the proper inheritors of the right to rule. As noted in Chapter 5, this segment of the royal family and those loyal to them no longer participate in the carrying out of the *Tsangantsainy*, nor do its members give their blessing (as they are meant to do) when a new Ampanjaka (from the Ambatoharaña line) is selected. That said, they still consider themselves to be "Antankaraña". Like Morocco's "emblematic" king, then, the symbols described above are icons to which the population gazes in search of commonality "even when the gazing is made in dissent" (Combs-Schilling 1996:2). Dissenters continue to recognize the significance of the polity, certain historical narratives
and events like the *Tsangantsainy* -- they only attribute different meanings to them. That some covet the mast and would have it planted elsewhere (if they could) is a sure indication of the power and singularity of that symbol.
CONCLUSION

This dissertation has explored the inter-relatedness of history, ritual and identity in northern Madagascar in two ways. It has done so first through a discussion of the practices by which people in the region affiliate with certain powerful forces and symbols. "Antankaraña" identity (whether reckoned as something essentially inclusive or exclusive), it has suggested, is constructed out of the willingness of people to recognize these forces and symbols as important to their lives. Whether they accept the polity and the figures (living and/or dead) and practices associated with it as sacred and indispensable elements in reckoning a particular cosmology, or simply refer to such institutions and individuals as markers of collective uniqueness in a heterogeneous state, these individuals are all "Antankaraña" (although not, of course, uniquely so). That said, we must not forget that the processes through which 'Antankarañaness' is constructed are to a degree controlled by the authorities (living and dead; royal and prophetical) who have steered and continue to direct the polity through changing times, and that in "serving", individuals reinforce and re-sanctify the positions of these figures.

This dissertation has also traced the development of a political system through time. Since the initial acceptance of 'arriving' royalty by the indigenous population of the north, it has posited, the polity has been supported and legitimized through changing socio-political times from within and without. From within, it has been maintained through the service and participation of the people who constitute it. From without, it has been strengthened through the recognition and support of powerful outsiders. Through history it has been the living *Ampanjaka* who has managed these internal and external forces in ways that have ensured the continuity of the polity and his position at its centre.

I must re-assert, however, that he has not done so alone. In the past (as suggested in *tantara*) he has been assisted in this management (as in the management of the polity itself) by his own ancestors, polity officials and other close advisors. In recent years it has been the participation of representatives of both external and internal forces (i.e., of both non-Antankaraña observers and Antankaraña celebrants) in events which demonstrate and
re-legitimize his authority in the region that has ensured his mediatory position between local and extra-local (national and international) interests.

My discussions of these two topics share more in common than is immediately apparent. In both, it is ultimately the processes by which the continuity of a political order is assured that are being described. Through prescribed but willing practice, “Antankaraña” commemorate events of the past that ensured the present and participate in events of the present that ensure the future. Through the effective management of internal and external forces, Ampanjaka past and present have negotiated a place for themselves and the order they represent in changing socio-political contexts. In both cases the past is recalled in ways that assure the relevance of the polity in the present. What, then, of the future? What will become of the polity I have described here in the next century? The document I introduce in the following section (by way of concluding this dissertation) would seem to suggest that not only will the polity continue to exist ... it will continue to grow as it is ideally meant to.

La Communauté Traditionelle Antakarana

Perhaps the best reason for considering the Antankaraña a "community" is that that term (or rather the French translation of it) has been adopted locally. I should note from the beginning that the use of the term "communauté" in the document cited below is only tangentially related to the sort of "community" I have suggested above. Certainly both the "communauté", as it is imagined locally, and the "community" as I imagine it, are inherently connected to the polity, past and ritual in the north, but, for the former, unlike the latter, such connections are explicitly drawn locally with particular intentions in mind.

A document, entitled "Des Mémoires de la Communauté Traditionnelle Antakarana" (produced in Ambilobe under the direction of the current Ampanjaka, Tsimiharo III, in June 1996) begins as follows:
- Profoundly attached to its cultural and spiritual values.
- Faithful in respect for ancestral customs which define the personality and identity of the region.
- Affirming that prescriptions and taboos held by the ancestors are positive measures which have helped to safeguard and protect the ecology and natures in all senses (the earth, flora and fauna).
- Convinced that the development and blooming of mankind depends on the environment, that Antakarana tradition constitutes no barrier to development whether local or national, that this tradition can work well in conjunction with modern conceptions of development as evident in other states, notably JAPAN, LUXEMBOURG, BELGIUM, GREAT BRITAIN, SWEDEN, etc...
- Posits the foundation of its [i.e., "La Communauté ...""]s philosophy:

I) TIAKO TANINDRAZAKO, HAJAIKO FOMBAN-DRAZAKO et
II) TIAKO FAINAKO, ANKASITRAHAKO NY RAZAKO, which translates as:

I) I LOVE MY FATHERLAND (LAND OF MY ANCESTORS), I RESPECT THEIR CUSTOMS, and
II) I LOVE MY LIFE, FOR WHICH I THANK MY ANCESTORS.

(text in capital letters appears as such in the document)

This remarkable document goes on to list 12 points directed at any individuals or organizations intent on carrying out projects in or around the Ankaraña reserve (which is

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1 Throughout this document, the word I have been spelling throughout this dissertation as “Antankaraña” is written as “Antakarana”.
comprised of the Ankaraña massif and surrounding lands). A sample: Article 1 states that following in the footsteps of his grandfather (the Ampanjaka Tsalana III who agreed to having Ankaraña declared a special reserve in 1956) the current Ampanjaka, Tsimiharo III, would like to see Ankaraña be declared a national park so that it may be subject to greater care and protection; Article 2 establishes that Ankaraña is an important part of local cultural patrimony, that it "symbolizes the identity of Antakarana" and that it is the resting place of their ancestors and "martyrs"; Article 3 states that the "Antakarana community" demands to be kept informed of all projects and interventions taking place in the area so that it (i.e., "the Antakarana community") may ensure that ancestral customs and taboos are being respected; and so on.

While these points obviously reflect the particular concerns of a particular time, there is enough within them (as well as in the preamble reprinted above) to suggest that the notion of an Antakarana community is a potentially powerful one in contemporary northern Madagascar. In this document, and others that have been produced since, a claim to the vast future of northern Madagascar is being staked. The statement made is a simple one: the Antankarana community exists (it has a founding philosophy), is organized (it has access to word-processors and printers) and demands to be recognized as an important player in the development and conservation of the region. What is more, just like those Japanese, Luxembourgers, Belgians, British and Swedes referred to in the document, members of the Antankarana community do not consider retaining a monarchical political system antithetical to the goals of modernization. If anything, the document implies, such goals will only be achievable in northern Madagascar in cooperation with representatives of the polity. Article 4, for example, suggests that re-drawing the boundaries of the Ankaraña reserve (a project under consideration at that time) is a good idea, but only if the technicians who do so consult with local rangahy and fahatelo — "assistants of the Antakarana royalty".

In employing the term "community" a particular image is being deployed -- one perhaps not so far from that of the homogeneous and smoothly functioning community posited by Redfield (1955). Recognizing the power of the idea of "community", and quite aware of its place alongside "ceremony", "ancestral customs" and "tradition" in the
Western imagination, a cynical observer might contend, the authors of the document have used the term with NGOs, film-makers, foreign investors and researchers in mind. That it is written in French only affirms the possibility. What is presented is an entity that organizations like the WWF or USAID can't ignore. This is not to say, of course, that such a "homogeneous" and "smoothly functioning" community actually exists -- rather that this is the image deployed. Again I must reiterate how significant events like the Tsangantsainy are -- it is at these events that the size of the Antankarana community is exhibited to politicians, representative of NGO's and potential investors. It is also there that the Ampanjaka is held up (literally) as the central living figure in that community.

Unsurprisingly, the "Mémoires de la Communauté Traditionnelle Antakarana" are printed on the Ampanjaka's letterhead — his name and address appear prominently at the top of the first page. Although the sentiments expressed therein are attributed to the Antankarana community as a whole, there is no denying that the Ampanjaka and his close advisors in Ambilobe were the ones who composed it. That said, it would be wrong to think the intended goals of the thing are entirely self-serving. Remember that as "ruler", he is meant to oversee the well-being of the polity's constituents and ensure the continuity of the polity itself. If such duties today require a word-processor, video camera and mastery of negotiation techniques then (some would say) so be it. Certainly what the Ampanjaka gleans from his relations with outsiders go to himself, his family and to those who are loyal to him first -- but again, this is a fulfillment of the role he was chosen for.

The polity continues to exist only as long as people continue to recognize it, and the Ampanjaka does not claim to represent any more than those who recognize him. In a sense, this document is evidence that the polity has adapted to the "environment" of the 1990s just as it adapted to the French in the 1890s.

To those critics (and there are some) who say that the Ampanjaka acts primarily out of his own interests, I can only reiterate what I have written before: that his power rests ultimately on the will of the people who recognize it. Without their support and recognition, he is nothing. To those who would argue that the Ampanjaka promotes the "Antakarana community" (and events like the Tsangantsainy, the fisehina and the ziara among others) as a way of building up his own reputation and the symbolic capital he
brings to any negotiating table in the north -- of course. That, to some degree, is the whole point.

What then is the actual position of the "Communauté Traditionnelle Antakarana" in contemporary northern Madagascar? The ace it holds -- the asset that will ensure it a voice in the future -- is its claim to long-standing occupation of the region. As Sharp's (1993) work has shown, such claims are among the most powerful that can be made in contemporary Madagascar -- ties which link land to its living and ancestral occupants are difficult to dispute. "La Communauté Traditionnelle Antakarana", spurred by the ambitions of the current Ampanjaka, is evidently attempting to fortify those ties. And their greatest power may lie in the subtle threats such ties allow them to make. Article 12 (the last one outlined in the document introduced above) reads:

To those who would infringe on the prescriptions and taboos of Ankarana, serious curses will result if ancestral customs that have existed since the time of Antakarana ancestors are not respected. It is therefore suggested that those who enter the reserve be cautious.

With the recent discovery of sapphires alongside the Ankaraña massif and rumors of the imminent arrival of a large American oil company in Ambilobe, the warning is a timely one.
PARTIAL GLOSSARY

Ampanjaka -- ruler of the polity
ampanombo -- a person who "serves" the fanjakana
ampijoro -- a person responsible for pronouncing invocations to the ancestors
anadoany -- a representative of the royal family
andriana -- royal man
barisan'antely -- honey alcohol prepared especially for certain occasions
doany -- royal capital
fady -- taboo(s)
fahatelo -- a commoner official of the polity (second highest ranking)
fanjakana -- government, polity, "rule"
fanompoana -- an occasion at which people "serve" the fanjakana
fatidra -- blood brotherhood
fomba -- custom(s)
fombandrazana -- customs of the ancestors
joro -- an invocation to ancestors
manantany -- highest ranking commoner official of the polity
manombo -- to "serve" the fanjakana
moasy -- prophetess
ndrambavy -- royal woman
Ndrambivibe -- the great/paramount royal woman
rangahy -- a commoner official of the polity (third highest ranking)
reyamandreny -- lit. "father and mother"; parents or village elders
tantara (lovansofiny) -- an account of past events ("inherited through the ears")
tombo -- grown; the accomplishment of something associated with the ampanjaka
tompondrazaña -- "owner or master of the ancestors"
Tsangantsainy -- the ritual process/event at which a mast representing the sacredness of ancestors is constructed and raised.
tromba -- the spirits of royal ancestors that appear in mediums
vazaha -- French; European/American foreigner
Zafinifotsy (short for Zafimbolafoatsy) -- "the grandchildren of silver"
Zafinimena (short for Zafimbolamena) -- "the grandchildren of gold"
zanakabavy -- the child(ren) of a royal woman
zanakalahy -- the child(ren) of a royal man
ziara -- annual visits to the tombs of past Muslim rulers and teachers
zomba -- the ruler's palace
zombavola -- the royal cemetery near Ambatoharana
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