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THE POLITICAL ELITE OF IMERINA AND THE REVOLT OF THE *MENALAMBA*. THE CREATION OF A COLONIAL MYTH IN MADAGASCAR, 1895–1898[1]

BY STEPHEN ELLIS

ONE of the most puzzling and fascinating of all resistance movements is that known as the revolt of the *menalamba*. It occurred over a wide area of central Madagascar, mostly in the kingdom of Imerina, in the two years following the French invasion of Madagascar in 1895. The most mysterious aspect of the rising has always been the question of who, if anyone, was its leader. The official version, that reported by the French government in Madagascar, was that the movement was inspired or directed by a number of magnates at the old Merina court.[2] The published evidence is so ambiguous as to have obliged every subsequent author to accept this version,[3] although there was considerable doubt expressed as to its truth at that time. Recent research in previously unopened archives has thrown new light on the question.[4]

The background to the rising may be summarized quite briefly. The French army, on its march to Tananarive, had met no effective opposition but had suffered heavy losses from disease. The Merina government, divided by vicious feuds, was impotent. One faction led by the prime minister's secretary, Rasanjy, was even in secret communication with the invaders.[5] The French themselves were divided as to what to do with the government of Imerina once it had fallen. In fact they settled for the conventional device of a protectorate, established by a treaty signed on 1 October 1895.[6] The queen of Imerina, who also claimed to be the queen of Madagascar, kept her throne; but the essential Malagasy collaborators were to be Rasanjy and

[1] I am grateful to Madame Françoise Raison for her comments upon an earlier draft of this article.

[2] *Rapport d'ensemble sur la pacification, l'organisation et la colonisation de Madagascar* (Tananarive, 1899), p. 14.

[3] The only full-length work on the *menalamba* is J. Rasoanasy, *Menalamba sy tanindrazana* (Tananarive, 1976). For a good discussion of the published evidence on the leadership of the *menalamba* see S. Ayache, 'Introduction à l'œuvre de Rainandriamampandry', *Annales de l'Université de Madagascar, série lettres*, x (1969), 11–50.

[4] The papers in question are those of the Laroche family, in Paris, and the Lyautey papers, soon to be transferred to a permanent archive in Paris. I am most grateful to Madame Laroche for permission to study her family papers in her own home, and to MM. P. Toussaint and A. Le Révérend and Madame Bonazzi for permission to consult the Lyautey papers. See also note 73.

[5] On the political factions see C. Le Myre de Vilers, 'Note sur la situation politique et morale', and 'Généalogie des principales familles Malgaches', 14 December 1888, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (MAE), Paris, correspondance politique, Madagascar, ancienne série, vol. 30, fols. 23–32 and 46–53; on the French party, see E. F. Knight, *Madagascar in War Time* (London, 1896), *passim*; for a brief biography of Rasanjy, *Notes, Reconnaissances et Explorations*, III (1898), 116–17.

[6] R. Pascal, 'Les rapports de quinzaine d'Hippolyte Laroche', pt. v, *Bulletin de Madagascar*, CCXLVIII *bis* (February 1967), pp. 165–70, prints the treaty. See also A. Lebon, *La pacification de Madagascar* (Paris, 1928), *passim*, on French arguments over the government of Madagascar.

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another high official, Rainandriamampandry.[7] Despite outbreaks of violence in Imerina and in other regions of Madagascar, both civil and military administrators pronounced themselves to be satisfied with the progress of events throughout the first six months of their administration.[8] They did not realize the extent of the agitation which was in the air all over Imerina, and particularly the strength of the nationalist coalition being formed in the north.[9] When a full-scale rising broke out in March 1896, it took almost every French official by surprise. The rebels, often calling themselves *menalamba*,[10] attacked indiscriminately Europeans and those Malagasy whom they reckoned to be collaborators. Mostly they vented their wrath on churches and on native churchmen. By June the *menalamba* were burning churches within sight of Tananarive, where the French were more or less besieged.[11]

The reaction of the French at times came close to panic, and the existing divisions within their ranks immediately became much more apparent.[12] The most basic split, but not the only one, was between military and civilian personnel. Personal disagreements and policy disputes added fuel to the heat of these arguments. Most soldiers suspected that the rising was supported by one or more of the many political groups among the Merina officials who still remained in Tananarive. They pointed to the fact that from the very day of the occupation of the capital there had been rumours that some of the Merina oligarchy would support an anti-French rising, although no one in a high position had taken the rumours seriously.[13] Only when the intelligence service was taken over by the young and none too tactful Lieutenant Peltier did some sort of evidence materialize. By May 1896 Peltier had amassed from very dubious sources what he considered to be evidence of an anti-French conspiracy, said to involve almost every politician in Tananarive.[14] His story was, on the face of it, utterly fantastic. His reports spoke of secret committees and lamplight messages. One almost expects to read of cloaks and daggers as well. The civilian resident-general, Laroche, calmly dismissed the whole story.[15] And although most of the higher ranks of the administration were

[7] Dépôt des Archives d'Outre-Mer (DAOM), Aix-en-Provence, Madagascar 2 Z 326: memoranda by Ranchot, 14 and 29 Oct. 1895; and Madagascar 2 Z 342: Ranchot to ministre des affaires étrangères, 15 November 1895.

[8] DAOM, Mad. 2 Z 342: Ranchot to ministre des affaires étrangères, 16 January 1896; Mad. 2 Z 365: General Voyron to ministre de la guerre, 1 February 1896.

[9] On the spread of the insurrection in northern Imerina, DAOM Mad. 6 (2) D 3: Ramampanenitra to Ramasoandromahamay (Rabozaka), 19 *Alakarabo* 1896; in southern Imerina, DAOM Mad. 2 Z 361, *passim*.

[10] *Menalamba* means literally 'red shawls'. The most plausible explanation for the name is that the leaders wore red shawls as a traditional symbol of authority.

[11] C. Savaron, *Mes souvenirs à Madagascar avant et après la conquête* (Tananarive, 1932), p. 287. The Laroche papers include the manuscript of the unpublished memoirs of Hippolyte Laroche, resident-general of Madagascar from January to October 1896. These include a chapter entitled 'La semaine sanglante', a record of the siege of Tananarive.

[12] H. Laroche, 'Le pouvoir civil et le commandement', chapter XIII of his memoirs; A. Lebon, *La pacification*, *passim*.

[13] H. Berthier, 'Le protectorat du 1er Octobre 1895 au 18 Janvier 1896', *Bulletin de l'Académie Malgache* (new series), XXIV (1941), 121.

[14] 'Le service des renseignements militaires', chapter XII of Laroche's memoirs, typescript of 57 pages, Laroche papers. The original report of the conspiracy is in DAOM Mad. 2 Z 347: Voyron to Laroche, 18 June 1896.

[15] Pascal, 'Les rapports de quinzaine', pt. IV, *Bull. de Madag.* CCXLVIII (January 1967), 73–86.

at odds with Laroche on other matters, not one of them was willing to support the theory of a high-level conspiracy.[16]

The general consensus of opinion among the best-informed observers was that the Merina political world was split into two main factions which were capable of going to any lengths to destroy one another. One of the factions centred upon the queen and her court. The other was led by Rasanjy and included a relative of the queen called Ramahatra. Rainandriamampandry occupied an uneasy position in between. Not even General Voyron, the commandant of the army, was prepared to support wholeheartedly the allegations of a plot, although he frequently gave his opinion in terms so vague as to be meaningless. His main concern was not to commit himself.[17]

Most of the pressure to take action against the mysterious traitors in Tananarive came from the lower ranks of the army, in fact from young officers very like Lieutenant Peltier. The finger of guilt was pointed at almost every Merina politician, but chiefly at Rainandriamampandry and Rasanjy, who were the best known. Laroche was widely held to have been outwitted by a combination of Merina politicians and British missionaries.[18] In France a similar interpretation gained currency in many circles. Laroche was attacked in the press for his supposed incompetence and his protestant faith.[19] Moreover Laroche's earlier complaints of military brutality had led to an official complaint from the colonial ministry to the war ministry, so that even in Paris considerations of professional pride were involved.[20] There was also a small lobby in metropolitan politics, led by the two deputies for Réunion, which called for Madagascar's outright annexation. The rising in Imerina made their case much more convincing.[21] Accordingly, the island was declared on 6 August 1896 to be a French colony. General Joseph Gallieni was despatched to Madagascar to relieve Laroche of his duties and to set up a military government.

On 10 October Laroche left Tananarive after handing over to his successor. Within twenty-four hours Gallieni had arrested Rainandriamampandry and some relatives of the queen, together with some lesser figures. Some were exiled. Rainandriamampandry and Prince Ratsimamanga, the queen's uncle, were tried for rebellion, found guilty, and shot on 15 October.

Gallieni claimed that he had found important new evidence of the guilt of Rainandriamampandry and Ratsimamanga.[22] Other people disputed this hotly. Of those French administrators who were in a good position to judge

[16] 'Compte-rendu de la réunion du 16 Juin 1896', Laroche papers, rapports spéciaux.

[17] Laroche papers: Gautier to Laroche, 1 June 1896; Bourde to Lebon, 10–11 July 1896, printed in Lebon, pp. 222–5; P. Bourde, 'Note sur les rapports du palais avec l'insurrection de l'Imerina', no date, Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer (ANSOM), Paris, MAD 215 (445); DAOM Mad. 2 Z 347: Voyron to Laroche, 25 June 1896; Service historique de l'Armée (SHA), Vincennes, Madagascar ancien fonds carton 9: Voyron to ministre de la guerre, 11 June 1896.

[18] ANSOM MAD 216 (447): Laroche to Lebon, 14 June 1896. For the opinions of the army see SHA, Mad AF 68, letters from Lt. de Cointet; also, Commandant Reibell, *Le Commandant Lamy, d'après sa correspondance et ses souvenirs de campagne* (Paris, 1903), 306–59.

[19] ANSOM MAD 216 (453), *passim*, has a collection of relevant press-cuttings.

[20] SHA, Mad. AF 44: Lebon to General Billot, 25 March 1896.

[21] L. Brunet, *L'œuvre de la France à Madagascar* (Paris, 1903), *passim*. Brunet was one of the deputies for Réunion.

[22] H. Deschamps, *Histoire de Madagascar* (4th ed., Paris, 1972), p. 236, note 1.

and who later published their memoirs, two insisted on the guilt of the accused and one, an associate of Laroche, claimed that the executions were completely arbitrary.[23] But the private papers of the Laroche family include a detailed account of the trial, which has been missing to this day.[24] This omission from the official archives is not to be wondered at as, if Laroche is to be believed, Gallieni deliberately avoided leaving any transcript of the proceedings.[25] Laroche's account was written some years later, and forms part of his unpublished memoirs.[26] It is evident that he felt a strong personal dislike of Gallieni, but there is no reason to doubt the truth of his account of the trial. It corresponds with details from other, less full accounts,[27] and it is plain that Laroche derived some information from a number of people who had actually played a part in the events described.

The proceedings were a parody of justice. The counsel assigned to the defence was none other than Lieutenant Peltier, while Rasanjy was a major witness for the prosecution. The only charge of any substance levelled against either of the accused was that Rainandriamampandry was said to have received a letter from the northern *menalamba* in February or March 1896, although no exhibit was produced.

According to Laroche, Gallieni had decided even before he set foot in Madagascar that heads must roll, and the assertion seems a reasonable one.[28] He needed to choose a member of a noble family to represent the court party and a commoner to stand for the opposition. To this purpose Gallieni had asked Gautier, the director of native affairs, who should be the candidates for the firing-squad. Gautier advised the choice of Ratsimamanga, a nobleman who had been unpopular for many years because of his financial extortions. The other choice was to be Rainandriamampandry because, although he enjoyed a considerable reputation as a politician and a leading protestant, he had no close political friends and might therefore be considered dispensable. Most important was Gautier's advice to retain Rasanjy, the most obvious target, because of his value as an administrator and probably too because of his friendship with the former secretary-general, Paul Bourde, who had friends in high places in Paris.[29] Laroche's account here fits two other pieces of evidence. One of Laroche's colleagues, using a pseudonym, also wrote that the choice of victims was made by 'un fonctionnaire civil qui jouissait alors de sa [i.e. Gallieni's] confiance', although he did not mention any names.[30] If this was indeed Gautier, then his troublesome conscience might explain

[23] H. Berthier, 'Le protectorat'; E-F. Gautier, *Trois Héros* (Paris, 1931), pp. 67–139; J. Carol (pseud.), *Chez les Hovas* (*Au pays rouge*), (Paris, 1898). Cf. Ayache, 'Introduction à l'œuvre de Rainandriamampandry'.

[24] 'Exécution du Ministre de l'Intérieur et du Prince Ratsimamanga', chapter XV of Laroche's memoirs. This text forms the basis for the following discussion of the trial.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 61 of typed draft.

[26] According to Madame Laroche, her father-in-law's memoirs were written after 1904.

[27] Archives of the United States' consulate at Tamatave (US Consular), vol. x. Original in Washington. Microfilm copy in Archives Nationales (Arch. Nat.), Paris, 253 Mi 40: Welter to Rockhill, 19 October 1896; E. Grosclaude, *Un parisien à Madagascar* (2nd ed., Paris, 1898), 94–96; Grosclaude was probably also the author of the account in *Le Figaro*, 29 October 1896.

[28] Cf. ANSOM MAD 215 (445): Gallieni to Lebon, 10 October 1896; H. Deschamps, *Histoire de Madagascar*, p. 235.

[29] ANSOM MAD 216 (453): Laroche to Lebon, 20 July 1896.

[30] Carol, *Chez les Hovas*, 272–4.

the extravagant praise which he was to give to Rainandriamampandry thirty-five years later.[31]

The executions achieved some at least of their desired effect. They inspired suitable fear in Tananarive and were popular with French soldiers and many civilians.[32] They were greeted with enthusiasm by the forward members of the colonial lobby in Paris,[33] where Gallieni's action was rightly interpreted as the most spectacular manifestation of a *politique des races* which was intended to eclipse the Merina protestant oligarchy and which, largely through Gallieni and his colleague Lyautey, was to become an important strand in French colonial thought. In February 1897 the queen and another handful of magnates were exiled, but in this case there was no trial and no execution.

While Gallieni was working to dismantle the protectorate, the *menalamba* bands in the countryside were growing weaker from starvation and more susceptible to a negotiated surrender. In the north, where one of the most powerful bands was commanded by a man named Rabezavana, military command was exercised by Hubert Lyautey, recently summoned to Madagascar by Gallieni and eventually to rise to become a marshal of France and a leading colonial theorist. On 12 May 1897 Lyautey received in his camp a Merina official, Rainianjanoro. He was an associate of Rasanjy who had been sent out from Tananarive to secure Rabezavana's surrender.[34] Over the next seventeen days Rainianjanoro succeeded in meeting Rabezavana and discussing with him the possibility of surrender. He persuaded the *menalamba* general to meet one of Lyautey's subordinates, Captain Rémond.[35] Lyautey later discovered, much to his annoyance, that throughout the period of this mission Rainianjanoro was secretly and quite unofficially corresponding with Rasanjy, although he was supposed to be acting solely under Lyautey's orders.[36] Only later did it become clear that Rainianjanoro and Rasanjy were in pursuit of a business deal with Rabezavana.[37]

At the same time Lyautey was in possession of highly confidential instructions from Gallieni as to the conditions of surrender which he was to demand from Rabezavana. On 28 May, before Rabezavana had met any of the French or their collaborators other than Rainianjanoro, Lyautey sent to Rémond a private note which, he stressed, should not be shown to Rainianjanoro. It is worth quoting at length:[38]

[31] Gautier, *Trois Héros*, 67–139.

[32] US Consular, vol. x (Arch. Nat. 253 Mi 40): Welter to Rockhill, 19 October and 3 December 1896; Lamy to Giraud, 3 December 1896, printed in Reibell, *Le Commandant Lamy*, p. 359; P. Solofo, *Hitako ny nitifirana an-dRainandriamampandry sy Ratsimamanga* (Tananarive, 1959), 14–15.

[33] Brunet, *L'œuvre de la France*, 377 *et seq.*

[34] Rainianjanoro, *Fampandrian-tany sy tantara maro samy hafa* (Tananarive, 1920), 11–12; Lyautey papers, ancien classement 455: Lyautey to chef de poste de Morafeno, 12 May 1897.

[35] Rainianjanoro, *Fampandrian-tany*, 12–16; Rainianjanoro, 'Histoire de ce que Rainianjanoro 15 hrs. a fait dans la pacification du pays à Madagascar', 1 March 1899, Lyautey papers, a. cl. 445.

[36] Lyautey papers, a. cl. 445: Rasanjy to Rainianjanoro, 22 May 1897; a. cl. 31: Rémond to Lyautey, 8 October 1897.

[37] Below, note 46.

[38] Lyautey papers, a. cl. 455: Lyautey to Rémond, 28 May 1897.

Le G[énér]al m'a laissé carte blanche, sans détail, tout en m'imposant de garder Rabezavana jusqu'à son retour. (Ceci est strictement confidentiel.) J'ai à demander à Rabezavana des gages que je vous dirai verbalement, qui seront l'épreuve de sa sincérité et d'après lesquels le G[énér]al verra dans quelle mesure il peut, en ce qui concerne du rentrée en grâce, dépasser la vie et la liberté.

Je ne puis lui dire quels sont ces gages que moi-même à Morafeno. . . Je puis dire que les gages que je demanderai à Rabezavana sont facilement exécutables.

It would be intriguing to know what were the '*gages*' which were so very secret that they could only be told to Rémond and could not be committed to writing. A description of Rabezavana's surrender permits us to have a good idea of them. On 29 May Rabezavana made his first contact with a European negotiator when he met Rémond. Two days later he came to Lyautey's camp accompanied by Rainianjanoro and Captain Rémond.[39] Lyautey duly reported that he had met Rabezavana and that the *menalamba* leader had returned next day with a list of his allies, whose surrender he offered to secure.[40] Lyautey's published account of this meeting, incidentally, is pure fiction.[41] It was not until 11 June that any mention was made of Rabezavana's exact role in the insurrection and of his alleged relations with the executed magnates Rainandriamampandry and Ratsimamanga. Lyautey wrote to Rémond:[42]

Les déclarations que vous a faites Rabezavana au sujet des % [*sic*] qu'il aurait reçues de la cour de Ranavalo et des personnages fusillés Ratsimamanga et Rainandriamampandry ont une très grande portée et présentent un intérêt particulier pour le Résident Général. Il y aurait grande importance à ce que vous obtenez de Rabezavana, s'il en existe et s'il en possède, tous les documents écrits donnant la preuve matérielle de ce fait ou seulement même des indices y relatifs.

Clearly Rabezavana had not yet produced any documentary evidence of his involvement with the court. In fact on 14 June Lyautey reported to Gallieni Rasanjy's underhand dealings, and went on to say that all Rabezavana had done so far was to secure his life. To obtain other concessions he now had to render what Lyautey called '*services effectifs et palpables*'.[43] Rabezavana wrote down a copy from memory of a letter which, he claimed, had come to him from Rainandriamampandry in January 1896. There exist two versions of Rabezavana's transcription, both the same in substance.[44] One version was in due course despatched by Gallieni to Paris as retrospective proof that the rising had been planned and led from Tananarive. In time all of the main *menalamba* leaders, when they surrendered, were to produce similar letters said to have come from Rainandriamampandry early in 1896, at the beginning of the revolt.[45]

[39] Lyautey papers, a. cl. 453/1: Lyautey to Gallieni, 1 June 1897. [40] *Ibid.*

[41] Lyautey to his brother, 24 May 1897, [*sic*], printed in L. H. G. Lyautey, *Lettres du Tonkin et de Madagascar* (2nd ed. Paris, 1921), 537–9. It is evident that the account was written many years later, and may have been deliberately misleading. Rémond is misspelt 'Raymond'; Lyautey was not at Antsatrana on 24 May 1897; nor is the date of the surrender correct.

[42] Lyautey papers, a. cl. 452/2: Lyautey to Rémond, 11 June 1897.

[43] Lyautey papers, a. cl. 455: Lyautey to Gallieni, 14 June 1897. Lyautey's italics.

[44] Lyautey papers, a. cl. 446: Rabezavana to Rémond, 15 July 1897; ANSOM MAD 438 (1203): same to same, 16 July 1897, annexe no. 1 to Gallieni's political report of 26 August 1897.

[45] The other letters are: 'Déposition de Rainibetsimisaraka', 26 July 1897, annexe no. 2 to Gallieni's report of 26 August 1897, ANSOM MAD 438 (1203); letters to and from

The description of Rabezavana's surrender enables us to reconstruct the conditions upon which he laid down his weapons. He was neither imprisoned, executed nor exiled. He had been guaranteed his life and liberty and clemency for his followers. In return he had undertaken to obtain the submission of some of his allies. That was never any secret. What then were the orders which Gallieni had given to Lyautey regarding Rabezavana's submission and which were so highly confidential? There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that Gallieni made it the main condition of surrender of all three main leaders of the *menalamba* that they should supply him with written evidence of the conspiracy of the politicians in Tananarive. Gallieni got his evidence. The *menalamba* generals were spared. The man who gained the most was Rasanjy, who became unchallengeable as France's chief collaborator, and also added to his considerable wealth. While Rainianjanoro had been officially negotiating Rabezavana's surrender, the two allies, Rasanjy and Rainianjanoro, had been privately arranging a financial coup. They bought several thousand head of cattle from the grazing lands so recently occupied by the *menalamba* and took them to the under-supplied market of Tananarive, where they were sold for a very handsome profit.[46]

A fraudulent version of the revolt of the *menalamba* passed into history. There were quite a few Europeans who disagreed with Gallieni's version of events, mostly friends of Laroche or foreigners. Once armed with evidence against the Merina élite, Gallieni could proceed to replace the protectorate with his own controversial *politique des races*, secure in the possession of a weapon with which to discredit criticism. Gallieni's official report on his mission to pacify Imerina maintained that the traitors in Tananarive had begun to foment opposition to France in January 1896, and thereafter continued to encourage the insurgents.[47] In his unpublished reports and his private correspondence Gallieni stressed still further the personal blame attached to Rainandriamampandry as the ringleader.[48] Some people thought that he later felt guilty about the use of Rainandriamampandry in particular as a scapegoat.[49] It is a fact that in 1901, while Gallieni was still governor-general of Madagascar, a subsidy of 86,000 francs was paid to the dead minister's family.[50]

But the proof that evidence was fabricated against Rainandriamampandry and Ratsimamanga does not in itself disprove the story of a high-level conspiracy in Tananarive. There are indications that one or more of the magnates in the capital could possibly have incited a rising without committing

Rabozaka annexed to H. Berthier, 'Le protectorat', in *Bull. de l'Acad. Malg.*; 'Déclaration de Rabozaka', no date, annexed to Gallieni's report of 27 March 1898, ANSOM MAD 374 (1015).

[46] SHA, Mad. nouveau fonds 15/28(2)/17: note on Rainianjanoro; *Journal Officiel de Madagascar et Dépendances*, CCXXXVI (16 April 1898), 1727–8.

[47] *Rapport d'ensemble*, 14.

[48] For example, 'Rapport du tournée du Gouverneur-Général dans le Betsileo', 13 September–6 October 1897, DAOM Mad. 2 D 95. The bulk of Gallieni's private papers remains with his family and is not available for consultation, but there is much of interest in the archives départementales de l'Orne, Le Myre de Vilers papers, dossier 29: letters from Gallieni, 1896–1904.

[49] 'Exécution du Ministre de l'Intérieur et du Prince Ratsimamanga', 63–4, Laroche papers; T. T. Matthews, *Thirty Years in Madagascar* (2nd ed., London, 1904), 319–20.

[50] DAOM Mad. 6 (10) D 1.

themselves to paper. It might therefore be argued that Gallieni, while transgressing the letter of the law, was yet in pursuit of the real chief of the insurrection. In fact Gallieni sometimes hinted that this was the case.[51]

There had been rumours of a mysterious conspiracy from October 1895 onwards.[52] But the first time that there was concrete evidence that someone in government circles might possibly have foreknowledge of an insurrection was the affair of what was called the 'Ambohimanga letter'. On 14 February 1896 the queen and a group of courtiers including Rainandriamampandry showed Laroche a letter written in the queen's name, calling upon the governor of Ambohimanga to organize a revolt. The messenger who had delivered the letter was questioned. At first he claimed that the letter had been forged by Rasanjy, an assertion which the queen supported, but later he changed his story and said that the letter was indeed the product of a conspiracy hatched in the royal palace.[53] It was never proved one way or another who had written the letter. Laroche refused to treat the matter as being of any importance.[54] Some officials took it a lot more seriously,[55] and in time it came to be regarded by the general staff of the army as the first definite evidence of a conspiracy.[56] The most likely explanation is that the letter was not really intended to precipitate a rising but was written by one party as a means of discrediting its opponents.[57] It implies that the courtiers were aware that some sort of insurrection was in the offing. The French themselves had had ample warning of that but had ignored the danger-signals.[58]

Shortly after the incident of the Ambohimanga letter, when it was becoming painfully obvious that there was a genuine insurrection in the countryside, Prince Ramahatra, a friend of Rasanjy, came to the French authorities with yet another compromising letter.[59] It was addressed to Ramahatra himself and signed by Rabezavana under his *nom de guerre* of Ravaikafo, 'the spark'. There seems no reason to doubt that the letter was genuine. The *menalamba* were always anxious to give their movement a focus by using the figurehead of monarchy. Since the queen was guarded by the French in Tananarive, who better to appeal to than Ramahatra, one of the very few courtiers who was popular and probably the person with the best claim to the throne after Ranavalona herself?[60]

In view of the discussion of letters purporting to come from the *menalamba*

[51] Le Myre de Vilers papers, dossier 29: Gallieni to Le Myre de Vilers, 12 November 1898.

[52] DAOM Mad. 2 Z 326: memorandum by Ranchot, 14 October 1895.

[53] ANSOM MAD 216 (447): Laroche to ministre des colonies, 25 February 1896. Enclosed is a French translation of the letter, dated 1 February 1896.

[54] 'La lettre au gouverneur d'Ambohimanga', typescript of 6 pages, Laroche papers.

[55] ANSOM MAD 216 (453): Laroche to Lebon, 20 July 1896.

[56] 'Rapport de Monsieur le Commandant Gérard, Chef d'Etat-Major, sur la déposition de la Reine', March 1897, enclosed with Gallieni's report of 12 March 1897, ANSOM MAD 438 (1201).

[57] ANSOM MAD 216 (447): Gautier to Laroche, 1 June 1896, annexe no. 1 to Laroche's report of 13 June 1896.

[58] For intelligence reports warning of the approaching insurrection, see DAOM MAD. 2 Z 332 and 2 Z 364.

[59] ANSOM MAD 216 (447): Laroche to ministre des colonies, 28 March 1896. A copy of the letter is enclosed: Ravaikafo (Rabezavana) to Ramahatra, 22 *Alohotsy* 1896.

[60] C. Savaron, *Mes souvenirs*, 153 and 175. For a brief biography of Ramahatra, J. Chauvin, 'Le Prince Ramahatra', *Revue d'histoire des colonies*, XXVII, ii (1939), 33–46.

we should perhaps proceed to a brief review of their value as evidence. It may be argued that it is unreasonable to characterize the Ambohimanga letter as a forgery but to accept the letter from Rabezavana to Ramahatra as genuine. There can be no doubt whatever that there were a number of forged letters in circulation, a fact commented upon by some of the *menalamba* leaders themselves.[61] Broadly speaking there are three categories of false letters. The first has already been met in our discussion of the surrender of Rabezavana. It has been demonstrated that letters were written after June 1897 by former *menalamba*, directly or indirectly at French request, to suggest that Rainandriamampandry and Ratsimamanga had organized the rising. Another type of false letter was that, not inspired by the French, but bearing a forged signature in order to incriminate a third party. We have suggested that the Ambohimanga letter was of this type. The third category, by far the most common, is of letters written by genuine *menalamba* using a well-known name in order to attract support. It is not always clear whether such false signatures were intended to mislead the ignorant, by pretending that the rising had more extensive support than was really the case, or whether they were merely a rhetorical device.

Clearly the existence of such a bewildering variety of misleading evidence leads to special problems of interpretation. Although there is evidence that a certain amount of forgery was deliberately encouraged by Gallieni after June 1897, the present study does not assume that this makes all French material suspect. Neither in Tananarive nor in Paris was the government in business to forge evidence, and indeed *menalamba* letters annexed to Gallieni's political reports of 1896 often contradicted his stated opinion of the rising. It has therefore been assumed that most of the statements of evidence or copies of documents placed in French archives were sincerely believed to be genuine, unless there is good reason to suspect otherwise. This does not preclude the possibility that letters captured by French troops and believed to be authentic may have been falsified by a Malagasy for whatever reason. There are two exceptions to this general admissibility of evidence from French archives. The first is cases in which considerable doubt was expressed at that time as to the origin of a document. A good example is the Ambohimanga letter which was so often thought to be of doubtful authorship as to leave the historian no choice but to treat it with scepticism. The second case is with letters which are known to have been written by the *menalamba* after June 1897. There is no evidence that the French solicited any forgeries before that date, and in fact they could hardly be in a position to do so since none of the major *menalamba* leaders had yet surrendered.

The letter given by Rabezavana's messenger to Ramahatra on 18 March 1896 does not fit any of the categories of likely forgeries. Suspicion is attached only to Ramahatra's insistence that Rabezavana had sent similar letters of exhortation to other magnates, including Rainandriamampandry.[62] It is highly questionable whether there ever was a letter from the *menalamba* to Rainandriamampandry. None was ever produced; in fact the version of events

[61] DAOM Mad. 6 (2) D 3: Rainimafana to Ramasoandromahamay (Rabozaka), 16 *Adimizana* 1896.

[62] On the circumstances surrounding the reception of the letter see SHA, Mad. NF 8/3/15: Ramahatra to secrétaire-général, 19 March 1896; H. Berthier, 'Le protectorat', 128; Berthier papers, Académie des Sciences d'Outre-mer, Paris: Ramahatra to Rasanjy, 19 March 1896, and Ramahatra to Gallieni, 19 October 1896.

finalized in official records after the end of the rising was that Rainandriamanpandry had solicited Rabezavana, and not *vice versa*. And yet Ramahatra's revelation that he had received a letter from the *menalamba*, and his assertion that Rainandriamampandry had done as well, had a sensational effect in Tananarive. As we have seen, this story was to be the mainstay of the case against Rainandriamampandry at his trial. The whole idea of this letter seems to have been invented by Ramahatra, perhaps with Rasanjy's help, as a means of casting doubt upon an opponent.[63] Perhaps we may even guess that it was repayment in kind for the court party's earlier tactic of the Ambohimanga letter.

There were thus two powerful interests which sought to inflate the rumours of a conspiracy and which eventually were to settle upon Rainandriamampandry as their scapegoat. One was the French army and some of the civilian population. The other was constituted by the Merina factions in the capital, each straining to discredit the opposition by tarring it with the brush of disloyalty. But from March 1896 onwards, French troops operating against the *menalamba* in the countryside constantly reported that the insurgents themselves claimed to have high-level support. The name most often quoted was that of the queen herself, although most French officers were willing to concede that her name was used as a means of claiming leadership among the rebel bands. This only increased the suspicion that someone was behind the rising. Sometimes letters were found bearing the names of the queen or of Ramahatra but which were evidently not signed by them personally.[64] Very rarely was there any remark as to precisely how or why the magnates might be involved with the *menalamba*.

There were several aspects of the rising which tended to point towards a central organization. Although none of the *menalamba* was of really high rank in the old hierarchy, it was nonetheless obvious that the insurgents were quite well organized. Secondly, the rising had broken out in full intensity at the same moment in both the north and the south. Finally there was the evidence of prisoners who spoke of having allies in Tananarive.

To illustrate the problems involved we may cite the example of a letter found on 8 April 1896 which is one of the very few pieces of concrete evidence to suggest how the rising might have been organized and which at the same time illustrates so many of the processes at work in the formulation of the theory of a conspiracy. The letter was undated and anonymous but was addressed to the Malagasy governor of the village where it was discovered in the house of a local pastor. The text is as follows:[65]

> Look out for and examine the deeds of the people. And if you discover that many people unite and that there is a command for an attack of all the provinces of Imerina and the coast, let us know. And if the province of Sisaony makes this agreement, it need not fear the fate of Ambodirano.[66]

[63] The evidence of the messenger who carried the letter to Ramahatra also throws doubt on the existence of any similar letter from Rabezavana to Rainandriamampandry. 'Déclaration du messager qui a porté la lettre au Prince Ramahatra...', March 1896, SHA, Mad. NF 8/3/15.

[64] For example, SHA, Mad. NF 8/3/29: Captain Staup to Voyron, 7 April 1896.

[65] DAOM Mad. 2 Z 361: Colonel Oudri to Voyron, 8 April 1896, and 'Rapport du Général Oudri', 8 May 1896. The translation from the Malagasy is mine.

[66] Ambodirano was the scene of an unsuccessful rising in November 1895.

Colonel Oudri, who discovered the letter, concluded that it provided evidence that the rising had been planned for some time and must be known to some of the Merina officials in Tananarive.[67] Upon his return to Paris, Oudri, now promoted to the rank of general, told the minister of war that the letter he had found proved that 'le mouvement insurrectionnel devait éclater sur un ordre venu de la capitale', and that among the enemies of the French were British missionaries and some of the Merina élite. The most likely candidates for the post of ringleader were, he thought, Rasanjy and Rainandriamampandry.[68] Like many others, Oudri could not believe that the country people of Madagascar were capable of organizing a rising without leadership from high places.

Similar reports of a connexion with the court are so persistent that it is evident that many of the insurgents really believed that their anti-European rising had the support of the queen and some of her principal officers. Even some of those Europeans best acquainted with Madagascar and who were at first sceptical of the conspiracy began to think that there might be something in the notion. Dr Besson, an old Madagascar hand, wrote that the Merina élite 'n'ont aucune espèce d'influence sur les rebelles et leurs chefs' but admitted that he was very puzzled.[69] Only after the execution of Rainandriamampandry did he change his official attitude and maintain that the whole rising had been plotted by the former minister from the beginning.[70] In private he lamented to the end of his days the destruction of a protectorate based on the Merina monarchy.[71] Some Norwegian missionaries believed that 'des gens haut placés dirigent', and even one or two members of the London Missionary Society had their suspicions.[72]

Some of these assertions can be checked against the letters written by the *menalamba* to each other and captured after their surrender. There are still in existence several hundred letters written in various *menalamba* camps between the beginning of 1896 and mid-1897. There can be no doubt of the authenticity of the vast majority of them. Several are in the handwriting of Rabezavana, and many are stamped with the seals which the rebels used to distinguish 'official' letters.[73] The queen is frequently mentioned as the source of the revolt, but in a figurative sense. One letter declares in a telling passage:[74]

[67] DAOM Mad. 2 Z 361: Oudri to Voyron, 8 April 1896.

[68] SHA, Mad. AF 26: Oudri to ministre de la guerre, 25 August 1896.

[69] Laroche papers: Besson to Laroche, 4 and 12 June 1896, quoted in part in R. Pascal, 'Les rapports de quinzaine', pt. 1, *Bull. de Madag.* CCXLV (October 1966), 951, note 1.

[70] ANSOM MAD 215 (445): Besson to Gallieni, 24 November 1896, annexe no. 6 to Gallieni's report of 13 December 1896.

[71] Lyautey papers, a. cl. 35: Besson to Lyautey, 26 June 1903.

[72] DAOM Mad. 2 Z 386, 'Journal de la résidence de Betafo', entries for 4 and 8 June 1896; Laroche papers: Besson to Laroche, 4 June 1896. See also the extracts from the *Norsk Missionstidende* translated into French in enclosures with Hanotaux to Lebon, 31 July 1896, ANSOM MAD 348 (931).

[73] There are *menalamba* letters scattered in several archives in France and Madagascar, but the main collections are in DAOM Mad. 6 (2) D 3, and in the Archives de la République Malgache (ARM), Tananarive, series NN91. Both consist mostly of letters captured from Rabozaka towards the end of 1897.

[74] Laroche papers: Rafaralahimanavanana to Rainiketamanga and others, 19 *Asorotany* 1896 (French translation).

Voici ce que nous vous disons, Messieurs: nous avons reçu une lettre de la reine et du Prince Ratsitiavola, 15e honneur.

Nous vous donnons connaissance, que nous ne sommes pas des fahavalos [bandits]; la lettre actuelle est engagée par le gouvernement lui-même.

The *menalamba* had a horror of rebelling against legitimate authority, which would have been sacrilege, and they were therefore at great pains to point out that they were not rebels but patriots, because they had the leadership of the queen. They were also adapting for their letters the traditionally spoken form of discourse called a *kabary*, which always began with an appeal to various authorities. The *menalamba* therefore began many of their letters with a litany of names, including those of the queen and some of her courtiers. Sometimes the list even included the prime minister's name, although the incumbent of that office was generally agreed to be a French puppet and was only rarely accused of conspiracy.

The names of courtiers in Tananarive occur in a limited number of contexts. Most often they are in a litany of the type used in a *kabary*, especially when the *menalamba* issued a public proclamation.[75] They were used whenever a leader wanted to attribute military promotions to some of his followers, so that he could claim they had been brought from the queen.[76] They were most often used by certain leaders: by two who were of very low traditional status, Rainijirika and Ramenamaso,[77] and by Rafanenitra, the leading tactician among the *menalamba* generals, who would often say that a certain line of action had been ordered by the mysterious figures in Tananarive.[78] The latter, the mythical directors of the rising, always bore the names of Ratsitiavola (or sometimes Rainitsitiavola) and Ratiatanindrazana. Literally, the names mean respectively 'Mr Does-not-love-money' and 'Mr Patriot'. The pseudonyms, standing for any prince or great man patriotic enough to join the rising, continued in use long after the deaths of Rainandriamampandry and Ratsimamanga, which is further proof of their innocence. Indeed, their execution seemed to provoke little except contempt among the *menalamba*:[79]

Quand vous êtes arrivés, Faratay,[80] vous avez dit: la Reine reste Reine, le Premier Ministre reste Premier Ministre. Et voilà que vous avez tué ce dernier[81] ainsi que les officiers qui étaient à Tananarive et qui, pourtant, vous aimaient.

The names of 'Patriot' and 'Does-not-love-money' are hardly of a traditional type, although it is possible that Ratsitiavola refers to a famous

[75] For example, DAOM Mad. 6 (2) D 3: Ranjiva to Ramahamay (Rabozaka), 12 *Alahasaty* 1896.

[76] DAOM Mad. 2 Z 387: Alby to Laroche, 31 August 1896.

[77] On Rainijirika, Laroche papers: note by résident-inspecteur Pradon, 5 September 1896. On Ramenamaso, Savaron, *Mes souvenirs*, 216–17.

[78] For example, ARM NN91: Ralaifanenitra to Ramasoandromahamay (Rabozaka), 22 *Adizaoza* 1896.

[79] 'Proclamation d'un chef rebelle du Cercle d'Ambatomanga', no date, annexe no. 2 to Gallieni's report of 13 December 1896, ANSOM MAD 215 (445).

[80] There is a play on words between '*Farantsay*' ('French') and '*Fara-tay*' (literally, 'the last excrement'). The *menalamba* often used this insulting pun.

[81] It was a common belief among the rebels that the old prime minister, Rainilaiarivony, had been killed by the French. In fact he died of natural causes in exile in Algiers.

kabary pronounced by the great King Andrianampoinimerina.[82] In fact they bear a striking resemblance to the names of the people encountered by Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan's great allegory had been translated into Malagasy by British missionaries in the 1830s and had subsequently become so popular in Imerina as to gain almost the status of ancestral wisdom.[83] The pseudonyms of the *menalamba* show how deeply British nonconformist culture had penetrated even among the opponents of Christianity. They also give an insight into the sort of war which the *menalamba* thought they were fighting. Many of them accepted that Tananarive had only fallen to the French because it had been sold by a corrupt oligarchy. Those who collaborated with the invaders were told 'vous faites un idole de l'argent', because they preferred money to justice.[84]

Ratsitiavola and Ratiatanindrazana were no more real people than was the King Ludd of the English machine-breakers. The names were nevertheless important for the *menalamba* in that they enabled them to use in their service traditional authority and the whole panoply of an ancient culture.[85] It was the strength of this tradition, and the real sense of nationality of many Malagasy, including some non-Merina, which enabled the *menalamba* to achieve that degree of co-ordination which baffled Europeans. And although the queen was real enough, her title was used quite without her consent. Furthermore it was neither the first nor the last time that such a thing was to happen. Dissident groups had likewise claimed to be acting in the name of the sovereign in 1863[86] and 1877.[87] A similar phenomenon was to occur in 1947, when Malagasy insurgents claimed to be acting for their deputies in the French chamber.[88] It is most unlikely that any of the *menalamba* leaders believed that there was anyone in the court or the government who was on their side, although to judge from the frequency with which captured *menalamba* told the French that they had support in high places it seems that many of the rank-and-file really did believe it. This was partly wishful thinking, since their whole philosophy required them to believe that the queen must in some sense be on their side. They also appear to have thought that

[82] Cf. G. S. Chapus and E. Ratsimba, *Histoire des Rois* (4 vols., Paris, 1953–8), IV, 345. This is the French translation of Père Callet's *Tantaran' ny Andriana*. I am grateful to Françoise Raison for supplying this reference and also for drawing my attention to the influence of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

[83] W. Ellis, *The Martyr Church: a Narrative of the Introduction, Progress and Triumph of Christianity in Madagascar* (London, 1870), p. 107.

[84] DAOM Mad. 6 (4) D 16, 'dossier Peill': proclamation by Rabezavana, 12 November 1896.

[85] There is a fine discussion of the Merina concept of political authority in A. Delivré, *L'histoire des rois d'Imerina* (Paris, 1974), 139–74.

[86] F. Raison, 'Les ramanenjana', *Asie du sud-est et le monde insulindien*, VII, ii–iii (1976), 271–93. R. Delval, *Radama II, prince de la renaissance malgache* (Paris, 1972), 732–918, provides evidence that Radama II really did lead the insurgents of 1863. Madame Raison's view is the more convincing because the rebels of 1863, like those of 1896 and 1947, probably needed to believe that their movement was supported by a legitimate authority.

[87] DAOM Mad. 2 Z 105, *kabary* of Queen Ranavalona II, June 1877 (French translation). 'Je sais que les fauteurs de troubles mettent mon nom en avant pour entraîner les gens à leur suite. Ils mentent; ce sont des ennemis de moi et du royaume eux et ceux qui les écoutent; ils seront punis comme rebelles.'

[88] J. Tronchon, *L'insurrection malgache de 1947* (Paris, 1974), 82–118.

the queen's will could be expressed independently of her person. The true royal will, conforming to the wishes of the past kings of Imerina, was expressed by their leaders, who thus played a part akin to that of a spirit medium.

The *menalamba* in the countryside undoubtedly did have some contacts in Tananarive. There is specific mention in a couple of letters of the need to take a message to someone in the capital.[89] Among the Lyautey papers there exists a letter from the ubiquitous Ratiatanindrazana informing Rabezavana that there are many in Tananarive who are awaiting his arrival. There is no indication of the identity of the author,[90] although some Frenchmen were to claim later that Ratiatanindrazna was the pen-name of Rainandriamampandry.[91] It remains possible, at any rate in theory, that there was someone in a high position in the capital who sympathized with the rebels.

But that is a far cry from saying that the rising was directed from Tananarive, still less that the leaders were Rainandriamampandry and Ratsimamanga. The *menalamba* had a strong contempt for the corrupt politics of the capital, to the extent that a fair number of high-ranking Merina officials were killed by the insurgents.[92] It would be tedious to refute one by one the accusations made against individual magnates, but some of the names quoted as possible conspirators were of people who could have expected little mercy if they had fallen into the hands of the rebels. There were certainly those who used the rising for their own ends, but there was no need to communicate with the real *menalamba* to do that, as Rasanjy showed.

The *menalamba* did include in their number some people who had been fairly highly placed in the old royal administration.[93] But it is very significant that none of these individuals normally lived in Tananarive and none was caught up in the intrigue and corruption of the court. Nor do any of the rebels appear to have been very rich. Lists of goods confiscated from *menalamba* chiefs reveal nothing to match, for example, Rainandriamampandry's fortune of 300,000 francs.[94]

It is clear that the two men cited by Gallieni as the real leaders of the rising of the *menalamba* were not guilty, and indeed that the role of the old oligarchy

[89] DAOM Mad. 6 (2) D 3: Ramialanenina to Ramasoandromahamay (Rabozaka), 10 *Adimizana* 1896; ARM NN91: Ralaifanenitra to Ramasoandromahamay (Rabozaka), 8 *Asorotany* 1896.

[90] Lyautey papers, a. cl. 445: 'Patriote 16e honneur' to Rabezavana, 18 July 1896 (French translation). Added doubt is attached to the authorship of the letter by the pencilled notes in the margin. By the signature an unknown hand (Lyautey?) has written 'Randriamampandry' [*sic*]. In the margin is written 'lettre de Randriamampandry – est-ce copie ou de mémoire?'.

[91] Notably Gautier, *Trois Héros*, 132–3.

[92] There is an incomplete list of such casualties in Laroche to Lebon, 10 July 1896, printed in Pascal, pt. IV, p. 89, note 1.

[93] For some examples, see 'Notice concernant la région d'Andriamena', no date, DAOM Mad. 6 (9) D 27; archives of the London Missionary Society (LMS), London, Madagascar incoming letters 26/2/A: Sibree to Thompson, 22 April 1896; DAOM Mad. 6 (2) D 3: Rainimafana and others to Ramasoandromahamay (Rabozaka), 19 *Asombola* 1896.

[94] Decree of Ranavalona III, 22 August 1896, DAOM Mad. 6 (10) D 1. On Rainandriamampandry's wealth, 'Exécution du Ministre de l'Intérieur et du Prince Ratsimamanga', Laroche papers.

in the rising was virtually nil. The significance of these findings goes far beyond proving that Rainandriamampandry and Ratsimamanga were morally and legally innocent of the charges against them. The case of Rainandriamampandry – like that of his contemporary, Dreyfus[95] – is much more than a question of individual innocence. It was a point which divided opinion among all the Europeans in Madagascar and stood for a multitude of other issues. Gallieni's ruthlessness was successful in its aim of attracting support among the French community, but it had several unexpected consequences. It strengthened the suspicion already held by many Frenchmen that the revolt was in some way supported by the protestant churches and by Britain. It is true that even under Laroche's administration the attitude of some Malagasy churchmen had been ambiguous, but by and large they were more inclined to collaborate with France than with the *menalamba*.[96] The executions helped to drive protestants and rebels together. Closely connected with this was the belief that Britain, the home of so many protestant missionaries, would intervene to help the Malagasy. As early as August 1896 a captured Englishman had been told by the *menalamba* that 'la reine a donné l'ordre aux chefs de l'insurrection de respecter les Anglais'.[97] The myth of British intervention was encouraged by the execution of Rainandriamampandry, a leading anglophile and protestant. The rumour reappeared after the Fashoda crisis, in 1898 and 1899, and never really disappeared.[98] It emerged once more in 1942 after the Allied landings in Madagascar.[99]

The policy of which the executions were a central part also helped to set off a vicious religious war in the villages of central Madagascar throughout 1897 and 1898. Much of the struggle between collaborators and resisters became channelled into bitter confessional disputes which were battles for the control of individual villages.[100] These disputes were all the more fierce because the fate for a protestant who was out-manoeuvred was often to be denounced as a rebel and shot.[101] None of this was intended by Gallieni.[102] It was a side-effect of a *politique des races* which was never to succeed in its central aim of restricting the influence of the Merina, and especially the Merina of the old oligarchy.[103]

[95] The comparison with the Dreyfus affair is an interesting one. The issues at stake between pro-and anti-military factions were similar in both cases. Laroche in chapter XV of his unpublished memoirs makes specific allusion to Dreyfus. It is ironic that one of the original charges against Dreyfus was that he had sold plans for the organization of the Madagascar expedition of 1894–5!

[96] T. T. Matthews (trans.), 'Among the *Fahavalo*: perils and adventures of a prisoner for fourteen months in the rebel camp', *Antananarivo Annual*, VI (1897), 80–93.

[97] Berthier papers: Penel to Laroche, 3–4 August 1896.

[98] DAOM Mad. 6 (4) D 52: Besson to Gallieni, 10 February 1899.

[99] Tronchon, *L'insurrection malgache*, p. 24.

[100] The main protestant archives relating to the religious troubles are the LMS (London) and the Société des Missions Evangéliques (Paris). See also DAOM 6 (4) D 50–1. The Jesuit archives, which represent the catholic view, are surprisingly thin for this period.

[101] Matthews, *Thirty Years*, 324.

[102] Le Myre de Vilers papers, dossier 29: Gallieni to Le Myre de Vilers, *passim*.

[103] Cf. G. Fenard, *Les indigènes fonctionnaires à Madagascar* (Paris, 1939), 239–40; H. Deschamps, *Les migrations intérieures à Madagascar* (Paris, 1959), 90; R. Archer, *Madagascar depuis 1972* (Paris, 1976), *passim*.

The false history of the *menalamba* was written in official histories and guilty memoirs and thence passed into history books. It helped to make the reputation of Rainandriamampandry as a nationalist hero and a protestant martyr, which is how he is remembered today in Madagascar.

RÉSUMÉ

Pendant le dix-neuvième siècle, Madagascar vint à être dominé par le royaume intérieur d'Imerina. Une élite occidentalisée le gouvernait; celle-ci comprenait surtout des convertis chrétiens et semblait offrir la promesse de moderniser elle-même tout Madagascar, comme fût le Japon. Mais durant les dernières années du siècle, le royaume souffrit de graves désordres internes qui favorisèrent l'établissement en 1895 d'un protectorat administré par la France.

Quelques mois après l'imposition du protectorat, un mouvement de résistance redoutable s'éleva, connu sous le nom de la révolte des *menalamba*. Le mouvement se répandit rapidement et était suffisamment organisé pour menacer l'influence française à Tananarive en 1896. Le soulèvement provoqua de profondes dissensions au sein de l'administration française et dont le point culminant fut le renvoi du Résident-Général Laroche, remplacé par le régime militaire du Général Gallieni.

Ce sont surtout les allégations que l'insurrection avait été organisée secrètement par des membres du gouvernement merina placé sous la tutelle française, qui perdirent Laroche. Gallieni soutint ces allégations et, par conséquent, exécuta ou exila certains dirigeants du gouvernement et abolit la monarchie sous prétexte que l'élite merina avait été responsable du soulèvement. L'explication de Gallieni est passée dans l'histoire comme l'explication habituelle de l'émeute, bien qu'elle ne fût pas sans antagonistes contemporaines.

Des témoignages nouvellement découverts montrent que l'histoire d'une conspiration par l'élite à Tananarive fût délibérément fomentée afin de soutenir une politique radicale visant à détruire l'oligarchie merina. Cette fausse information a depuis obscurci à la fois la vraie nature du mouvement des *menalamba* et l'histoire de la politique française dans les premières années de l'occupation de Madagascar.

La falsification a soutenu la mythologie à la fois coloniale et nationaliste. La description de cette invention a une portée considérable pour l'histoire de Madagascar et pour celle de l'impérialisme français.