Abstract

This thesis is about the Tsimahafotsy Merina of Ambohimanga, Madagascar, and the relationship between their collective concept of cultural identity and the cultural landscape in which they live.

The Tsimahafotsy, once the dominant cultural group on the island have, over the last century, lost their political and social dominance, yet they remain united in a position of perceived privilege and power, a situation which inspired my thesis question: How did the Tsimahafotsy Merina build and maintain such a distinct, coherent and enduring sense of cultural identity in spite of significant and prolonged forces of change?

I argue that the Tsimahafotsy have built and maintained their position as a result of a shared concept of socio-cosmic order in which they hold a dominant position, with their ancestors and tradition serving as a mediating mechanism to excessive change. Although the Tsimahafotsy appear to have undergone significant political, economic, social and cultural transformations from the early phases of their history to the present, evolution has in fact been conservative and additive, and the fundamental *imago mundi* upon which the Tsimahafotsy's collective identity is based has therefore remained consistently intact.

I attempt to demonstrate that the cultural landscape of Ambohimanga has played a significant part in creating and maintaining this "ideal" socio-cosmic order over time, through its role as a powerful communication system. The order has been explicitly and symbolically mapped onto Ambohimanga's cultural landscape (an integral part of the Tsimahafotsy's everyday and ritual lives) as it slowly and additively evolved from the early phases of Tsimahafotsy history to the present. As with their political, economic, social and cultural world, the forces of change that the Tsimahafotsy have encountered have exerted influence over Ambohimanga's cultural landscape, but this has been largely surface change. When we peel back the layers by considering archeological and anthropological sources together (a method I call "archaeological anthropology"), a fundamental continuity of meaning for those initiated into this powerful visual language is revealed.

Thus, as a result of their conservative approach to change, the visual vocabulary of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape has remained comprehensible to the Tsimahafotsy, and its meaning consistent – thereby playing a significant role in the Tsimahafotsy's rise to a position of domination in Imerina and Madagascar, and maintaining their collective image of themselves as privileged and powerful despite current political and economic realities.

“Change is inherent in human life: but this fact should not lead us into those strands of recent thought which say that change is so endemic and formless that we can say little about it” (Gosden 1994:166)

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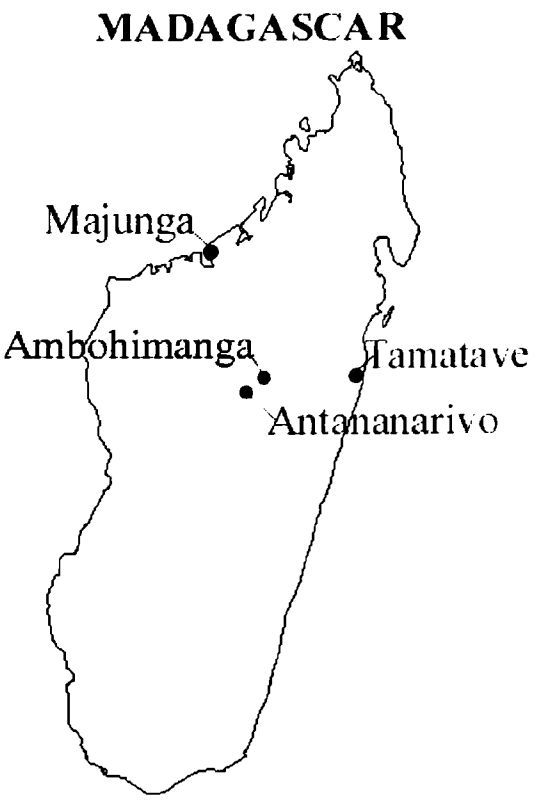
Introduction



This thesis is about the Tsimahafotsy Merina, a cultural group living in Ambohimanga, a hilltop town located in the central highlands of Madagascar, the world's fourth largest island and only Afro-Asian country. In my dissertation, I explore the Tsimahafotsy's rise to a position of domination over other Merina and Malagasy groups, the maintenance of that position of perceived privilege over time, and the role the "cultural landscape" [1] has played in the process of collective cultural identity formation.

During my 1997 fieldwork, one of the first questions I asked fifty residents of Ambohimanga was: "What is your nationality?" No one responded that they were "Malagasy" (the common name for all human groups in Madagascar), even though the question was loaded in that direction; four individuals responded that they were "Merina" (the ethnic group which has historically dominated the central highlands of Madagascar); and the majority (forty-six people) further differentiated themselves by stating that they were "Tsimahafotsy," the exclusive local cultural group with ancestral land in Ambohimanga, traditionally considered the highest ranking of the Merina. During the semi-structured interviews, many informants went on to stress that they were different from other Malagasy groups not indigenous to the central highlands, especially the coastal populations. This implied that the Merina in Ambohimanga harbour a strong sense of cultural identity, if not superiority, quite separate from their assigned "nationality." It is interesting that not one of the fifty individuals I interviewed conceived that they were a part of a single pan-Malagasy entity. This suggests that the "Malagasy nation," ascribing unity to the diversity of Madagascar's eighteen officially-recognised ethnic groups, is a politically constructed and imagined one. In reality, there remains significant ethnic and cultural differentiation in Madagascar that I feel is essential to acknowledge and understand if one wishes to accurately comprehend the modern cultural dynamic.

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1 The cultural landscape consists of all culturally significant objects in the natural and built environment. The first reference to a "cultural landscape" in the literature was made by Sauer, in which he suggested that culture shapes the natural landscape to produce a "cultural landscape." "The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result" (Sauer 1963:343, cited in Hirsch & O'Hanlon 1995:9). Similarly, although she does not mention the cultural landscape specifically, Bender noted that "landscapes are created by people - through their experience and engagement with the world around them" (Bender 1993:1). Tilley has also defined landscape as "part of a process in which the natural becomes encultured and the cultural becomes naturalised" (Tilley 1993:55). Likewise, as Rossler recognised, the cultural landscape refers to "the complex relationships between man and nature in the construction, formation and evolution of landscapes" (Rossler (1993), cited in Posey (1996)). Posey has subsequently defined cultural landscapes as joint cultural and natural heritage sites (Posey 1996).

This is especially true in the case of the Tsimahafotsy, who have historically held a position of domination and power in Madagascar; the group responsible for "unifying" warring factions of Hova into an aggregate group (Merina) and then expanding their borders to encompass approximately two-thirds of Madagascar. It is compelling that despite centuries of foreign influence in the central highlands, during which time the Tsimahafotsy largely lost political control over the rest of the island, their collective identity remains strong, and the Tsimahafotsy's perception of themselves as united and somewhat "superior" perseveres. This paradox led me to my thesis question:

How did the Tsimahafotsy Merina build and maintain such a distinct, coherent and enduring sense of cultural identity in spite of significant and prolonged forces of change?

Focusing on the people and place of Ambohimanga, the "cradle" of Merina civilisation, I argue and endeavour to demonstrate that identity is closely bound up with both history - the group's approach to change and continuity - and place - the cultural landscape in which the group lives. Further, I attempt to show that this cultural landscape, that plays an active role in identity formation, can be used as a tool with which to unlock cultural understanding.

It is my aim that this thesis will contribute to our knowledge and understanding of cultural identity formation and maintenance, through the Tsimahafotsy Merina example at Ambohimanga. First, the study suggests a new way of looking at history and identity, cognisant of a culture's underlying cosmological foundations and subsequent approach to change and continuity. Second, it provides new information about Merina history and Ambohimanga's cultural landscape, which is achieved by combining archival resources with archaeological evidence never brought together before, through contemporary fieldwork never previously undertaken in Ambohimanga, and through the first comprehensive mapping of Ambohimanga's natural and cultural heritage (Appendix A and B). Third, it promotes a new model for analysing data through the combination of diverse sources, including the cultural landscape, which I argue serves as a communication system, playing an active role in personal and cultural development, and is thus a primary source. As a result of the above, I hope that this thesis contributes to a more complete understanding of the complex site of Ambohimanga and its role in shaping and maintaining the Tsimahafotsy Merina's remarkably unified and tenacious concept of cultural identity. Further, I trust this holistic approach can be applied to comprehending the mystery of other cultural groups that have maintained a strong collective identity despite exposure to often extreme and prolonged forces of change.

Chapter One: Change, Cultural Identity, and Landscape

What is Cultural Identity?

In order for a deep, comprehensive collective identity to exist for a cultural group, a unified world-view is generally necessary. However, it is essential to note that this *imago mundi*, while fundamentally stable, is an organic concept, evolving in response to external influences. In his introduction to Locality and Belonging, David Parkin posed an important question: "Is anthropology sometimes unrealistic in cross-culturally comparing practices and concepts of belonging and locality among peoples but treating them as unmenaced by outsiders?" (Parkin 1998:xiii). I believe the answer is an emphatic yes! No culture is isolated and static, all have been (and continue to be) influenced by external forces. How the cultural group manages these influences, however, is what serves to create and maintain their collective self-image. Thus, as Tilley has suggested, "an essence of ethnicity" cannot be conceived in terms of a stable body of beliefs, practices, routines, traditions, rituals, or style horizons of material culture. Rather, a cultural essence of ethnicity is to be found in "continual creativity, diffusion and change in which it is often the combination of different elements drawn from outside the ethnic group and combined and reinvented inside it in new forms, that creates cultural distinctiveness" (Tilley 1999:259). Therefore, in order to understand a society's conception of cultural identity, it is essential to explore the group's historical response to change and continuity.

Building and Maintaining a Culture's Basic Structure - Forces of Change and Adaptation

In doing so, we must first seek to discover the group's cosmological foundations. It is a fundamental characteristic for human beings to create order for themselves. This basic structure (or "cultural *habitus*") tends to be built around a series of oppositions, as recognised by the structuralist school, pioneered by Claude Levi-Strauss.[2] Most often this is achieved by contrasting a state of chaos and that of order, represented by the natural and cultural worlds, respectively. As Hodder remarked, desire for a cultural order arises in basic fears and needs for protection from natural forces. "The culture/nature duality is the very stuff of all human society" (Hodder 1990:30). Following this fundamental division each culture, over time, builds its own structure of relevant oppositions, such as male:female; clean:unclean; insider:outsider; sacred:profane; which creates their unique social and ideological systems, organising their socio-cosmic lives.

However, this process does not occur in an hermetic unchanging environment. Following Sahlins, I conceive of culture as an open or adaptive system, entering into relation with external forces, nature and, except for completely isolated societies, other cultures (Sahlins 1960:47). It is the group's relationship with cultures external to it that is my focus. Foreign cultures bring ideas, things and technology, which in most cases must

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2 Claude Levi-Strauss searched for deep innate structures of a psychobiological nature universal to all human beings. This he determined to consist of binary oppositions. Tilley, however, felt that because people and environment are compounded, it is unhelpful to think in terms of a binary nature/culture distinction (Tilley 1994:23). While I agree with Tilley that people and environment are constitutive components of the same world, I think it can be constructive to conceive of it in terms of complimentary oppositions. While this approach may be considered reductionist and limiting if taken too far, it is a useful framework in which to understand the way people organise and see their world.

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Change, Continuity and Cultural Identity

as Traced Through the People and Place of Ambohimanga, Madagascar



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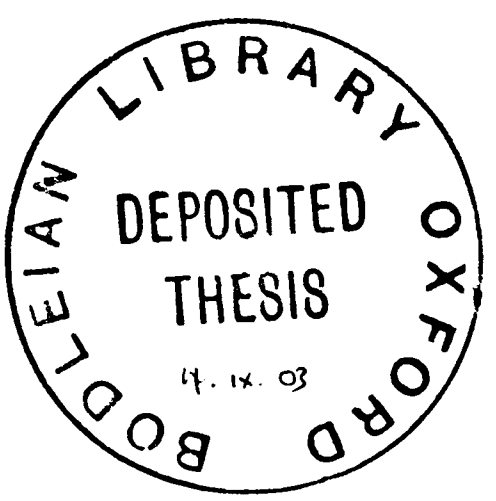

be processed by the recipient culture, thereby making them their own. Sahlins noted that the adaptive process has two characteristic aspects: creative and conservative. On one hand there is the evolution of specialised structures and patterns that enable a culture or a population of organisms to achieve a requisite measure of adjustment to its environmental setting. In this process, there is a tendency toward stabilisation, the conservation of the adaptive structures and modes that have been achieved (Sahlins 1960:45). It is now generally accepted and emphasised that no living culture is static; all are dynamic, and thus in process of continuous change. However, Sahlins has questioned why such an obvious principle - "quite irrelevant for the understanding of cultural change" - is stated so frequently, while more important ones, such as stability, are neglected (Sahlins 1960:63). Thus, Sahlins argued that under the influence of external factors, cultures act to maintain their basic structure through conservative adaptation or "additive change".

Sahlins illustrated the role of social and ideological systems (which are based upon the culture's cosmological foundations) in resisting or actively inhibiting changes that would disrupt or modify the existing culture. Both can be inherently conservative, deriving their authority and sanction from conditions of the past. From this tendency toward stability, Sahlins formulated a general principle, the "principle of stabilisation": When acted upon by external forces a culture will, if necessary, undergo specific changes only to the extent of, and with the effect of, preserving its fundamental structure and character (Sahlins 1960:54). A culture might "change just enough so that they would not have to change" (ibid:56). Sahlins asserted that the persistent tendency toward stability is characteristic of all cultural systems. Thus, he argued that change consists of creative adaptations, innovative alterations or additions to a culture. But, because of their stabilizing functions, such features have a conservative, anti-progressive character in the sense of "general progress" (ibid:57). Sahlins expanded on and refined his theories on history and change in his later work from 1985, Islands of History, which provided the theoretical basis for Anahulu: the Anthropology of History in the Kingdom of Hawaii. Based on Sahlins' model, I argue that cultural identity is built and maintained by incorporating new forms and ideas on top of those already established: adding, manipulating and copying, versus replacing, destroying and inventing. The system is self-regulating in that when excessive change is introduced, there is popular resistance, often incorporating the established social or ideological paradigm that is under threat, in an effort to maintain the ways of one's ancestors.

Thus, social and ideological systems become the primary means of defence against change. For instance, Sahlins cites the example of the Native American Potlatch ceremony on the northwest coast of the United States and Canada. In the face of encroaching capitalist culture this practice became the primary instrument for preserving a way of life, which maintained great disparity in social status for the sake of equality in wealth (Sahlins 1960:66). This defence against change is also illustrated, in many cases, by mass movements in which a supernaturalistic ideology is utilised in organising a social movement of resistance to the encroachments of a dominant, more powerful culture (e.g. mass scenes of possession by disgruntled ancestors or deities in the face of Christianity). While significant elements of change are incorporated on the surface, the fundamental ideology the society is based upon is kept alive, often under ground.

To summarise: because of their systemic nature, cultures tend toward stability and self-maintenance, and under the influence of external pressures frequently develop special features for preserving their basic structures and orientations. This is accomplished through the process of "additive change" (Sahlins 1960:68). The system will accommodate certain changes from the outside but only so long as its fundamental structure is not jeopardised by them. If it is, popular resistance occurs in an attempt to return to established norms. This is the underlying basis of what anthropologists have often called the natural "conservation of culture" (Sahlins 1960:87), a concept which I believe is responsible for building and maintaining cultural identity by sustaining fundamental continuity in spite of significant and prolonged forces of foreign influence.

The Objectification of Social and Ideological Systems in the Cultural Landscape

How does this system function? I argue that a society's cosmological foundations and the ideological and social systems that have built up by "additive change" on top of them, are objectified in the cultural landscape in which the group lives. The landscape, in turn, serves as a communication system, so that people and place are bound in a mutually reflexive relationship of meaning-creation. Since social and ideological systems are assimilated into a people's collective psyche by being objectified in symbolism and made manifest in the cultural landscape in which the society belongs, their significance is often implicit, not explicit; conceptualised only by the initiated.[3] Through unconscious and conscious action involving features of the cultural landscape, continuity of meaning is preserved. Ties to tradition, the ancestors and ancestral practices often play a significant role in the process. Thus, material forms in the cultural landscape can act as a communication system, functioning to connect the past with the present and direct the future, thereby creating a strong dynamic sense of cultural identity, through continuity.

This exemplifies the concept of "objectification," referred to by Miller (1987) as a process of externalisation and sublation, where systems are made manifest in symbolism and then reabsorbed into the collective psyche of the group. This process, he argued, is essential to the development of a given subject. He focused on the material object, such as those features that comprise the cultural landscape, as a medium for objectification. Other anthropologists have also recognised the significance of objectification. Munn, for example, has argued that the process of objectification is essential to the creation and reproduction of a group (Munn 1973:58). Gosden has also asserted that objectification is a necessary part of any society (Gosden 1994:71). Likewise, Tilley has suggested that persons require things to make and transform themselves: "This objectification of culture is as essential to its understanding as its phenomenological verbal description.....Just as persons make things, things make persons" (Tilley 1999:262).

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3 Taking his lead from Durkheim and Mauss, Levi-Strauss saw in space the opportunity to "study social and mental processes through objective and crystallised external projections of them" (Levi-Strauss 1963) . He argued that "each manufactured object, even the most utilitarian, is a kind of crystallisation (condensation) of symbols accessible not only to the maker but to all the users," (cited in Layton 1981:107).

Gosden has also proposed that there is a mutual making of people and things. He has intimated that people create time and space (their cultural world or *habitus*) through their actions in the cultural landscape (Gosden 1994:35).[4] These actions can be conscious, but are largely unconscious. While the cultural landscape can be manipulated to serve certain ends deliberately, most agree that the notion of a society's cultural world arises from habitual practice. Thus, habitus is not consciously mastered, but is built up from experience. "*Habitus* represents the sedimentation of past practice in the human organism so that it unconsciously guides [the future]....*Habitus* is a link between past and future which is unconsciously transmitted" (ibid:117). Bourdieu suggested that "the principles embodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation; they cannot even be made explicit" (Bourdieu 1977:93, 94). In fact, conscious thought and its product are constantly becoming part of the group's unconscious social being. People tend to act in accordance with established norms, often choosing the "ways of their ancestors" over those that are introduced externally. "Our lives are thus a mixture of the unconscious and habitual, and the conscious, each of which draws on the past in its own way" (ibid:188). As a result, a unique cultural landscape and cultural identity is created because, as Tilley maintained, personal and cultural identity is bound up with place.

Whether conscious or unconscious, the repeated actions which may have been (and are) carried out with forms of material culture in the cultural landscape, symbolising the respective social and/or ideological systems, help deal with the dynamism of a situation in which external foreign influence (e.g. colonialisation) has threatened indigenous world order. With this situation "past, present and future meet in complex forms, such that the present is only given meaning through retaining elements of the past and anticipating the future" (Tilley 1994:20). Space therefore becomes value-laden, and a sense of attachment to a place is frequently derived from the stability of meanings associated with it.

Thus, the cultural landscape, as material culture, takes on an active role in personal and cultural identity formation and maintenance. As Nadia Lovell correctly points out, "belonging to a place is viewed as instrumental in creating collective identity" (Lovell 1998: 4). From the perspective of structuration theory, Giddens has emphasised the role of locales in processes of social production and reproduction (Giddens 1979, 1981, 1984, cited in Tilley 1994:19). Gosden has pointed out that material culture, its forms and functions, can be so enduring that they show up well on the time scales over which archaeological evidence is created. For example, Stonehenge presents "an appearance of massive continuity...against a background of drastic change" (Bradley 1991:217, cited in Gosden 1994:124). Gosden went on to suggest that deliberate reference to the past through the monument is seen as a means of creating stability in an otherwise volatile

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4 Gosden has promoted the "active nature of the material world, based around the creation of time and space through social and material relations. The material world is part of us and not an external environment in which we move and act; it is part of our social force" (Gosden 1994:76). He used Dorset Cursus as an example to show that spaces were not simply an external medium in which people acted; rather, the social geography of the monuments became part of what people were (ibid: 99).

social world. He termed this process "dynamic traditionalism," where material culture creates traditions within an otherwise dynamic framework (Gosden 1999:31).

Morphy also considered the role of landscape as mediating between present experience (i.e. foreign influence) and the ancestral past in his analysis of Yolngu society in Central Australia (Morphy 1995:205). Like Gosden, he suggested that objectified symbols are constitutive as part of cultural process. "The process allows for multiple determinacy, for co-evolution, and for a complex and at times potentially chaotic relationship between structure and action, social reproduction and transformation" (ibid:206). Morphy argued the attachment of people to place through the mediating process of the ancestral past is part of the core structure of Aboriginal society (Morphy 1990). He went on to suggest that interaction with the landscape is part of the process whereby the cultural structure of Aboriginal society is reproduced, in spite of the forces of change it is exposed to (Morphy 1995:187). Thus, the past may appear distant and radically different from the present, but there is material and manifest continuity between the present and that past which, I argue, can be traced through the cultural landscape, itself comprised of material culture.

The Role of Action and Perception

From these examples we can see that space is a medium rather than a container for action, something that is involved in action and cannot be divorced from it. As Tilley remarked, "a landscape has ontological import because it is lived in and through, mediated, worked on and altered, replete with cultural meaning and symbolism - and not just something looked at or thought about, an object merely for contemplation, depiction, representation and aestheticization" (Tilley 1994:26). It is also important to recognise that space is socially produced, and different societies, groups and individuals act out their lives in different spaces. Space in itself is not a meaningful term; what space *is* depends on who is experiencing it and how. Thus, a cultural group who live in a particular landscape will have a particular "way of seeing." The place acts dialectically so as to create the people who are of that place. These qualities of locales and landscapes give rise to a feeling of belonging, rootedness, and familiarity. Thus, the cultural landscape can serve as a medium of objectification, acting to create and reinforce a group's unique cultural identity, through recursiveness.[5]

The Cultural Landscape as a Lens

Because the cultural landscape plays such an active role as a communication system, a microcosmos reflecting the macrocosmos, I argue that it can be used by anthropologists as an effective tool with which to unlock cultural understanding. Landscape, as a concept for analysis, entered into the fields of anthropology relatively recently. Tilley recognised that there is a dearth of anthropological literature concerned with its significance (Tilley 1994:35). Hirsch also noted that landscape has received little overt treatment in this field,

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5 Gosden has stressed that all life operates through recursiveness, which is to say that we make use of the past to create present and future action. Thus, social, ideological and spatial forms are mutually constitutive. The world created by past generations becomes the arena for socialising future groups (Gosden 1994:24).

suggesting that landscape has only been significant in anthropological accounts in two related ways. First, it has been deployed as a framing convention, which informs the way the anthropologist brings his or her study into "view." Secondly, it has been used to refer to the meaning imputed by local people to their cultural and physical surroundings (Hirsch & O'Hanlon 1995:1). Recently, the literature has embraced how meaning is created in the landscape (notably Bender 1998) and its role in building and maintaining identity (Hirsch & O'Hanlon 1995; Lovell 1998), which is my focus.[6] Essentially, I believe that the analysis of the landscape can be used as a lens through which to discover a society's underlying cosmological foundations, the ideological and social systems based on these foundations that have evolved through time, and to trace the group's approach to change and acculturation. Since landscape serves to mediate between societies and the outside world (Sahlins and Kirch 1992:26), analysing it can serve to link the past, present and future in moving towards a more comprehensive understanding of a culture and their conception of identity.

Before any analysis can be undertaken, however, we must first learn the language of the cultural landscape in which the group under study lives. Botscharow has suggested that "an archaeological site is like a text in an unknown language...the actions of certain people have left their traces in the dirt, and these have become documents of human action. The task of the archaeologist is to recover these documents or texts and then to trace out or decipher and interpret them" (Botscharow 1989:50). Botscharow emphasised that there is no "right" way to read such a text, but that it must be attempted: "A misread text still has life, whereas an unread text is truly dead" (Botscharow 1989:54). Thus, in this thesis I set out to read and understand the cultural landscape of Ambohimanga as accurately as possible, and reveal the recursive role it has played in Tsimahafotsy Merina identity formation from early history to the present.

Reading and Understanding the Cultural Landscape

Forms and Functions

Seeing the landscape as a language that an anthropologist not indigenous to the culture can read and understand is a result of applying the techniques of Saussurian semiotics to anthropology. Saussurian semiotics has informed the contemporary analysis of a wide variety of cultural forms, including the cultural landscape. In the middle of the twentieth century it came to be recognised that ideas are often conveyed not by words but by things (see Morphy 1994:664). As a method of "reading things" Ferdinand de Saussure's ideas were utilised within anthropology by Levi-Strauss who applied the principles of semiotics to all areas of human culture though the concept of structuralism, in an attempt to determine their underlying structure and

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6 Bender has explored the complexity and power of landscape, suggesting that landscapes are created by people through their experience and engagement with the world around them (Bender 1998:1). Hirsch and O'Hanlon have also written about landscape as a cultural process, providing a framework for the cross-cultural comparative study of landscape, "a framework which has been lacking in both anthropology and in these related disciplines" (Hirsch & O'Hanlon 1995:6). Similarly, Lovell (1998) focused on concepts of landscape and identity, suggesting that belonging and locality are markers of identity, and considered the construction of collective memory surrounding place. She has argued that belonging to a place is viewed as instrumental in creating collective identities (Lovell 1998:4).

significance.[7] In this case the "signifier" came to be represented by the form of a physical object and the "signified" the function or meaning of that object.

The concept of the signified was later refined by Roland Barthes, who recognised that function could be denotational (literal or utilitarian) or connotational (metaphorical or symbolic), both functions being equally important for determining meaning (Olsen 1990). Invariably it was determined that artefacts are both functional *and* meaningful. Insofar as they are the first, they are of practical use, insofar as they are the second, they are of primarily social use, in that they become a means by which cultural identities are known and perpetuated. Thus, an object's "function" has two basic and different components: denoted "practical" function and connotated conceptual "ideological" function (Eco 1980a:25-40; Sanders 1990:59; Jencks 1980a:107-110), both of which must be considered when attempting to determine meaning.

Context

The structuralist approach, focusing on signifiers and signifieds, could be applied to the way anything, including the cultural landscape, could take on meaning. I agree with many contemporary anthropologists that the school's greatest strength was its aim to determine the underlying order of things, but its limitations have also been recognised. The structuralists realised that underlying order could not be accurately understood without considering cultural and spatial context. However, while they promoted the importance of *emic* perception, they did not account for the biases of *etic* or external perception. Also, structuralists relied mainly on a synchronic view of time, thus largely ignoring historic or temporal context. Post-structuralists, beginning in the 1980's, have addressed these limitations (see Hodder 1982), emphasising the importance of change, cultural subjectivity and historical context, when determining meaning. Thus, by combining the strengths of structuralism and post-structuralism, I propose a framework for determining meaning in the cultural landscape that considers form and function (signifiers and signifieds) within the parameters of cultural, spatial and temporal context.

Cultural Context

The most important context when studying a cultural landscape is cultural context. Although structuralism took cultural specificity into account (one of semiotics' general hypotheses is that language conveys its information through the organisation of a coded set of signs whose meaning is accepted by cultural convention), its proponents did not focus on the biases inherent in external perception of the language, an issue which most contemporary anthropologists believe is paramount for rendering accurate understanding. As discussed above, a basic premise inherent in the semiotic approach to analysing the cultural landscape is that the cultural

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7 Ferdinand Saussure (1915) was primarily a language theorist, concerned with the connection between words and their meanings. He saw the linguistic sign as a two part entity: signifier and signified, where the signifier referred to the pattern of marks on a paper, the signified referred to the concepts, ideas, or other thoughts which the signifier stood for, recognising a symbiosis between the two. Essentially, a signifier refers to that which means; a signified is that which is meant. Levi-Strauss applied semiotics to anthropology in the 1960's. Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, and others, later expanded the model.

landscape, like language, is comprised of a system of signs for the communication of information (Chomsky 1957; Broadbent 1980a). But objects, like writing or speech, can be correctly read or understood only if the coded meanings can be accurately interpreted by the readers (Sanders 1990:46). Thus, "meaning in the environment is inescapable. All is meaningful" (Abercrombie 1984:7). However, Carsten warns: "To enter another culture is to stand nervously in front of an alien house and to step inside a world of unfamiliar objects and strange people, a maze of spatial conventions whose invisible lines get easily scuffed and trampled by ignorant foreign feet" (Carsten 1995:4). The cultural landscape always communicates a message (whether intended or not) and we, as researchers, must seek to interpret that message as accurately as possible.

Coote (1992) has also reminded the analyst that people from different cultures live in different visual worlds, and has argued that it is a basic task of the anthropologist to investigate how people from different cultures see the world (see Berger 1972). He has demonstrated that through the analysis of the language people use in their description and discussions of the visual world, the way in which they manipulate that world in art and material culture, their dances and rituals, and indeed all areas of their cultural life, the analyst can build up a picture of the way people in another society conceive of their world. Whatever his or her chosen method of investigation, the goal of *understanding* is essential if the anthropologist is to comprehend the cultural landscape of that society accurately, and to do so the analyst must recognise his or her own cultural biases and try to see it as the members of that society see it. "We must recognise that our values are neither the only ones, nor the norm" (Coote & Shelton 1992:10). Morphy (1994) has likewise contended that, for the analysis of objects from other cultures to be useful, they must be understood on their own terms.[8]

Spatial Context

Spatial relationships are also critically important for meaning determination, and each signifier can only be understood in relation to other signifiers. Several scholars have stressed that data received, collected or analysed out of spatial context is as equally uninterpretable as that collected out of cultural context (Ruesch 1956; Hall 1974). The meaning of a feature becomes oblique without the context and accompanying clues from other symbol systems surrounding it (Preziosi 1979; Rapoport 1982). Therefore, we must look at the whole environment in order to understand it. If we look at any point in isolation we cannot grasp its complex and subtle relation to the "vernacular matrix" with which it forms a total system of meaning (Sanders 1990:3). For instance, Abercrombie, in his study of architecture, noted that architecture is social, as we see any one building in the context of a series of other things. "It can cast a powerful spell, but only in collaboration with the building next door, or the ones down the block, or in terms of the relationship between its form and the shape of the mountain in the distance" (Abercrombie 1984:8).

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8 Ian Hodder has also attested that we cannot generalise from one culture to another. "If we say that meanings are context dependent, then all we can do is come to an understanding of each cultural context in its own right, as a unique set of cultural dispositions and practices" (Hodder 1991:6).

Gidden's theory of structuration (Giddens 1979, 1981) is a useful way to think of spatial relationship.[9] In the cultural landscape, Giddens attested that there are at least five reflexive relationships among people, spaces and objects that are important in the analysis of the interaction between the built environment and human beings. These relationships are (1) people-space, where people define space and space defines people (a stranger can make "private" space "public"); (2) people-objects, which refers to the use of objects to define people (a crown signifies a king); (3) objects-objects, where the object defines other objects (a robe placed next to a sceptre implies "royalty"); (4) objects-space, where surrounding space is defined by the objects in it; and (5) space-space, once space is given a social value, other spaces around it are as well. In addition, direction in a three-dimensional space often plays a significant role in meaning determination. For example, north, south, east, west, centre, above and below are often invested with particular properties, and when we see objects in relation to each other, meaning is created or emphasised. Recognising that one cannot look only at isolated features, as any feature exists in a wider interactive setting, it is clear that spatial context is an essential component of the cultural landscape's language.

Temporal Context

Another context which must be considered is temporal, or historical, context. The most major criticism of structuralism seems to be that objects are perceived in a synchronic sense, frozen in time, implying that society is relatively passive and unchanging. Rather, a more diachronic analysis is necessary; the object's historicism of meanings must be considered. Post-structuralists addressed this need by looking at history and the fluidity of links between external forces and the culture under study, recognising that societies as well as cultural landscapes evolve over time. Bender (1993) has stressed the density and dynamism of landscape, that landscapes are both spatial and temporal, with her reference to V.S. Naipaul's experience in the Enigma of Arrival (1987). She noted that the landscape is never inert, people engage with it, re-work it, appropriate and contest it through time. Landscapes are thus polysemic, and in a constant process of construction and reconstruction (Bender 1993:3).[10]

Therefore, in order to be accurately understood, features must be seen in temporal context as well as in cultural and spatial context. Like every culture, every age must also be considered in its own terms, "as if the past were a foreign country" (Lowenthal, Feeley-Harnik et al. 1994). Coote and Shelton (1992) have also recognised that the stereotypical picture of anthropology as concerned with unchanging societies is no longer realistic. The societies that anthropologists have traditionally studied are not isolated and fixed, and anthropologists have had to learn to deal with the dynamics of change. Instead, the cultural landscape is always "becoming" (Van de Ven 1978), in a continual dialectic of inter-signification with all its dimensions: form,

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9 Donley-Reid (1990) has suggested that "material culture" should be reinterpreted in light of the theory of structuration.

10 Several post-structuralists suggest that it is human action, conscious and unconscious, which changes the cultural landscape's meaning over time. Viewing environment and behaviour as a mutually influential system is a relatively recent theoretical position (Rapoport 1990) and I will focus on this interactive model.

function, space and time, simultaneously. "All in all, container and contained are related as parts of a continuous process of living" (Carsten 1995:46).

Eco (1980a) also recognised the dialectical interplay between forms and history as an interaction between structures and events, between configurations that are physically stable as significative forms and the constantly changing play of circumstances that confer new meanings on them.[11] In the course of history, in coming into contact with external forces or passing from one human group to another, an object might incur several different readings. Often, the sense of its denotative function is lost and the connotative functions remain.[12] Thus, the landscape itself may remain an enduring structure, but each generation fashions its own view of it (Parker-Pearson 1994).[13]

Therefore, because of the temporal dimension, "places themselves may be said to acquire a history, sedimented layers of meaning by virtue of the actions and events that take place in them" (Tilley 1994:27). In a later work Tilley argued that artefacts might grow layers of metaphorical meaning like the rings of an onion (1999:266). Thus, over time, cultural landscapes build up in strata of significance. Foucault, writing about ideas as layers, suggested that the surface layer often obscures the layers beneath it (Foucault 1976). But, in terms of the cultural landscape, by understanding a site's features, their forms and functions, in cultural, spatial and historical context, I argue that we can decode the layers, recognise prevailing themes and seek to understand them.

In current times, the majority of anthropologists and archaeologists accept the utility of Saussurian semiotics as a method with which to analyse the "language" of material culture as long as *etic*, spatial and temporal context are taken into account. My approach to reading the cultural landscape combines structuralism's concern with underlying order and meaning with recognition of bias, a concern with spatial dynamics and history. Thus I begin from a premise that form and function, or signifiers and signifieds, are embedded in an esoteric, culturally-specific code, which must be seen in spatial and temporal context from the *emic* perspective in order to be accurately understood. I hope to give substance to the idea that meaning is present in the formal arrangement of things in the cultural landscape, and that it is through this arrangement that knowledge, which cannot be realised by the written or spoken word, can be found. The methods and sources required to learn, read and analyse the code embedded in Ambohimanga's cultural landscape are discussed in Chapter Two.

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11 Through time, a cultural landscape feature can become something new or different. We can see this when a building becomes a new *machine a habiter* waiting to be interpreted and accepted and perhaps tending to connote some new ideology of inhabitation (Eco 1980a:43). In this sense "meaning is realised through social practices" (Parker-Pearson 1994) .

12 For example, as Eco (1980a:28-29) has pointed out, the Parthenon is no longer a place of worship, but still demonstrates Greek sensibility.

13 "Aesthetic text" is continuously open to new interpretations and there can be a recontextualisation of space over time (see Thomas 1991) .

The Anahulu Example

The framework and approach I have outlined above can be clearly detected in Sahlins and Kirch's work with the Anahulu of O'ahu, Hawaii. In their book, Anahulu: The Anthropology of History in the Kingdom of Hawaii (1992), Kirch and Sahlins demonstrated that, despite extensive foreign contact and influence, the Anahulu have built and maintained a fundamental cultural structure through the process of additive change, which is manifested in features of the cultural landscape. This, in turn, has served recursively to mediate contact-induced cultural change, thus creating and maintaining a strong sense of Anahulu identity. I use Sahlins and Kirch's work as a model for my study of the Merina, who have followed a similar historical trajectory, with similar results.

As stressed above, "societies do not exist in splendid isolation and, moreover, a real problem is how to determine their 'edges'" (Rowlands 1989:3). Sahlins pointed out that since Captain Cook's "discovery" of the Hawaiian Islands in 1778, the political and economic forces of the "world system" converged on the Islands, principally on the port of Honolulu (O'ahu) and Lahina (Maui), from where the effects of colonisation were carried to more remote places, such as the Anahulu region of O'ahu.

According to Sahlins and Kirch's work, at first glance it appears that the Anahulu culture underwent radical change, as a result of these external influences. Change appears to have been substitutive; but, in fact it was additive. Foreign interests were added to existing Polynesian ambitions, mediated by tradition, the "ways of the ancestors" (Sahlins and Kirch 1992 vol. 1:76). As a result, the fundamental ideological core of Anahulu society remained intact. Sahlins and Kirch argued that the old O'ahu order was present in historical events of the nineteenth century as a structural condition, if not an express political position. Built into the landscape, it was the "mytho-praxis" of the people's alienation from the existing authorities (Sahlins and Kirch 1992 vol. 1:35). Thus, Sahlins has shown that Hawaii's entrance into this "world history," through a series of local mediations, was realised in the particular cultural forms of Anahulu history. These mediations, in turn, have constituted a unique and enduring Anahulu cultural identity. "Never should it be forgotten, then, that the processes of real-politics and real-economics we describe unfold in the specific forms of an Hawaiian cultural order" (Sahlins and Kirch 1992 vol. 1:2).

Also, the Anahulu's ancestral taboo system, a key component of the group's cosmological foundations, was not eradicated in 1819 with the abolition of the formal Hawaiian religion. Rather, it was preserved in transposed form. The Anahulu outwardly submitted to a mandated change of religion, Christianity, without necessarily changing their convictions. "Far from renouncing their former gods, possibly two-thirds of the people still adhered to them to some degree and sacrificed to them in private" (AB: 5 August 1824, cited in Sahlins and Kirch vol. 1:6). Thus, Christianity was received by the people in a political spirit and did not alter the Anahulu's fundamental social and ideological order.

In this case, colonisation realised itself thought the mediation of a set of Hawaiian structural principles. In and through the Hawaiian system there developed a specific organisation of commercial demands, desires for commodities, certain forms of labour control, an intensity of "exploitation" (and resentment thereof), particular relations of land tenure, tendencies of migration, policies of social reproduction, and more. But, Sahlins cautioned, we should not lose the cultural thread. "All the time we are comprehending a definite cultural organisation of history and material life" (Sahlins and Kirch 1992:216). The historic transformations, in religion, land boundaries, economy and chiefship, reproduced an Hawaiian structure of the "long run" (ibid:21). What this means, Sahlins asserted, is that Hawaiians were authors of their own history and not merely its victims. While foreign influence was imposing itself on them, Hawaiians synthesised the experience in their own cultural terms, which resulted in an enduring continuity of meaning and cultural identity.

The Anahulu's cultural identity was maintained through the recursive process of self-regulation. When change was too extreme, when the social or ideological system was dangerously threatened, revolution would occur; for example, when the traditional chief-based system came under threat. By 1840, the "common people" had accumulated a considerable history of resistance to the "anti-chief government" which was imposing itself upon them. The Royal Rebellion of 1833-4 was the first in a series of social movements by which the general population demonstrated their disenchantment with those in power who were breaking too fast from accepted norms. The movements took idiomatic forms unfamiliar to western conceptions of politics, incorporating the Anahulu social and ideological systems under threat.

For example, the Great Awakening (1837-39), a reaction to the constitutional monarchy and Christianity that was being imposed, took the form of mass scenes of possession by ancestral deities. From all over the island of O'ahu came testimonies of "wailings, faintings, and other such manifestations of the dissatisfied beings" (Wyllie 1848:59, cited in Sahlins and Kirch 1992). Further, the correspondence between revivalist scenarios of possession and the behaviour of traditional prophets or priests (not eliminated with the abolition of the formal Hawaiian religion in 1819) reinforced a sense of the old order. These practitioners had always represented an alternative to Christianity. They were men and women of "spontaneous inspiration" who functioned as personal media of the same powers that hereditary priests and chiefs approached in prescribed rituals. According to an eyewitness, during and after the "Great Awakening" such "charismatic idolaters" could still be seen about the countryside peddling cures, prophecies, and miracles of various kinds" (ibid.). Thus, we need not conclude that the "revival" issued in an entirely new kind of person, as some historians have believed. Rather, it demonstrated a return to the old system for creating order. Able to respond to specific troubles of the conjuncture, the priests constituted an accessible and popular version of the traditional world order. Most importantly, the protest movement kept the notion of fertility alive, a concept centrally important to the Anahulu, tied in with their chief-based social and ideological system. Told in story and dramatised in ritual, the constitution of chiefship was in and of itself the guarantee of the passage of the seasons, the growth of crops, and the fertility and longevity of humanity (Sahlins and Kirch 1992:129). Thus, it was necessary for the chiefly system to be preserved, which it was through the priests or prophets mentioned above.

Kirch and Sahlins have successfully shown that these cultural structures and processes of Hawaiian history were "sedimented in the ground" of the Anahulu Valley (Sahlins and Kirch 1992, vol. 1:1); objectified in the cultural landscape. They have argued that the cultural landscape communicates structures and sentiments of better times. "All about were the traces of good chiefs of sacred memory, *ali'i* who made kinsmen of the people and sponsored a prosperity no longer seen" (ibid:17). Thus, the landscape served and still serves as a text, acting recursively to maintain a fundamental cultural core, a common *imago mundi* based upon tradition. Material culture and its forms and functions (seen in context), evoke an alternative society: older, truer, and more directly related to the people; thus, helping to maintain a strong sense of Anahulu identity in the face of extensive and prolonged foreign influence (see Sahlins and Kirch 1992, vol. 1:182).

The Tsimahafotsy Merina Example

This process has also been clearly illustrated by the Tsimahafotsy of Ambohimanga, Madagascar, which I will endeavor to demonstrate in the following chapters. Like the Anahulu, the Tsimahafotsy have built and maintained a strong sense of cultural identity in spite of significant and prolonged forces of foreign influence; a situation that one might assume would alter their culture dramatically. But, as a result of established social and ideological systems based on a certain underlying cosmological order which has served to continually regulate innovation, change has been incremental and additive, not substitutive. Thus, a strong sense of Tsimahafotsy cultural identity has been built and preserved. Through time, this order has been objectified in the cultural landscape of Ambohimanga as a visual language which, I argue, has played a paramount role in building and preserving the Tsimahafotsy's *imago mundi* and consequently their collective sense of identity, illustrating Tilley's adage that "just as persons make things, things make persons "(Tilley 1999: 262).

Chapter Two: Tracing Change and Continuity Through the Lens of a Cultural Landscape

Archaeological Anthropology

To address my thesis question ("How did the Tsimahafotsy Merina build and maintain such a strong sense of cultural identity in spite of significant and prolonged forces of change?") in accordance with the framework outlined in Chapter One, required a three-pronged approach. First, after determining the Tsimahafotsy's remarkable collective conception of identity, I set out to uncover the cosmological foundations guiding the cultural group. I then traced their historical response to foreign influence, focusing on how they have managed the process of acculturation (Part One, Chapter Three). Second, I endeavoured to learn the language of the cultural landscape in which the group lives, systematically tracing its evolution as completely as possible to discover what features existed, their forms and functions in space over time (Part Two, Chapters Four through Eight). Then, I analysed this information by attempting to read the visual language, searching for prevailing themes and tracing structural representations of order and continuity in relation to history to reveal how the cultural landscape served to build and maintain the society's sense of cultural identity in spite of significant and prolonged external influence (Part Three, Chapter Nine). This model necessitated an holistic approach, which combined methods and sources from several disciplines, especially the two complimentary but rarely combined fields of anthropology and archaeology. [14]

Sahlins and Kirch's study of the Anahulu, discussed in Chapter One is, I believe, the first work to effectively integrate these different forms of evidence within the framework of a cultural landscape. "Rarely has the attempt been made to bring the full methodological rigour of both ethnohistory [anthropology] and archaeology to bear upon a particular locale" (Sahlins and Kirch 1992:26). Through their work, Sahlins and Kirch stress the interpretative and theoretical gains which are reciprocal between intensive archaeological and ethno-historical (e.g. anthropological) collaboration. Historical ethnography can provide an accurate reading of history as well as the precise "social co-ordinates" of many of the existing physical remains identified archaeologically. Archaeology thus connects the present to the deeper past, while providing controls on the accuracy of historical documents. In addition, Sahlins and Kirch have demonstrated the importance of recognising that these texts inform various perspectives, insider and outsider, *emic* and *etic*, respectively. As a result of their integrated approach, Sahlins and Kirch achieve a detailed temporal and spatial resolution of Anahulu history, which I feel is essential for moving towards cultural understanding.

I have attempted to achieve a similar objective with my work in Ambohimanga, Madagascar, home of the Tsimahafotsy Merina. I was led to Ambohimanga by Elie Rajaonarison, the former Secretary General of Madagascar, who suggested that I research the cultural heritage of the Merina's original capital in Madagascar's central highlands. As an outsider to Madagascar and the Tsimahafotsy Merina viewpoint, I

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14 As Kent (1990) asserted, we should investigate an issue from different disciplines and from different perspectives. Interdisciplinary research provides more alternatives with which to view data. Awareness of multiple disciplines allows one to introduce novel approaches not considered before, to have access to different data sets which may enhance a discipline's pre-existing one, and to avoid mistakes already made and corrected in other disciplines. Thus, value is created from a complimentarity of methods and perspectives.

endeavored to capture the *emic* perspective as much as possible in the course of my research. I followed Kirch and Sahlin's example of working back and forth between the historical and archaeological texts to discover how the Tsimahafotsy Merina maintained a strong sense of cultural identity in spite of extensive forces of change. However, I felt it essential to add contemporary anthropological fieldwork to the recipe, a source which Sahlins and Kirch do not emphasise. I call my holistic approach "archaeological anthropology," which suggests an equal emphasis on physical, written and contemporary oral evidence.

Part One: Historical Trajectory - Phases of Change and Underlying Socio-Cosmic Order

The aim of Part One (Chapter Three) was to explore the Tsimahafotsy Merina's cosmological foundations and their historical trajectory (the external influences the area has been exposed to and how the Merina have managed the acculturation process). By tracing change and continuity, this investigation unveiled the underlying socio-cosmic order which has served to guide the Tsimahafotsy Merina and revealed the consequent social and ideological systems which have acted recursively to build and maintain that order. I traced the external influences affecting Ambohimanga, and the Tsimahafotsy's adaptive response to these forces, by outlining historical phases through time, using the archaeological phases established by Adrian Mille's air photography survey (1970), combined with those established by Wright and Rakotoarisoa (1997), with the addition of the Colonial and Modern phases.[15] This investigation involved several interrelated components, combining *etic* and *emic* perspectives including archival sources, secondary sources and contemporary fieldwork.

In establishing the Tsimahafotsy's historical context and evolving world view, I drew most heavily from the Merina oral traditions, the Tantaran ny'Andriana ("Tantara") recorded at Ambohimanga and translated by a Jesuit priest, Father Callet, in the nineteenth century. Another integral source was Otto Christian Dahle's compilation of myths from the central highlands also collected at Ambohimanga in the nineteenth century and translated into English by Lee Haring (1994). I also consulted several sources concerning Indonesian epics, legends and traditions. The Bugis by Christian Pelras (1996) was particularly useful for tracing continuity from thirteenth century Indonesia to Madagascar's central highlands. In addition, I reviewed reports and diaries from early explorers to the island and traders dealing in slaves and firearms. Similar to Sahlins, a major resource for my work was missionary diaries, letters, reports and miscellaneous papers, primarily from the London Missionary Society whose disciples also served as advisors to the native government. Tourists and semi-commercial travellers to Ambohimanga contributed to my evidence by offering a differently biased *etic* perspective to the missionaries. I also utilised French sources, such as diaries of government officials, military

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15 The historical phases are: Early History (until the 8th century), the Vazimba period (eighth to thirteenth century); the Early Phases (thirteenth to mid-seventeenth century) (Fiekena, Antanambe, Ankatso, Angavobe); Ambohidray Phase (mid to late seventeenth century); the Early Kaloy Phase (late seventeenth to late eighteenth century); the Late Kaloy Phase (late eighteenth to early nineteenth century); the Fiadanana Phase (early to late nineteenth century); the Colonial Phase (late nineteenth to mid twentieth century); and the Modern Phase (mid twentieth century to the present).

personnel and travellers, government reports, journals and newspapers, which became plentiful when the French established a protectorate over the island in 1895. Secondary sources were also consulted for Part I; the most important being those concerning the Merina's origins, state building, cosmology, ritual and spirit possession.

Part Two: Learning the language of Ambohimanga's Cultural Landscape - A Description of the Features, their Forms and Functions through Time and Space

After exploring the Merina's historical trajectory and investigating how their strong sense of cultural identity was formed by building and maintaining an underlying cosmological order, I set out to demonstrate that this message has been made manifest in the cultural landscape of Ambohimanga. As discussed in Chapter One, because a landscape consists of culturally significant physical features, it can be classified as material culture and analysed as a communication system. But first it is necessary to learn the language of the landscape in question. Thus, in accordance with my theoretical framework discussed in Chapter One which combines structuralism's concern with underlying order and post-structuralism's concern with history, I set out to learn the esoteric, culturally-specific code embedded in Ambohimanga's cultural landscape as accurately as possible. In doing so, It was necessary to determine which features comprised it and how their form and functions evolved in space, over time.

This undertaking proved challenging because there is so little written information available pertaining to the site. No written records were kept by the Merina themselves until 1820, when the London Missionary Society taught writing in English and the Malagasy language using the Latin alphabet. Those who learned to write focused mainly on history and politics. There was little written about specific sites such as Ambohimanga. The Merina eyewitness accounts of Ambohimanga recorded in the oral histories are extremely useful, but are often contradictory. Europeans were banned from Ambohimanga until the turn of the twentieth century. Then, when they were allowed into the walled town, they generally did not make much effort to record accurate descriptions of the site. Most reviews tended to consist of excerpts lifted directly from the Tantara, and writers seemed unconcerned with the contradictions inherent therein. Also, these accounts, especially regarding the function of cultural landscape features, were bathed in misunderstanding, reflecting Christian and western bias. Another factor contributing to the dearth of information about Ambohimanga is the fact that archaeological excavations have been limited due to continuous and heavy occupation since the seventeenth century. Furthermore, there have been few scholarly analyses of Ambohimanga's landscape. Most significant was one undertaken by Vincent Belrose-Huyghues (1983) on the *rova*[16] complex and two others by Susan Kus (1979, 1989), who focused on the fortifications surrounding the site.

Thus, in order to draw an accurate picture of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape through time, it was essential to amass as many sources as possible and consider them all together, combining anthropological (ethno-

16 A *rova* is an enclosure containing royal buildings, tombs, shrines, and other culturally significant features.

historical) and archaeological data, as per Sahlins and Kirch's approach. In addition to the Tantara and the European observations noted above, visual evidence (photographs and drawings), my fieldwork (particularly "participatory mapping," see below), archaeological evidence (which I mapped, see below), and knowledge of other similar sites in Imerina such as Antananarivo, were indispensable to my research.

By combining sources, I was able to piece together a fairly detailed outline of Ambohimanga from its Early Phases to the present. I could identify the features which comprised the language of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape, trace their forms and functions, and see them in a cultural context, through my understanding of the Merina's cosmological foundations and the system of creating order based upon them (Part One). The cultural system was played out in spatial contexts, which could be determined by seeing the features in relation to each other and by considering the spatial organisation in Antananarivo (in many ways a replica of Ambohimanga). It was clear that because Ambohimanga is a multidimensional space, a natural and built environment comprised of culturally significant features, it required an holistic approach for comprehending it. By combining interdisciplinary sources, I have been able to reach an understanding of the site that would not have been possible within the confines of a single discipline.

Part Three:Reading and Understanding the Language of Ambohimanga's Cultural Landscape

In Part Three of my thesis (Chapter Nine), I address another challenge: what did the information gleaned from Part Two mean? What messages were communicated? What role did the cultural landscape play in building and maintaining the Merina's sense of cultural identity in the face of extensive foreign influence? To discover this, it was necessary to decode the layers of meaning sedimented in Ambohimanga's cultural landscape by tracing redundant visual themes from Chapters Four through Eight and relating them to the ideological continuity revealed in Chapter Three. The built environment is a sign system, which is highly dependent upon context and redundancy for its proper interpretation.[17] As a result of working back and forth between the anthropological and archaeological texts, utilising maps and contemporary fieldwork, I was able to pursue the historical trajectory of change and continuity in Ambohimanga's cultural landscape, tracing structural representations of order and redundant themes through time.

I discovered that there are several key features and feature combinations in Ambohimanga's cultural landscape which have consistently served as a visual language to communicate to the population. There are natural features consisting of rocks, water sources and trees, and built structures such as fortifications, rocks sculpted into standing stones, buildings, tombs and shrines. These features, seen in relation to one another, form a culturally important symbolic system, which illustrates the Merina's ideological and sociological foundations – their objectified *imago mundi*, discussed in Chapter Three. This is accomplished through the

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17 Redundancy is a technical concept used in communication theory where it is meant to remove uncertainty from the mind of the person receiving a message, through the repetition of information (Layton 1981). It can be easily applied to other symbol systems such as the cultural landscape.

concentric and diametric structuring of space, the creation of boundaries and the differentiation of features according to their location, size, height and style. Throughout the archaeological time phases defined for the area, the face of Ambohimanga changed, but its symbolic messages remained generally stable. By understanding the site's spatial and historical context, peeling back the historical layers, certain structural themes can be seen which persevere into the present, forging a strong cultural identity and indicating "Merinaness" to the careful observer.

Methods

As discussed above, the three parts of my methodological model required several interdisciplinary sources. Part One relied mainly on written and oral sources, gleaned from archives, libraries and contemporary fieldwork. Part Two used these sources with the addition of visual resources, also found in the archives, and archaeological evidence mapped at the site. Part Three utilised all of the above sources in combination.

Anthropological Fieldwork and Participatory Mapping

I spent a total of nine months in Madagascar undertaking fieldwork, which was divided into four separate visits (1996 (one month), 1997 (six months), 1998 (one month) and 1999 (one month)).[18] During my first visit (1996) I carried out a feasibility study - identifying key informants, assessing archival sources and securing written permission from various government offices to work in the *rova* complex at Ambohimanga. During my second visit (1997), I began my field research using participant observation. I lived at Ambohimanga with a Tsimahafotsy family for eight weeks and interviewed fifty individuals from the town, some as couples and small groups, using semi-structured interviewing techniques, participatory mapping and photo elicitation. I also interviewed twenty-five foreign and domestic (Merina and non-Merina) tourists who visited the site.[19] All interviews were taped in their entirety and transcribed, with the help of my field assistant.[20] During my third visit (1998), I interviewed twenty-five Tsimahafotsy with a second set of questions regarding the sacred forest. These interviews were also taped and transcribed. At this time I mapped the culturally significant features and archaeological remains comprising the site using a "Total Earth Station" for surveying purposes and "Global Positioning System" (GPS) technology. The site had never been accurately mapped before and this project was instrumental to determining the layout of the area and its evolution through time, and contributed to my understanding of directional significance. During my fourth visit (1999), I observed renovations implemented as part of "*Rova* Rescue," a conservation and preservation project I designed in 1997 (Appendix D).

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18 Subsequently (1999, 2000, 2001, 2002) I have travelled widely in southern Africa looking at the potential for ethno-tourism to the region and learning about the different cultural groups in South Africa, Swaziland, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia. This investigation has helped me to see Madagascar in its wider African context.

19 I would normally conduct one to two interviews per day and spend the rest of my time observing people and their behaviour at the site.

20 I was assisted with my fieldwork by Mr. Hery Ratsirarisoa from Antananarivo, and Mr. Thierry Andriamparany from Ambohimanga.

I chose to interview a broad range of individuals, whom I identified primarily through networking and observation. They comprised relatively equal numbers of people from the lower, middle and upper classes - subsistence farmers, general labourers, security guards, students, teachers, business-owners, religious leaders (including *ombiassy*,[21] Christian ministers and priests), academics and government officials. These individuals held various religious perspectives; many claimed to be Christians (Protestant and Catholic), but most practised *fombandrazana* (ancestor worship). There were relatively equal numbers of males and females involved in the study, their ages ranging from fifteen to ninety years. By consulting a wide range of individuals, I endeavoured to discover the diverse perspectives of the site's various user-groups, to reveal a cross section of contemporary public attitudes to the area. The questions I asked concerned the individual's conception of their identity, their background, religious syncretism issues, their feelings about Ambohimanga's *rova* complex, cultural revitalisation and the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage at Ambohimanga (for specific questions asked see Appendix B). I encouraged informants to speak beyond my interview guide, which was useful in identifying topics that were most important to them.

As a key part of the interview, I used the technique of "participatory mapping," where the informant led me through the *rova* complex in a sequence of their choosing, identifying features within the setting which were important to them and explaining why. This exercise enabled me to identify and learn about significant cultural landscape features that would never have been apparent otherwise.[22] It was also extremely useful for discovering what Ambohimanga's cultural landscape means today to its various users and how they read its visual language. Further, it gave the informant a focus other than the interviewing process, which helped maintain a relaxed atmosphere during the interview and encourage the flow of conversation. Depending upon the person's concept of nationality, ethnicity, religious persuasion and social background, the nature of the features deemed important, the order in which they were visited and the reasons for these sequences varied. However, it was interesting to discover that the Merina's interpretation of the site, whether residents of Ambohimanga (Tsimahafotsy) or visitors, was virtually identical, thus suggesting that the Merina speak a common symbolic language. As a result of the participatory mapping process, I was able to construct a comprehensive list of features that were deemed most significant at the site. With this knowledge I was able to go back in history and trace the feature's forms and functions in space through time, using a combination of oral traditions and other written and visual resources.

Additionally, I visited several other sacred hills of Imerina on which *rovas* once stood,[23] and attended numerous *tromba* ceremonies celebrating the "cult of the ancestors," at Ambohimanga, Mahazaza, Ambatondradama, Mangabe and Ankazomalaza, which are nearby *douany*, or sacred sites. I also attended

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21 *Ombiassy* is a generic term which refers to those who practice as shamans, divination, astrology or healing (Mack 1986:34).

22 I used this compilation of the site's most significant landscape features as a framework for chapters four to eight.

23 The twelve sacred hills are: Ambohimanga, Ambohidratrimo, Ambohidrabiby, Ilafy, Ambohimalaza, Imerikasina, Analamanga (Antananarivo), Ambohidrapeto, Alasora, Antsahadinta, Ampndrana, and Merimanjaka.

and participated in several *famadihana* (indigenous burial and reburial ceremonies), as well as Protestant and Catholic church services.

Archeological Fieldwork and Map-Making

During my third trip to Ambohimanga (1998), I interviewed twenty-five people about Ambohimanga's forest, endeavouring to understand its significance, past and present, and conservation issues relevant to it (for specific questions see Appendix B). This information was used for an article "A Community-based Reforestation Program for the Conservation of Forest Culture in Madagascar," presented at a Bio-Reforestation Workshop in Nepal, 1999 (Appendix C). Also in 1998, I mapped selected natural and cultural features at the summit of Ambohimanga, including archaeological remains, using a "Total Earth Station" and "Global Positioning System" (GPS).

The hill of Ambohimanga is the highest in the central highlands, at approximately 5,250 feet high. A double band of fortifications, each with seven gates, bisects the hill about half way up from the base. The external fortifications span approximately one and one quarter miles. The area inside the fortifications is approximately thirty acres in area and quite densely populated. Approximately ten acres of the hill is covered in forest. There is a town centre located near the main gate on the northern side of the hill. Houses and tombs of the Tsimahafotsy population are located primarily on the western and southern sides of the hill. Several shrines and water sources are dotted throughout the area. The royal complex at the top of Ambohimanga consists of the Mahandry Rova (still existing), and the archaeological remains of two former *rovas* (Bevato, below Mahandry to the southwest, and Nanjakana, above Mahandry to the northeast), along with several shrines and other culturally significant features. The eastern side of the hill remains virtually unpopulated because of the ledges and cliffs that form its landscape.

I identified the features that would comprise my maps primarily through the participatory mapping exercise discussed above. From three datum points (A, B and C) I plotted four hundred and ninety-three points comprising fifty significant features. Because the "Total Earth Station" was not usable in Ambohimanga's forest, I employed a "Global Positioning System" (GPS) to identify the placement of the internal and external gates of Ambohimanga's fortifications, charting the directions of paths and distance between them. In addition, I used a compass to confirm the orientation of buildings and archaeological remains. Then, I drew a map of the area using "Computer Aided Design" (CAD) software. To my knowledge, this is the first and most accurate map ever made of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape.

It is important to note that previous maps made of Ambohimanga, its fortifications and royal residences (Razafintsalama 1973; Raison 1977; Belrose-Huyghues 1983; Davidson 1990) have been skewed because of a disregard of magnetic declination. Most researchers who have mapped the area themselves, or used maps made by others, have glossed over the fact that the alignment of features with the directions shown on their maps did not agree with custom. Belrose-Huyghues was the first to recognise the problem in 1975 when he

noted that the orientation of the Mahandry Rova was not "exact" and that all the constructions were oriented north-east by south-west in relation to magnetic north instead of north-south as custom dictates. He postulated that it could have been a technical error lying with the *ombiassy* who determined direction of the building using the sun, stars and moon. Perhaps there was confusion with the co-ordinates established in other latitudes by those who wrote the "*sorabe*"[24] or, perhaps, the *ombiassy* had a superficial knowledge of astronomy and had confused it with astrology (Belrose-Huyghues 1975). In a later article Belrose-Huyghues wrote that "*c'est sans doubt de cette double origine: une cosmographie solaire diurne privilegiant les quatre directions cardinales, et une cosmographie nocturne fondee sur les hauteurs d'etoiles par rapport a l'horizon et donc les multiples orientations transversales, que viennent certaines incoherences dans la realisaiton spatiale des conceptions cosmographiques Merina*" (Belrose-Huyghues 1983:145). Henry Wright (personal communication) also suggested that perhaps the discrepancies were due to magnetite in the area, which would cause a compass reading to be misleading (personal communication).

While the realisation of the inconsistency is useful, the possible reasons given for it may be incorrect. These researchers failed to take into account magnetic declination, which must be adjusted to the east in Madagascar, because true north is east of magnetic north. The amount of declination changes annually, but normally only by a few degrees. At the time I mapped the buildings at Ambohimanga, November 1998, using a compass, "Global Positioning System" and "Total Earth Station," they were oriented at three hundred and forty degrees in accordance with magnetic north. Therefore, when the magnetic declination for November 1998, nineteen degrees east,[25] is taken into account the buildings are actually oriented at three hundred and fifty-nine degrees, almost exactly on a north-south axis, in agreement with custom.

Sources

Archival Sources

To substantiate archaeological findings and the features identified as important by informants during participatory mapping, I utilised primary and secondary sources obtained from archives in Madagascar, England, and France.

In Madagascar (Antananarivo), I visited the Fiongonana Jesosy Kristiany Malagasy (FJKM) archives eight times, the Académie Malgache archives six times and the Géographique et Hydrographique Nationale (FTM) archives five times. The FJKM archives contain primarily British sources of missionary material from the London Missionary Society, along with British and French newspapers. The Académie Malgache archives contain primarily French monographs about Ambohimanga and some original drawings of the Ambohimanga *rova* complex from the beginning of the Colonial period, which have been useful in placing objects in the site

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24 The "Sorabe" are a compilation of books on cosmology, medicine, building, and other topics, brought to Madagsacar by Arabic immigrants.

25 Geomag. US National Geophysical Data Centre. Pangolin. www.pangolin.co.nz.

during that time. The FTM archives hold several useful photographs of Ambohimanga from 1895-1901 in its collection, depicting objects and buildings that no longer exist.

In England, I consulted archives at the School for Oriental and Asian Studies (SOAS) in London thirty times, the British Museum's Manuscripts Collection in London five times, and the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) archives at Rhodes House, Oxford, three times. The most valuable archive for my purposes was the Hardyman Madagascar Collection at SOAS in London. The Hardyman Collection contains a wide range of primary and secondary sources on Madagascar. It is an irreplaceable compilation of rare material assembled by a missionary-historian, James Hardyman, during his long residence in Madagascar. The Council for World Mission (London Missionary Society, or LMS) archives, also housed at SOAS, contain all the publications of the London Missionary Society, including material sent directly from Ambohimanga since 1870, when a permanent mission station was established there. This has been a useful historical reference, as it features visitation reports, yearly conference reports, six and twelve-month reports to London by each missionary, individual correspondence, private diaries and private letters to family.[26] The Manuscripts Department at the British Museum contains papers from early visits to Madagascar, including the diary of Jacques de LaSalle, who visited Ambohimanga in 1788, an eyewitness of Andrianampoinimerina, the most famous Merina King, and his reign. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) archive contains material from the late nineteenth century when the Anglican church was establishing itself at Ambatorharanana, a hill near Ambohimanga. Although the material does not mention Ambohimanga directly, it has been useful in placing the area in historical context.

In France, I visited the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris ten times, the Sociétié de Géographie in Paris two times, and the Archives d'outre Mer in Aix-en-Provence seven times. The Bibliothèque Nationale contains numerous French secondary sources on Madagascar, in the form of books, monographs and published diaries. Many of these concern the French take-over of Madagascar in 1895 and mention details about Ambohimanga as the army passed the hill en route to Antananarivo. The Bibliothèque Nationale also holds a complete collection of the "Journal Officiel de Madagascar et Dépendances," a French newspaper in publication from 1896-1958, which contains several reports of the Governor-General Gallieni's visits to the *rova* complex at Ambohimanga. The Sociétié de Géographie housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale holds photographs of the site, from Colonial times to the present. The Archives d'Outre Mer in Aix-en-Provence were particularly useful for personal papers relating to Ambohimanga, especially those of the Peills, a missionary family stationed there during the French take-over. In addition, the collection contains photographs of the area dating from Colonial times to the present.

26The LMS also produced journals: "The Antananarivo Annual" and "The Chronicle of the London Missionary Society," which I used extensively in my research.

Specific Sources Available in the Archives

I based much of my research on eyewitness accounts of explorers, missionaries and statesmen in the form of diaries, letters and reports. These documents provided excellent historical context for my work. Although most have been obviously biased, this did not usually effect their accounts on the placement of features within the cultural landscape at Ambohimanga. Secondary sources are also plentiful and varied. There have been numerous ethnographic works written about Merina society and its history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, both English and French, which help us to understand the politics, economics and ritual activity of the area.

The earliest European account of Imerina was produced in 1777 when Nicholas Mayeur, the interpreter for a Polish adventurer, Baron Beniowski, visited the high plateau (Mayeur 1777 [1913]). He wrote another account in 1785 (Mayeur 1785 [1913]). These accounts have been analysed by Grandidier, [27] an historian and naturalist, part of which was translated from French into English by James Sibree, an LMS missionary, for the "Antananarivo Annual" in 1900. The Merina seemed to accept Mayeur's visit favourably and the King at the time, Andrianampoinimerina, knowing that other ethnic groups had obtained arms and gunpowder from the French, readily accepted proposals of friendship (Sibree 1900:391). The earliest account of Ambohimanga dates from 1788, when Jacques de LaSalle, a Frenchman who also explored Madagascar with Beniowski, visited the hill on 2 September 1788. In his journal entry on that day he wrote that "*Je reste trois jours et me rendis chez Dianampouine,*[28] *roi d'une grande province voisine des Ambody-mangues*" (de LaSalle 1797:577).

There were no other European accounts of Ambohimanga until the London Missionary Society was established in Antananarivo in 1818, at which time printing was developed in Madagascar and reports began to be kept. There were no missionaries residing at Ambohimanga, but their accounts of building innovations in Antananarivo, which would have affected Ambohimanga, were useful. Also, their accounts of the *rova* complex at Antananarivo and its layout helped me to establish the layout of the compound at Ambohimanga, since they were similarly arranged. In addition, the official advisor to King Radama I in the early nineteenth century was James Hastie, an English Sergeant who became Radama's Prime Minister and accompanied the King to Ambohimanga, offering a useful description of the hill and the King's activities there. There were no indigenous primary sources written at that time. However, material was handed down in the form of oral histories, such as the Tantaran 'ny Andriana collected and transcribed by Father Callet, and the epics, myths, and legends, collected by Otto Christian Dahle.

During the reign of Radama I's successor, Ranavalona I (1828-1861), written information became much less prolific. Europeans were banned from the town by the Queen, so there were no European eyewitness accounts collected. There are few purely indigenous primary sources from this era, but one is of great

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27 Mayeur's manuscripts, which have been analysed by Grandidier, are conserved in the British Museum.

28 "Dianampouine" (Andrianampoinimerina) was arguably the most important Merina king.

significance. The most important source for my study is the manuscripts of Raombana (Secretary to Ranavalona I) collected by Simon Ayache and published in 1994. The work is important in that it documents the period during which Europeans were excluded from Madagascar by Ranavalona I. There are several accounts of Ambohimanga in the reports, along with interesting descriptions of life under Ranavalona I's reign. Raombana began to write his memoirs in 1853 and wrote until his death in 1855. As an introduction to his work, Raombana recounted the history of Imerina from the earliest times. He wrote most of his narrative in English, and often from a British perspective, as he was educated in England for two or three years during the reign of Radama I (LMS(R) 1825-28:103). Raombana's papers are divided into three parts. In my thesis they are referred to as Part I, Part II and Part III. [29] Part III is further divided into sections a, b and c.

When the LMS established itself in Ambohimanga in 1870 there were regular reports sent to London from the town, although the missionaries were still based outside the town walls. Missionaries residing there noted the Queen's visits to the town, their purpose and effect on the population, decrees governing architectural innovation in forms and functions, and documented when buildings were transferred from Antananarivo to Ambohimanga. The missionaries stationed in Ambohimanga who have issued reports and other material were J. Sibree, J. Wills, C. Moss, J. Peill, R. Griffith, J. Hardyman, D. Jones, M. Tester, B. Evans, and J. Jones. Sibree wrote the most about the area in his books and numerous letters. Peill also wrote many letters. Hardyman was important in that his son collected the most complete archive of material on the Merina available anywhere (the Hardyman Collection, now housed at SOAS in London, discussed above). Visitors to the Ambohimanga missionaries provided valuable observations and information in the form of diaries and articles. Further, a periodical from the London Missionary Society, "The Antananarivo Annual," was circulated from 1875-1900.

During the nineteenth century there was a French presence in Madagascar as well as English, but the French concentrated on regions outside Imerina. They were not based at Ambohimanga until they occupied the town militarily in 1896. However, one of the richest resources we have about the Tsimahafotsy Merina is the Tantaran ny'Andriana, four volumes of the Merina's oral histories, as collected by a French Jesuit priest, Father Callet, from 1860-1883, mentioned above. Much of the Tantara concerns the people and place of Ambohimanga and focuses on Merina origins, cosmology, social and ideological systems. This material is largely based on legend, although some of Callet's informants had witnessed the end of Andrianampoinimerina's reign, thus lending credibility to the accounts of the Late Kaloy Phase and the Fiadanana Phase. Callet used several different informants for each period, thus the accounts can be compared. Although accounts are often contradictory and confusing, the work has been particularly useful in determining the form of features, their placement in the cultural landscape of Ambohimanga, and their practical and ideological functions, as determined by eyewitnesses. There have been several publications of the

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29 Part II was translated into French and published by Ayache in 1994. The other parts were collated by Ayache and presented as part of his Doctoral Thesis at the University of Paris.

Tantara. The first three volumes were produced by Callet between 1873-1881, in Malagasy. Malzac published the fourth volume in 1902. Then, a reference edition was published in 1908, in Malagasy, by the Académie Malgache. Finally, a French translation in four volumes by Chapus and Ratsimba was published in 1974. I have used the Chapus and Ratsimba version of the Tantara extensively in my research.[30] Although much of the Tantara is mythical, this literary corpus does convey to us the conception that the Tsimahafotsy Merina had of their own past. Although we must use this material with caution, it should not be neglected, as information gleaned from the Tantara can be substantiated by broader interdisciplinary research.

French sources increased dramatically when Madagascar became a protectorate in 1895 and later a French colony (1897). Soldiers kept diaries of their mission overtaking Imerina and the military post established at the Mahandry Rova in 1896. Newspaper reports also revealed the layout of the *rova* complex when Gallieni, the first Governor-General, visited in 1897. After that, Gallieni's diaries and the Peill family's papers (the Peills were English missionaries living in Ambohimanga who often visited Gallieni at the *rova*) provided descriptive evidence of the area as well as a general history of events occurring there. Also, the "Journal Officiel" provided articles that mentioned Gallieni's visits to and activities in Ambohimanga. When Gallieni established the Académie Malgache in Antananarivo in 1902, it produced a scholarly journal, "Bulletin de l'Académie Malgache." Later, there was also the "Bulletin de Madagascar;" the "Revue de Madagascar;" and "Omaly sy Anio" ("Revue des Etudes Historiques"), produced from the University of Madagascar at Antananarivo, all of which I have used in my research.

Because of the availability of maps from the nineteenth century of the *rova* complex at Antananarivo (Ellis 1829 and Oliver 1862), archaeological evidence at Ambohimanga, Antananarivo, and other related sites, and the above archival material, I was able to chart Merina building trends through time. From this, I was able to construct a technological and stylistic history of each historical phase to use in my research. Also, I was able to trace the paths of specific buildings as they have been moved around, mainly from Antananarivo to Ambohimanga.

During the Modern Phase, significant resources have included reports from the LMS missionaries stationed in Ambohimanga until the 1940's, guide books reviewing the site, travellers' reports, as well as two television recordings, one of the *alahamady-be* (also called *fandroana*, or royal bath) ritual which occurred in a spirit of cultural revitalisation in 1994, and another, a documentary travelogue, which was broadcasted in 1996. The most significant resource that I have used from the Modern Phase has been my own fieldwork, especially the participatory mapping exercise described above, which helped me to identify the site's most significant features for its user-groups. The physical map I made of these cultural features was indispensable, as it allowed me to analyse their placement in space.

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30 Please note that the page numbers referred to in this document correspond with those printed in the side margins of Callet's Tantara (1974).

Conclusion

In conclusion, as a result of combining archaeological and anthropological methods ("archaeological anthropology"), I have utilised sources which heretofor have never been considered together in an attempt to afford new insights into the phenomena of change, continuity and identity formation in Ambohimanga, Madagascar. Also, using these resources, I set out to learn the rich language of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape and to reveal its active role in building and maintaining a cohesive sense of Merina (and specifically Tsimahafotsy) cultural identity in the face of extensive foreign influence.

My work will be presented in three sections, reflecting parts one, two and three of my model respectively. Part One (Chapter Three) reveals the social and ideological systems that built up additively over time and serve to protect Merina cosmological foundations against excessive forces of change. These social and ideological systems are objectified in symbolism and made manifest in the cultural landscape that has served to communicate them, consciously and unconsciously, to the population. In Part Two (Chapters Four through Eight), I identify and present the features which comprise the "language" of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape and trace its evolution in space over time, focusing on what changed and what stayed the same. Then, I endeavour to determine what the language means. "There is the landscape we initially see and a second landscape which is produced through local practice and which we come to recognise and understand through fieldwork and through ethnographic description and interpretation" (Lovell 1998:2). Thus, in Part Three (Chapter Nine), I attempt to "read" the symbolic language of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape and analyse it by considering the anthropological and archaeological evidence together. I trace patterns of structural and symbolic redundancy in an attempt to show how continuity in the cultural landscape has played an active recursive role in Merina identity formation and maintenance through time.

PART ONE

The Merina, whose name means "those from the country where one can see far" or "the elevated people" (an eloquent and important reference to their control of the central highlands and perceived superiority), are not only the most numerous of the Malagasy peoples, representing more than one-quarter of Madagascar's total population of approximately fifteen million people, but they have traditionally been the wealthiest and most organised in terms of social, economic, and political structure. The Tsimahafotsy Merina of Ambohimanga have historically been considered by themselves and many fellow Merina as the most elite and privileged of the Merina people, "*les pères de la population*" (Callet 1974:711),and have produced the powerful kings and queens who eventually ruled over approximately two thirds of Madagascar.

The Tsimahafotsy's name has variable connotations based around the word "white" (*fotsy*). Some believe that the name means "those who don't turn white from fear" (Razafintsalama 1973:22), which signifies their bravery and superiority. Others (including many of my informants) stated that the name referred to their light skinned appearance, "those who are white," which also implies superiority, as the colour white is associated with purity and ancestral power. The Merina are clearly the most "Asian" of the Malagasy ethnic groups in terms of their physical characteristics and culture and have maintained their Indonesian attributes through the practice of endogamy.[31] They are sensitive to physical differences and distinguish between people who are *fotsy* (white), with relatively light complexions and descended from the "freeborn" of the Merina kingdom (*andriana* and *hova*), and those who are *mainty* (black), descendants of slaves or captives from other parts of the island who are described as being more "African" in physical appearance.

Although perhaps not desirable or "politically correct," this racial distinction nonetheless divides the Merina society into two distinct groups. Highland Merina have always felt superior to the so-called *côtiers*, or Malagasy peoples living outside the central highlands. Scholars have noted in recent years that the salience of ethnic group identity has declined, while the division between the central highlands peoples and the *côtiers* continues to be of great importance in understanding social and political competition (Andrianaivoarivony 1997). Because, for example, the Betsileo people also live on the central highlands and the *côtiers* do not live anywhere near the coast, the central highlands/*côtier* split is best understood as the historical outcome of the domination of the Merina empire.

"*Fotsy*" also refers to the Tsimahafotsy Merina's perceived purity - genetically and physically located closest to the powerful royal ancestors. The most important component for understanding the cultural identity of any

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31 Such a practice would have discouraged their marrying with African and other dark-skinned peoples. The Merina continue to practice endogamy today, generally refusing to marry with people outside the central highlands.

Malagasy group is their place of residence (or native soil). As I discovered, first and foremost, Merina people stress their regional identity (e.g. Tsimahafotsy), before the national identity, Malagasy. This enshrines the concept of *patria* that is their father's land, the burial place of their ancestors, the territorial community that the Malagasy identify as their native home. The Tsimahafotsy Merina's ancestral land, or *tanindrazana*, is Ambohimanga, a place that is considered to be the origin and *axis mundi* of the former Merina empire. Thus, it is clear from the Tsimahafotsy example that identity can be intimately tied to place, a concept which is built from continuity and tradition. The place in question must have meaning and significance for those who live in it, reflecting, embodying and reinforcing the group's ideological foundations and ethos over generations.

In Chapter Three I set out to explore Imerina's historical context in an attempt to determine the social and ideological systems which have built up additively over time and serve to protect the Tsimahafotsy Merina's cosmological foundations against excessive forces of change. The continuity of these systems, I argue, has facilitated the Tsimahafotsy's unification and their rise to a position of dominance for over three hundred years. I traced Merina development during the archaeological phases established partly as a result of Adrian Mille's air-photography survey of sixteen thousand fortified sites in Madagascar's central highlands in 1970 and Wright and Rakotoarisoa's archaeological survey in 1997, with the addition of the Colonial Phase and Modern Phase. These phases are: Early History (until the eighth century), the Vazimba Period (eighth to thirteenth century), the Early Phases-Fiekena, Antanambe, Ankatso, Angavobe (thirteenth century to mid-seventeenth century), the Ambohidray Phase (mid to late seventeenth century), the Early Kaloy Phase (late seventeenth to late eighteenth century), the Late Kaloy Phase (late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, the Fiadanana Phase (early to late nineteenth century), the Colonial Phase (late nineteenth to mid twentieth century), and the Modern Phase (mid twentieth century to the present).

Chapter Three: Historical Trajectory – Phases of Change and Underlying Socio-Cosmic Order

1. Early History: The Peopling of Madagascar

Unfortunately, the largely mythical character of local information concerning early times in Madagascar, the lack of dated monuments, the absence of dates in historical texts and the lack of external sources until relatively late, combine to make the task of reconstructing "history before history" a rather difficult one. Geologists tell us that Madagascar split from Gondwanaland during the Late Jurassic or Upper Cretaceous periods, about one hundred and thirty million years ago (Krause et al 1997). The resulting isolation led to the evolution of remarkable endemic species, notably lemurs, on the island.[32] But how the island of Madagascar became populated with humans remains a controversial issue, and Raymond Kent's remark that "while the question of Malagasy origins has been most discussed, the result appears to be in inverse proportion to the literary output" (Kent 1970:37) is accurate. It is generally accepted that settlers immigrated to Madagascar in several waves (Deschamps 1960, Kent 1970, Vérin 1975, Mack 1986, Brown 1995), but the order and origin of these waves is a matter of debate.

Evidence suggests that the first humans arrived on Madagascar +/- 500AD. David Burney's palynological records (Burney 1986, 1987 a-c, 1993; Burney et al. 1986, 1987; Matsumoto and Burney 1994) date the first appearance of pollen of apparently imported plants in sediments, suggesting human occupation, to about two thousand years ago along the coast (Burney 1987c). The earliest archaeological evidence of human occupation is at Lakaton'I Anja, a rock shelter in the extreme north of the island that was discovered in 1986 by archaeologist Dr. Robert Dewar (Dewar 1996; Dewar and Rakotovololona 1992). The lowest level of the shelter containing traces of human occupation has calibrated radiocarbon dates of AD 420 (s.d. range 250-590). It is believed that the Lakaton'I Anja shelter was occupied for brief periods by small human groups exploiting the surrounding dry forest.

It is impossible to know conclusively who the first Malagasy inhabitants were without resorting to speculation. I believe they could have been ancestors of a human group called the Vazimba, found on the plateau in the thirteenth century. The oral traditions (Tantaran ny'Andriana) describe the Vazimba as a brown-skinned people of small stature who occupied the central plateau before the Hova (Callet 1974). It makes sense that they may have first lived on Madagascar's coasts where resources were more readily available and then moved inland when threatened by southeast Asian traders and immigrants.

The Vazimba may have been descendants of the southern African "Bushmen." Brown recognises the potential of this argument, pointing to the Tantara's physical description of the Vazimba that matches the "Bushman's" physical appearance, and by the continuing existence today in Madagascar of small pockets of such people, some of whom are still called Vazimba. "Vazimba were descendants of the earliest proto-Malagasy immigrants who were pushed into the interior by later arrivals" (Brown 1995:13). We can take this further by recognising

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32 Other animals might have made their way to Madagascar by the process of rafting across the Mozambique Channel from Africa. Predators did not cross the gap, however, leaving animals such as lemurs to flourish and diversify (Krause et al 1997:5).

that although the Bushmen were not traditionally sea-faring people, it is plausible that they braved the waters to escape the Nguni tribes moving into their territory approximately 1500 years ago. This would correspond with the occupation of Lakaton'I Anja in the fifth century. Also, that the inhabitants of Lakaton'I Anja were small nomadic groups, who exploited the natural resources of the dry forest, fits with the Bushman's traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyle.

The First Humans on Madagascar's High Plateau - The Vazimba period (8-13C)

Although there was human activity on the coasts in +/- 500 AD, immigration to Madagascar's central highlands occurred much later. Burney has revealed that the earliest human impact on the high plateau, a marked increase in burning and in grass pollen frequency, occurred in the eighth century AD (Burney 1987). Although evidence allows us to determine when the central highlands became populated, how the area became populated and by whom has been debated for centuries and there is still no consensus, see (Ferrand 1891-1902; Grandidier 1900; Deschamps 1960; Kent 1970; Southall 1975; Vérin 1979; Kottak 1980; Domenichini 1981; Vérin 1981; Ottino 1982; Mack 1986; Domenichini-Ramiaramanana 1988; Brown 1995), for a sampling of the various viewpoints.

As mentioned above, it is possible that Madagascar's aboriginal inhabitants, who originally settled on the coast, may have been pushed into the central highlands by immigrant traders on the coastal areas in the eighth century. Historical and archaeological evidence supports this theory, as there was a surge in trading activity at that time (Brown 1995:18). Madagascar was becoming an important link in the burgeoning spice trade. It is not unlikely that when the trading posts were set up along Madagascar's coasts, the technologically advanced immigrants were unfriendly to the aboriginal inhabitants, perhaps trying to kill them, enslave them or drive them away, in their competition for resources. It is logical, therefore, that the aboriginal people would have headed for uncharted territory on higher ground, where they could feel relatively safe and continue their hunter-gatherer way of life.

To this date there has been no archaeological evidence of settlements or stone tools dating from the eighth century found on the high plateau, despite persistent searching by archaeologists. There are several possible explanations for this: first, archaeological evidence that may have existed has been disturbed as a result of centuries of heavy occupation on the plateau; second, the high plateau is vast in area and perhaps evidence has not yet been located; third, the Vazimba, would have most likely lived in caves and temporary huts made from organic materials and used organic material for weaponry (clay spears are specifically mentioned in the Tantara (Callet 1974: 239), which would probably not have survived as architectural evidence); fourth, perhaps the Vazimba relied on crudely chipped hand axes that can only with some difficulty be recognised as tools rather than naturally occurring rocks. Hopefully, with persistent archaeological investigation, evidence (if it exists) will surface. Until then I will assume, as per Merina legend, that the Vazimba were the aboriginal inhabitants of the high plateau.

The Early Phases (13 C-mid 17C)

The Fiekena Phase (13-14C)

The Indonesian Immigrants

Eventually the Vazimba were disturbed in their high plateau retreat by a later wave of technologically advanced immigrants. The earliest archaeological sites found on the high plateau date conclusively from the thirteenth century (Dewar 1997:368), which suggests the presence of permanent occupations in the wake of the nomadic Vazimba. Also, Burney's research (1987), showing significant ecological changes in the central highlands in the thirteenth century, points to an intensification of agricultural activity in the region, along with an accelerated decline in the levels of pollen of woody vegetation which would have accompanied the practice of permanent farming and settlements in contrast to a hunting and gathering economy. Further, increased wood usage implies the presence of iron tools used to take down the trees for fire and building purposes.

All researchers agree that the immigrants to the central highlands had Indonesian origins, but differ in opinion about how these immigrants (Hova) [33] made their way to Madagascar (Deschamps 1960, Kent 1970, Vérin 1975, Mack 1986, Brown 1995). One theory proposes that immigrants from the Indonesian archipelago migrated along the coast of south Asia, across the Arabian Peninsula onto the east coast of Africa and, finally, across the Mozambique Channel into Madagascar. This movement, they suggest, occurred over several generations and, because of the gradual interaction between Asian and African populations, led to the arrival of a distinct Malagasy people and culture. Essentially, the theory emphasizes the homogeneity and unity of the peoples inhabiting Madagascar. A second theory emphasizes Malagasy diversity. Simply put, proponents argue for a series of migrations by waves of different ethnic groups to the island over time. According to this theory, Indonesians arrived first, migrating to Madagascar's coast from the archipelago (Grandidier 1908-1928). Several other waves of Indonesians followed (possibly with their Melanesian slaves). Some of these immigrants may have moved more or less directly to the central highlands. Later waves of settlers included African peoples, as a result of normal migrational trends and the rise of the slave trade, who generally settled outside the central highlands.

I support the second theory of immigration, primarily because African influence is historically weak on the central highlands. Some proponents of an African heritage point to cultural similarities such as keeping relics, geomancy, certain musical instruments, games and spirit possession. However, it is important to note that the Indonesians possessed these cultural characteristics as well, independently of the Africans, before they immigrated to Madagascar. Proponents of the homogeneity argument also stress a unity of language as evidence for their point of view. While it is true that all Malagasy, *fotsy* and *mainty*, speak the same general Malayo-Polynesian language, "Malagasy," it is important to remember that the language of trade at that time

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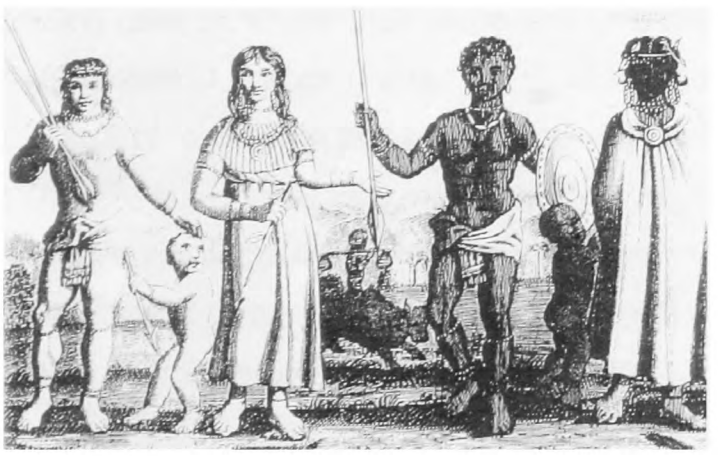
33 "Hova" later referred to a social grouping (the middle class, or "free men") during the Merina empire.

was Malay. Because Madagascar was essentially established and used as a trading post, it is logical that all inhabitants, whatever their origins, would speak the same general language of trade.[34] Also, it is important to note that there are significant variations in dialect amongst Malagasy ethnic groups, and the existence of Bantu loan-words is more prevalent in populations descended primarily from Africans (such as the Sakalava) than in those descended primarily from Indonesians (the Merina).

Perhaps the most convincing evidence in support of Indonesian origins and direct migration to the high plateau is that, to this day, the Merina have conserved their southeast Asian physical appearance (small stature, lighter skin and straight black hair), meaning that the Indonesian immigrants would have had to practice almost impossibly rigid endogamy during their time spent on the east African coast, as per the first theory. In addition, the Merina have largely maintained their uniquely Indonesian cultural characteristics, with little African influence (rice growing instead of cattle farming; rectangular houses with centre posts instead of circular ones; second burials;[35] weapons such as the *keris,*[36]etc.). Technological skills, such as iron working and weaving (Mack 1986), also suggests Indonesian origins. In addition, the language spoken in the central highlands of Madagascar has close affinities with the language spoken in present-day Indonesia. Finally, the Merina belief system closely resembles that of Indonesian peoples (Mack 1986:22; Deschamps 1960). So, while there is significant African influence elsewhere on the island, its impact on the Merina culture is minimal, and I believe that what exists was introduced as a result of the slave trade and normal migrational patterns following the Indonesians' arrival on the high plateau in the thirteenth century.



In the late seventeenth century, Struys remarked that the island was inhabited both by "whites and negroes," the former having "long and lank hair," the latter "a little curled" (Struys 1684:17). These contrasting images (*left*)[37] lie at the heart of the ongoing debate over the origins of the Malagasy people: *fotsy and mainty,* Asian or African. While the mystery remains unsolved, I feel that the evidence for a direct migration of Indonesian immigrants to Madagascar's central highlands is compelling.

34 www.linguaphone.com.hk/english/languages/ index.cfm

35 www.banggai.org

36 The *keris* is a southeast Asian dagger, often asymmetric in form. Its blade is about 12" to 15" long and sharpened on both edges. It can either be straight (as it was in Madagascar) or with an uneven number of waves (Maisey 1998).

37 Engraving from Flacourt (1658: 23).

The Indonesian Immigrants' Origins

The Republic of Indonesia is comprised of thirteen thousand five hundred islands and about three hundred ethnic groups (Frederick and Worden 1992). Although the archipelago is vast, I believe that evidence allows us to be quite specific about the origins of the Indonesian immigrants to the high plateau, and suggest that the proto-Merina Hova descended from the Bugis people of south Sulawesi (formerly called Celebes) who immigrated to Madagascar as a result of the spice trade, prior to their Islamization in the thirteenth century.

The Bugis were active sea-faring traders who proliferated in Indonesia and beyond. They crossed the Indonesian waters in their sturdy sailboats with outriggers called *prau*, voyaging as far west as Sumatra's east coast, the Malay Peninsula and the coast of Thailand, and as far east as the Trepang areas of the south Moluccas and the northern coast of Australia (Koentzjaraningrat 1950). They were also said to have visited Madagascar, a journey documented in their oral traditions (the epic of La Galigo), recorded in the early fourteenth century. "Some Nusantarians, especially the Bugis – as mentioned in the epic of Sawerigading in La Galigo – visited Madagascar and might have continued to sporadically visit the island" (Andriantefinahary and Yanariak 1997).

The Bugis sailors constructed their fleets of sailing ships to support the trade that thrived in the Indonesian islands thousands of years before the Europeans arrived. With the support and friendship of the Macassar traders, who controlled the main Port of Macassar[38]on Sulawesi, the Bugis sailors carried spices and other cargo (including slaves, ivory, cowrie shells, pearls, hides, and perhaps silk) from the archipelago, to major trading centres, where their cargo was unloaded and traded to Arab merchants, who then started their treks to the markets of Europe (Pelras 1996). Madagascar was likely established as one of these trading centres, and it is logical to assume that some Bugis may have stayed on the island to set up a permanent trading post there.[39] Thus, in the early part of the first millennium Madagascar formed part of a trading network that spanned the entire Indian Ocean. Indonesian traders took spices over approximately sixty-five hundred kilometres of ocean to Madagascar, from where Arabs shipped them via the Red Sea or overland up the Nile Valley, to the Mediterranean (Worsley 1994:1045).

The Indonesians retained their position of dominance until Arab traders began to infiltrate the Indonesian-controlled spice trade around the tenth century, taking it over by the thirteenth century. As a result of this shift, an Arabic population established a trading post on the Comoros, with trading links to Madagascar. This also corresponds with the rise of Swahili trading cities on the east African coast; [40] trading in slaves, ivory, gold and

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38 It is plausible that because the Bugis departed on their voyages from the Port of Makassar when they reached the island of Madagascar, they may have named it Madagascara after Mangkasara (Makassar).

39 Also, the Bugis may have left Sulawesi to avoid the turmultuous political environement in Indonesia during the thirteenth century, including Islamization and the Arab take-over of Makassar.

40 By the thirteenth century a number of significant mercantile city-states had been established, including Mogadishu, Malindi, Lamu, Mombasa, Kilwa, Pate, and Sofala (www.emayzine.com/lectures/africa3a.html).

iron. By the thirteenth century, the Arabs had set up a series of successful trading posts along Madagascar's northwest coast (Dewar 1997:368; Brown 1995: 21-22).

Immigration to the Central Highlands

While the trading routes had largely been usurped by the Arabs by the thirteenth century, the Indonesian immigrants on Madagascar's coast continued to play a role in trade. But, instead of dealing primarily with their own countrymen, they now would have traded almost exclusively with the Arabs. At that time, the focus of the trade in Madagascar moved away from spices and towards slaves as the principal market.

Learning that the slave trade was a lucrative business, waves of Bugis immigrants may have again sailed to Madagascar, this time passing more or less directly to the high plateau, to seek opportunity there (and perhaps to avoid Islamization and Arab competition in Indonesia). Slaves were brought from East Africa to Madagascar, where they were traded or sold to the Arabs on the coasts (Brown 1995: 21). It is possible that the Hova became the middlemen for these trades, setting up a favourably located trading post between the Mozambique Channel and Indian Ocean. The central highlands would have been the perfect location for trade because it was about equidistant between the western and northeastern coasts, and there were rivers upon which goods and slaves could be shipped. This argument has merit because the Hova remain a relatively pure Indonesian race, as evidenced by their physical and cultural characteristics, including wet rice agriculture, which would not have been successful at the coast and would have probably been forgotten during their sojourn there, if they had not passed directly to the high plateau.

Conquering the Vazimba with Superior Technology

As discussed above, when the Hova arrived in the central highlands, legend suggests that they encountered small dark skinned people there called Vazimba, whom the Indonesian immigrants conquered and likely enslaved or banished from the highlands, just as their ancestors may have done centuries earlier at the coast. The Vazimba would have been easily conquered because the Hova possessed superior weaponry. The Vazimba's clay spears were no match for Indonesian iron weapons, such as the *keris*, metal arrows and spears.

Once any Vazimba threat was eliminated on the central highlands, the Hova set about establishing permanent settlements, first in the valleys but soon on the high plateau's hilltops. They used their iron tools, such as axes, chisels and plane irons, to build permanent structures from wood and to dig deep defensive ditches. They also used fire-cracking methods, a technique brought with them from Indonesia, to separate stone slabs from boulders, before chipping them into shape with their iron tools to build strong fortresses. Thus, they would have been able to protect themselves, their trading goods, their slaves and their riches from invading foreigners and each other, as they vied for positions of superiority. The immigrants also would have brought their cultural conventions, such as wet-rice cultivation and irrigation practices, to the highlands, along with the luni-solar

saka[41] calendar that they used for planting and ritual purposes. As a result, the Hova were able to build and nurture a healthy and successful population in their new environment.

Importing a World View

Naturally the Bugis would have also imported their belief system, a combination of animism and Hinduism, based on Chinese and Indian influence into their new world. Sub-Mongoloid Asians about 3000 BC, followed by Indo-Aryan migrants from the south-Asian sub-continent of India, imported their animist beliefs based on ancestor worship.[42] Talismans and geomancy were also part of the system. I Ching, the Chinese pilgrim, visited the region for a time in the seventh century BC. He introduced the system of binary division and the existence of polarities in nature as the basics of a philosophy of harmony and opposition.[43]

The Indians, who came to Indonesia late in the first century, had a profound influence on the region's socio-cosmic order. They brought Hinduism and Buddhism to the archipelago, along with legendary epics and the concept of social stratification. The Indians also imported the concept of a three tiered cosmos, astrology and a system of thought in which a person could discover his or her own place in the cosmos and become aware of the "reality" lying outside his or her own earthly life (Frederick and Worden 1992), along with a system of writing (*sanskrit*) and the *saka* calendar, which directed agricultural and ritual cycles. In addition, the immigrants imported ideas of a state system, with taxes, castes and the concept of an interdependent cooperative hierarchy where each social grouping had its role (Kak 1993).

One of the most important contributions of the Indian immigrants to Indonesia was their *vedic* mythology and epics, which served as expositions of their ideal socio-cosmic order. The Ramayana, for example, is a poetic legend which portrayed the ideal man-god Rama and the ideal woman Sita who engineered a series of heroic events and achievements. The epic was edited, and perhaps written by, the Brahmins or priests as a book of devotion (Narayan 1995). Essentially, the story depicted the semi-divine ruler Rama's search for his perfect mate, overcoming superhuman obstacles and demonstrating his supreme power in the process. There was a focus on the importance of the correct marriage of the divine couple from whom all semi-divine earthly rulers would trace their origins. It also established the capital city of Kosala as the place for the birth of future kings.

If *vedic* literature was composed by and for the use of the Brahmin caste and thus remained an elite and esoteric literature, then the Puranas and their stories about their gods and activities were designed for and used by the average Hindu. Bhagavata Purana, for example, deals with the life and activities of the semi-divine

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41 From the seventh to the fourteenth century nearly all Austronesian inscriptions used the *saka* ("*scythian*") era, established in western India in 78AD. (www.indonesianheritage.com/Encycl.../body_indonesian_calendrical_systems.html).

42 www.asiarecipe.com/indohistory.html

43 feng.htmfeng.htm

god, Krishna, demonstrating his human as well as superhuman qualities. Krishna was a divine incarnation who experienced an unprecedented birth. The infant, instead of descending downwards to be born, flew up and appeared on the sky as a god with eight arms and each arm carrying a weapon. As a boy, Krishna was known for his good-natured pranks. As Krishna grew up, his supernatural qualities became more evident, as he evolved spiritually in the course of various "births" through trial. As a result of these heroic acts, the people soon realized that Krishna was God in human form – a semi-divine ruler – and revered him.

La Galigo

When the Hova arrived in Madagascar's central highlands around the thirteenth century they had been exposed to southern Indian influences such as the Hindu epics and a caste-based state system, but had not yet been Islamized. These cultural influences had been amalgamated with their traditional animist beliefs and recorded in the La Galigo epic (written down in the early fourteenth century, after the Bugis had gone to Madagascar), but known as oral tradition before.[44] La Galigo, the sacred epic myth of the Buginese, is one of the most voluminous works in World literature.[45] Excerpts of the epic and its analysis by Pelras (1996) served my research purposes as I was able to investigate parallels between the Bugis Sawerigading epic and Ibonia, the Merina epic of creation discussed below.

We can see influences of both priestly Hindu literature (Ramayana) and more common tales (Puranas) in La Galigo. Like Ramayana and the Bhagavata Purana, La Galigo was essentially an account of creation, a collection of rituals, and a manual of conduct which stressed the importance of a divine couple and semi-divine ruler from a specific place. The story took place in pre-Islamic times in Luwuq, which is considered the place of origin of Bugis culture. Most Bugis lordships and kingdoms throughout history claim to have been founded by a divine couple from Luwuq (Bulbeck 1991).

The La Galigo epic depicted a cosmic hierarchy where above everything is an eternal spiritual entity called Dewata Sisine, "the one God." From this entity, after heaven, earth, the underworld and the four gods of the air controlling the four corners of the globe were created, a divine couple was sent to the city of Luwuq (Winstedt 1925:3). This couple gave birth to Sawerigading, the main hero of the La Galigo epic cycle. The story depicted Sawerigading's quest to reunite with his twin sister We Tenriabeng, and the obstacles that he overcame using his superhuman power in the process. In the end, he married We Cudai (We Tenriabeng's identical cousin). After this union, all the other gods, including We Tenriabeng, were recalled to heaven. Sawerigading and We Cudai were the only gods who remained on earth and they produced a son named La Galigo, a naughty but loved youth (resembling Krishna), who became the semi-divine ruler of Luwuq. From that point forward, all

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44 Philological analysis of Bugis texts by Ian Caldwell (Hull University) has shown that the Bugis script was developed at around 1300AD and the epic was transcribed. He has drawn a conection between this and the rise of Luwuq as a powerful capital city, much as the Brahmins might have written Ramayana when Kosala was established.

45 A Dutch Scholar, R. A. Kern, wrote a detailed catalogue in two volumes of all the La Galigo manuscripts preserved in European libraries and at the former Matthes Library in Makassar.

nobility was considered to have emanated from this divine couple. Thus, the La Galigo epic illustrated the origin of the semi-divine ruler at Luwuq, capable of uniting the sky and underworld and the four corners of the globe, yet remaining rooted in the realm of humanity. Certain rituals undertaken at Luwuq (such as the purifying bath ritual discussed below) were required to maintain the semi-divine ruler's status and his powers to influence fertility and good fortune. As a result, Luwuq is considered the cradle of Bugis culture (see Pelras 1996:173).

The Early Phase Belief System

The La Galigo epic would have been transported to Madagascar by the Indonesian immigrants as oral tradition. There are several key concepts to the Bugis story that we will later see reflected in the Merina epic, Ibonia, recorded in the nineteenth century by Otto Christian Dahle at Ambohimanga. This demonstrates a tenacious continuity of world-view over a long period of time and allows us to assume (in lieu of other sources) that the Early Phase belief system resembled that expressed by La Galigo.

The Three Tiered Cosmos, Binary Opposition and Complementary Duality

Essentially, La Galigo depicted a three-part cosmos, presided over by a supreme God: an upper world (the dominion of the gods) and an underworld of evil spirits and demons. The middle world (the dwelling place of mankind) fell in between. The story was based on concept binary opposition, the most common being between chaos and order, represented by the heavens and underworld, respectively. Bugis cosmology recognized that just as the world around us is composed of pairs of opposites, male and female characteristics such as dry and wet, the sun and moon, light and dark, right and left, high and low, north and south, so too can the spiritual forces around us appear as either good or bad. Good spirits may be guardians of a village or represent the souls of the ancestors, and deserve respect and offerings. They reside in the upper world. Bad spirits, who reside in the lower world, may cause sickness or ill fortune, representing unhappy ancestors, and therefore need to be diverted from causing trouble either by receiving their own tribute or by being banished through the exorcism performed by a priest, a traditional healer and spirit medium. Humans resided in the middle world. There was a hierarchy of mediation whereby the ancestors could mediate between the supreme God and the semi-divine ruler or priests. In turn, the monarch or priests mediated between the ancestors and mortals and the hierarchy continued down the human social ranks, organized according to the caste system (see Pelras 1996). As we will see in following sections, this basic three-tiered socio-cosmic model was carried over into the central highlands of Madagascar, where it served to unite and guide the proto-Merina just as it did in Sulawesi (Chart A).

The Upper World

The upper world was clearly superior to the middle or lower worlds. The immigrants imported a tremendous respect for the dead, a "cult of the ancestors," in which ancestors were thought to bring fertility to their village. Thus, rituals were performed whereby the ancestors were imbued with the power to bless their descendants

THE EARLY PHASE POWER HIERARCHY (AMBOHIDRAY PHASE – EARLY KALOY PHASE)

UPPER WORLD	**Andrianahary** **Gods (North, South, East, West, Centre)** **Royal Ancestors** **Noble Ancestors** **Layperson's Ancestors**
MIDDLE WORLD	**Monarch (assisted by ombiassy)** **Nobles** **Laypersons** **Slaves**
LOWER WORLD	**The Vazimba and other malevolent and disgruntled spirits**

CHART A

with health, prosperity and fertility. Great importance was hence attached to preserving ancestral remains in a suitable abode and the living tended to maintain an intimate relationship with their forbears. The sacred graves of important historical figures of the past were especially significant to the Bugis, just as they would have been to Early Phase proto-Merina. Because the spirits of the upper world (the ancestors) were so powerful, they were seen to play a mediating role between the supreme God and the living monarch (Haring 1994: 53 n.3).

Becoming an Ancestor

The process of becoming an ancestor has been maintained in the central highlands of Madagascar following Sulwawesi tradition. In Sulawesi there were two types of ceremony that took place when a citizen died, reflecting the philosophy of binary opposition. There was first a mourning ceremony and then a thanksgiving ceremony. The former included the funeral, a time of sadness and the first burial. After the bodies had decomposed sufficiently, a second burial was held and the ancestor, relieved of his or her wet "female" qualities, would be interred in the family tomb, where dry "male" skeletons could produce fertility for the living.[46] The occasion of the second burial was accompanied by a joyous thanksgiving ceremony. The shrouded corpse was exhumed from its temporary grave, laid down near the family tomb and chained for one night. The following day all the corpses in the family tomb were removed, admired, re-wrapped in shrouds, and re-interred, followed by the new corpse. This practice was followed almost exactly in the central highlands of Madagascar, where the second-burial ceremony was called *famadihana.* The Bugis, like the Merina, believed that the soul resided in the skull of a person, so the head was always placed to east, the direction of the ancestors, the sun, life and all things good and sacred (Pelras 1996). Further, the family members of the deceased in both cultures were expected to build the most solid and expensive tomb possible for their ancestors and to keep the tombs clean and their forbears contented with sacrifice.

***The Concept of* Adat *and* Fady**

In addition to the burial rituals prescribed above, each community in Indonesia attempted to please the ancestors by closely following its culturally unique ancestral customs and taboos, commonly known as its *adat. Adat* was a locally accepted code of behaviour, a set of norms and rules deriving their legitimacy from tradition, "the way of the ancestors". The term covers a wide range of injunctions about proper behaviour in all aspects of life ranging from etiquette to criminal law. Hence it could include the principles for being a good citizen and a dutiful relative, the ideal organisation of the community, the correct procedures in ceremonies and rituals, and customary law concerning crime, property, succession, inheritance, adoption, marriage and divorce.[47]

Essentially, *adat* is a body of knowledge that could bind and harmonize social relations. It was seen by the people as essential for group survival; the rock on which society was based. In practice it was pragmatic and flexible, allowing the incorporation of things deemed non-threatening to the accepted order and the ancestors

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46 Please note that male/ female qualities are dissociated with sexuality in that both male and female skeletons, when dry, are considered ancestral and essentially "male."

47 www.indonesian heritage.com/encyl...ral-mosaic/body_the_cultural_mosaic.html

and shunning excessive change. *Adat* typically stressed the community over the individual and provided a set of rules and guidelines by which people could live together in relative harmony. It also guided the rituals that accompanied important events in life, such as marriage, birth and death. These ancestral commandments were known by a complex system of taboos (proscribed actions which upset the balance and flow of power in the universe). Breaking taboos was thought to result in personal or social "sickness" (Wessing 1978: 151-155).

Much of *adat* was communicated in the form of verse, easily remembered in the days when it was transmitted orally from generation to generation. While a comprehensive grasp of *adat* is considered necessary wisdom for traditional community and spiritual leaders, everyone is familiar with the injunctions of their *adat* through the common proverbs and aphorisms of their language and their general upbringing.[48] The *adat* system thus imported to the central highlands of Madagascar became known as *fady* by the Late Kaloy Phase, where it served to maintain continuity and uphold *fombandrazana*, the "ways of the ancestors," just as it did in Sulawesi.

The Underworld

In complete contrast to the ordered and purified realm of the ancestors and deities, was the volatile, unpredictable and dangerous underworld. As mentioned above, animate and inanimate objects were worshipped and venerated for their potency by the Bugis. Animism is the belief that humans share the world with spirits (emanating from both the upper and underworld), which could take up residence in cosmological elements (the sun, moon, stars), natural features (mountains, volcanic craters, caves, old trees, springs) weather (thunder, lightning and strong winds), objects (royal regalia and amulets), specific places (cultural landscape features), and sometimes in the human body. These spirits could be helpful, harmful or simply mischievous (Geertz 1960: 16-21). Sawerigading encountered and conquered several of these manifestations of the underworld throughout his journey during the La Galigo epic. As a result of his success, it was thought that humans could enlist the help or pacify certain spirits that dwelled in fixed abodes such as specific trees, rocks, or the craters of volcanoes. These "spirits of place" might respond favorably to an offering of food (Geertz 1960: 23-29), for example.

In the central highlands of Madagascar, the semi-mythical Vazimba became representative of the underworld. The Tantara recalls that one of the first proto-Merina chief's, Andrianjaka, dealt with the Vazimba when he conquered them, by formulating a cult of the Vazimba ancestors (Callet 1974:239-40), which continues to be observed today. Because all ancestors were considered powerful and potentially dangerous, especially those who were unhappy, the Vazimba's graves were respected and venerated. Thus, although they were overtaken by the Hova, the Vazimba became incorporated into the fabric of Merina culture as sacred, powerful, not-quite-human beings, in direct opposition to Hova ancestors. Their spirits were said to reside in the rocks and water,

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48 www.indonesian heritage.com/encyl...ral-mosaic/body_the_cultural_mosaic.html

and other natural features of the landscape(see Callet 1974:245), just as spirits did in Indonesia, and if not appeased by sacrifice, they could wreak havoc on the living.

The Middle World

In both Sulawesi and Avaradrano, the middle world of human beings was organised hierarchically according to a continuum, on a scale from pure to impure, depending upon one's genealogical and physical proximity to the upper or lower worlds.

The Tradition of a Complementary Social Hierarchy

The Indonesian social system was heavily influenced by the Indian influx in the early centuries AD. Elements of Indian civilization stimulated the emergence of centralized states and highly organized societies in Indonesia, based on the Indian caste system, which existed in the *vedic* times (Kak 1993:45). The four major Indian castes, or *jatis*, were Brahmin (priests and educated men), Kshaitrya (rulers and warriors), Vaishya (merchant traders) and Shudra (workers). "Untouchables" (including slaves) were positioned at the bottom (and technically outside) the system. The castes, divided by economic roles, were integrated into a cooperative system, whereby the dominant caste provided spiritual nourishment to the other castes in exchange for practical services. Thus, the castes worked in complementary fashion for a productive society adapted for their own requirements. The principle of "purity-impurity" kept the segments separate from one another. In this system each caste closed its boundaries to lower castes, refusing them the privileges of intermarriage and other contacts defined to be polluting. Each caste member went to the upper world after death, while the "untouchables" had no future after death (ibid.). Following this model, the principles upon which the traditional hierarchy of the Bugis was established were quite simple. According to the La Galigo texts there were originally two kinds of humans: white-blooded people of divine ancestry, and red blooded ordinary people who were commoners. At the bottom of the hierarchy were slaves ("untouchables"), often Melanesians, who were associated with the colour black. In these texts the division between categories was absolute and unbridgeable. In the ancient Bugis world, commoners with their red blood were seen as fundamentally different from white-blooded nobility (*andi*), with whom some of the divine essence had come down to earth (Pelras 1996:82, 172).

The Concept of Mana *and* Hasina

The concept of *mana* held the hierarchical society together in Indonesia. *Mana*, often designated as "supernatural power," was a term used by Indonesians, Polynesians and Melanesians, which refers to a super force, or extraordinary efficiency.[49] A person has *mana* when he is successful, fortunate, and demonstrates exceptional skill (e.g. as a chief). *Mana* could also be obtained from the gods or idols, as a sort of blessing. Derived from a root term that has aristocratic connotations, *mana* corresponds to social classification. As Sahlins would have discovered, the *ali'i*, the nobility of Polynesia, have more power (*mana*) than lay people,

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49 www.cyberspacei.com/jesusi/inlight/religion/belief/nature.htm

and the area that belongs to them and even the objects, animals and insignia associated with them have *mana*.[50] These individuals could give *mana* to lower ranking individuals in exchange for goods and services, which resulted in a binding relationship and productive society.

When the Dutch first landed in Indonesia in the seventeenth century, they noted a land system that was almost identical with that prevailing in India. The sovereign was acknowledged without question as the owner of the soil, the cultivator occupying it under unvarying conditions, the governors receiving assignments of the revenue of large areas in payment for their services in administration (Boys 1892). The rulers insisted on keeping monopolies over certain segments of the economy for themselves. Also, they demanded from each district a forced contingent of rice, and compelled the regents to supply whatever labour they required for their public works, in exchange for *mana* (ibid.). *Mana* came to be called *hasina* in the central highlands of Madagascar, and served to create functioning, hierarchically ordered chiefdoms on the hills of Avaradrano, just as it had in Sulawesi.

Semidivine Mediators and the *Axis Mundi*

Essentially, the ultimate goal of the Indonesian socio-cosmic system was to promote harmony and equilibrium between the two omnipresent and opposing forces, the upper world and the underworld, order and chaos, good and evil. It is important to understand, however, that although these forces are opposing, they are indivisible. By preserving the balance between them, a culture was able to minimize destruction and disaster, simultaneously promoting peace and health. This was accomplished through the process of mediation. By encapsulating sacred power on earth, rulers and priests were able to mediate between the natural and supernatural worlds and, it was believed, to assist their subjects in propitiating the forces of nature and harnessing divine bounty. This system was imported with the Bugis immigrants to Madagascar as the key concept of their socio-cosmic system.

The Semidivine Ruler and Symbols of Office

In Indonesia, the divine status of rulers was marked by ceremony and the possession of objects that encapsulated the sacred qualities of kingship. Since rulers were regarded as a channel for divine power on earth, it follows that these signs of authority were not simply tools of political legitimization, but were seen as actual embodiments of spiritual power; hence, the great significance attached to royal regalia and court ceremony throughout the archipelago. Among the objects used were weapons, particularly spears and swords (the *keris*), musical instruments, items of costume and ceremonial jewelry such as crowns with bird motifs (a popular symbol of Indonesian royalty), rings, bracelets, anklets, woven textiles, manuscripts and umbrellas.[51]

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50 www.cyberspacei.com/jesusi/inlight/religion/belief/nature.htm

51 The most important umbrellas were gold, had elaborate finials and were reserved for the sovereign. Other ranks were allowed to be sheltered by umbrellas with specific colours and forms (www. Indonesianheritage.com – symbols of office; see Pelras (1996: 81,173).

Amulets were thought to embody divine power and protect the owner. Many of these symbols of royalty and power were carried over into Madagascar.

The Concept of Mufakat *and* Kabary

Although hierarchically arranged, the Indonesians had a communal society where the good of the whole community was given precedence over that of the individual. Members of a communal society were expected to work for the common good of the whole group rather than for purely selfish goals. Corresponding with this, a common goal in deciding community issues was to achieve "*mufakat*" consensus, or preferably unanimous agreement. Although harmony and compromise were guiding principles and everyone was, in theory, allowed to have say in the final decision, the monarch held the power of persuasion, and agreement was generally a foregone conclusion.[52]

In Madagascar, *mufakat* came to be called *kabary* by the Late Kaloy Phase. The chief or monarch would deliver their message to the population, and the people would respond collectively with unwavering support. Visual and verbal threats depicting the consequences of insubordination often accompanied the monarch's proposal, which undoubtedly helped to sway the public into agreement. The ruler thus possessed the ability to speak from the ancestral realm and his words held a certain indisputable authority.

Supporting Priests: Advisors and Guardians of Tradition

Priests (*bissu*) also possessed semi-divine powers in the La Galigo world, mediating between all humans (including the ruler) and the ancestors and supernatural world. The transvestite priests were in charge of the royal regalia and talismans as well as rituals (Pelras 1996:83). They possessed esoteric knowledge of the cosmos, the ritual calendar, and geomancy, and used these methods to intercede between humans and the remote "Supreme Being" (ibid.). In addition to their mediation skills, priests served as the keepers of the old legends, traditions and myths that made up the Bugis literary heritage, as well as the experts on traditional customs and cures. In Madagascar these priests came to be known as *ombiassy*. It is important to note that the priests worked outside the hierarchy of mediation and served as advisors to the semi-divine leader and other members of the population.

The Ancestral Voice: Geomancy as a Medium of Communication

Priests used several means, including geomantic systems, astrology, trance dances, and amulets to mediate between the natural and supernatural realms.

Earth Geomancy

Geomancy is a system of divination that involves examining the pattern of objects thrown on the earth, in order to interpret messages sent from the ancestral realm. "When practising 'earth geomancy,' the practitioner would

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52 www.hawaii.edu/cseas/pubs/indonesia/indonesia.html

smack a bag containing his sacred stones down onto the soil with great relish– thus awakening the spirits of the soil (notably his ancestors), before reading their message."[53] This process came to be called *sikidy* in the central highlands of Madagascar.

Another form of geomancy imported from Indonesia to Madagascar was that of "earth harmony," a larger scale geomantic system which was usually applied to the house to ensure its and its inhabitant's proper alignment with cosmic forces. The Chinese probably introduced the practice of earth harmony to the Austronesian world with *feng shui*, based on the principle of complimentary opposition. *Feng shui* is the ancient Chinese geomantic system of managing one's luck and good fortune (which we will see in the Malagasy *vintana* system discussed later in this chapter). It was a concept bound with place, concerning subtle energies of the earth particularly in relation to the setting of a building and the interaction between human life and earth currents. It involved capturing the beneficial *chi*, also referred to as the life force, which flows through the earth's meridians, while at the same time deflecting the malevolent *sha*, which brought adversity and misfortune. If the house's *feng shui* was correct, it would allow the occupants the opportunity to prosper by living in harmony with the environment. Priests were consulted to determine proper balance of *chi* and *sha*, by using a device called the *ba-gua*. The *ba-gua* was an eight-sided diagram that was derived from the "I-Ching," the Chinese book of divination, which mapped out complimentary and non-complementary opposition on a rectangular or square space, based on the cardinal directions.

Another type of earth harmony tradition, known in Indonesia before the Bugis sailed for Madagascar, was Hindu v*astuvidya*. *Vastuvidya* was quite similar to *feng shui* in that the system was based on concepts of complimentary opposition and the flow of energy, with the addition of astrology. In addition to using the *saka* calendar, the Indians had a concept analogous to that of the western zodiac. The symbols representing constellations were similar to western symbols. They included the crab (Cancer), water vessel (Aquarius), fish (Pices), ram (Aries), bull (Taurus), scales (Libra), scorpion (Scorpio), goat (Capricorn), archer (Sagittarius), lion (Leo) and human twins (Gemini).

The harmonious systems of *feng shui* and *vastuvidya* were combined in Indonesia and used to bring place and person in perfect tune with one another, in an attempt to reduce bad influences and enhance the beneficial character of the site in question. To create true harmony, every building and feature on the landscape, natural and human, should occupy the position appropriate to its direction (Hebert 1965). In this way, earth harmony promoted harmonisation with the whole universe, the macrocosm, through microcosm. The concept of earth harmony based on four cardinal directions was brought to Madagascar and used when establishing settlements in the central highlands.

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53 www.shikanda.net/ancient_models/gen3/mankala.html

Trance Dance

Another means priests used to communicate with the ancestors in the upper world was via a human medium, using trance dance. This type of communication also had roots in Chinese and Hindu tradition. Spirits of ancestors, deities or guardian animals could take possession of human bodies and in this form, dance and communicate with the living. The presence of spirits was invoked by a ritual specialist, or priest. In Indonesia, *bissu* knew how boundaries could be crossed safely without disturbing the balance of energy. They possessed esoteric knowledge that could be acquired only through inheritance and/or special training.[54]

For a trance dance to take place, a priest made contact with the spirits and encouraged them to enter their own (or another medium's) body, often using musical instruments to play euphonic tunes and inhaling incense. Once possessed, s/he would start to shake and tremble, taking small steps at a time as s/he continued on to bigger more strenuous steps, then dancing with vigour and power. The dancing stopped only when the medium fell to the ground, exhausted. S/he then announced the best cure for the ailing person or offered the advice s/he was given from the ancestral world. The ancestors, however they were consulted, might prescribe medicine in the form of herbs and potions, but also in the form of amulets or talismans. These protective charms were considered powerful symbols of the ancestral voice in Sulawesi, and were revered (Pelras 1996:83; see also Sibeth 1991:83). The phenomena of trance dance was later called *tromba* in the central highlands of Madagascar.

Rituals of Cyclic Renewal and Purification

Each year the powers of the ruler, priests, and talismans had to be renewed. A basic tenet of the Hinduised Bugis religion is that rituals and ceremonies maintained harmony between the two equally powerful forces of good and evil, and that the proper and harmonious behavior of the people brings the supernatural forces under control. In the *vedic* literature, time was a controlling force that regulated the lives of living beings in accordance with a cosmic plan. This plan involved repeating cycles of creation and destruction of varying duration, in which humankind gradually descended from a high spiritual platform to a degenerated state. Then, with the beginning of a new year, the original state of purity was restored and the cycle began again (Sadaputa Dasa 1991). Hindu purification rituals also meant to capture the connections between the human and the cosmic and highlight the paradoxes of separation and unity (Kak 1993). The most powerful ritual to this end was the annual New Year ritual bath, called Diwali or Deepawali in India.

This event took place during the new moon that, according to the *saka* calendar, could fall anywhere between 25 February and 25 March. The new moon was a time of the sprits, of renewal, for starting over. The ritual bath with water became a common part of Indonesian ritual calendars, a symbolic relay of complementary opposition. The world was "clean" in the beginning of the year, becoming progressively "polluted" and "soiled"

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54 www.litera1no4.tripod.com/batak_frame.html

as the year progressed. The purpose of the New Year bath was to purify the people so that as they entered the new year they could be "reborn," cleansed of all wrongdoings committed in the previous year, hence restoring balance and fertility.[55]

Annual purification rituals also took place for amulets and talismans. The process was intended to shed the black forces of the underworld and restore power to the idol. Commonly this ritual took place during the New Year purifying bath, but sometimes it was undertaken at a different time. Both bathing ceremonies were recreated in Madagascar's central highlands where they purified the people (during *fandroana*) and talismans (during *alakaosy*) of the immigrants just as they had in Indonesia, restoring the powers of the rulers, priests and talismans and order in the population.

The Importance of Place: Luwuq as a Mythic Point of Origin

Place was an extremely important component of mediation for the Indianised Bugis people. Thus, just as Kosala was important in the Hindu epic of Ramayana, Luwuq was considered a mythic point of origin in the La Galigo epic (Pelras 1996:175).

The Bugis creation legend stressed two interlinked elements: the divine origin of the nobility and its extremely strong ties with the ancient kingdom of Luwuq. Thus, an unbreakable bond was affirmed between the sacred, power and wealth in Luwuq (Pelras 1996:173), with its influential and newly wealthy individuals acquiring a noble status which had not previously existed and whose distinctive trait, as opposed to ordinary chiefdom, was its sacred character (and white blood). The leading role of Luwuq as the mythic point of origin of the Bugis nobility and culture would have ensured the spread of that nobility throughout the areas under its control.[56]

It follows that those from the oldest and most powerful city of Luwuq, with the most powerful ancestors, were the most important and influential. The significance of place thus played a large role in identity formation. Recent textual analysis suggests a shallow royal Bugis genealogy, extending no further back than 1400 AD, and a subsequent period of suzerainty over much of south Sulawesi until 1500 AD (Bulbeck 2001). Hence, it is possible that Luwuq spread the tradition of its great antiquity as a means of legitimising its socio-political expansion. But, whether or not this is true, Luwuq and the La Galigo epic remain central to the Bugis world-view and conception of themselves.

In this thesis, I intend to argue that Ambohimanga became the Luwuq of Madagascar's central highlands, considered the real and mythic point of origin of the Merina people and their semi-divine leaders, and that

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55 Prashad, V. "Dewali and Decolonization," a talk given at Brown University, 26 October 1996. www.foil.org/culture/diwali.html.

56 Radiocarbon dating has confirmed that sociopolitical centralization commenced in Luwuq during the fourteenth century. Bulbeck, D. "Luwuq: The Mother Bugis Culture or The Great Confidence Trick? Pre-Islamic historical archeology in Luwu Districkt, South Sulawesi." Proceedings from a seminar held 13 March 2001.

Ambohimanga has served consistently as an *axis mundi* connecting the upper, lower and middle worlds, from its earliest occupation in the mid-seventeenth century.

The Antanambe and Ankatso Phases (14-Late 15C)

The Indonesians transported their epic tales and ideal socio-cosmic order to Madagascar in the form of oral tradition, where they reformulated the stories to fit their new environment and conditions. [57] The three part cosmos, with an upper world, lower world and middle world of humans in between, connected via an hierarchy of mediation, was a key concept.

Another particularly important concept during the Early Phase was the social differentiation among human beings in the middle world. As mentioned above, according to La Galigo texts, in Bugis society there were originally two kinds of humans: white blooded people of divine ancestry and red blooded ordinary people who were commoners. At the bottom of the hierarchy were slaves, "untouchables," generally dark-skinned Melanesians.[58] The middle world for the Hova was similarly divided into three parts: upper class, middle class and lower class, or "untouchables." These classes were called "*andriana*" (similar to the Indonesian "*andi*"), "*hova*" (free men) and "*andevo*" (slaves) respectively. They differentiated between red and white blood, as well as white and black skin colour. This was manifested by the Vazimba-Hova conflict, which highlighted the fundamental division between those of African and Indonesian heritage from earliest times.

The dissimilarity of the two groups, black vs. white, "savage vs. civilized," has been stressed internally, in the Tantaran ny'Andriana, and externally, in accounts given by foreign visitors (e.g. Flacourt 1658, 1661; Struys 1684). Thus, the Hova and Vazimba are presented as a binary opposition, an ethnic division that has prevailed in Madagascar and has influenced modern society.[59] The conflict between the groups during the Antanambe and Ankatso phases is well documented in the oral histories (Callet 1974:147).

The Angavobe Phase (Late 15C – Mid 17C): Proto-Merina Rulers in the Central Highlands

Once the Vazimba were removed or enslaved by the Hova, the race was on to become the richest, most powerful semi-divine ruler, and establish the most sacred and important space (a new Luwuq) in the central highlands of Madagascar. Consequently, during the Angavobe Phase, conflict in the central highlands increased (Wright and Rakotoarisoa 1997:326), as proto-Merina chiefs (andriana) were jockeying with each

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57 The La Galigo epic remained as oral tradition until it was written down by Europeans in the nineteenth century, at which point it was called "Ibonia." Through the ages, each monarch used the story to his or her political advantage.

58 Melanesians were regarded and treated by the majority of Malays as an inferior and unmarriageable people.

59 The Merina still divide themselves into two categories: *fotsy*, "white" refers principally to the descendants of the "free" Merina, those of southast Asian origins; the other category is called *mainty*, "black," and refers principally to the descendants of slaves who are usually described as negroid, of African descent (Bloch 1968:94).

other for positions of authority on the hilltops. The Arab trade monopoly collapsed and the Europeans came on the scene in the fifteenth century. By the early sixteenth century the Europeans had largely taken over the Arab trading routes of which Madagascar was a part. They burned down many of the Arab trading centres on Madagascar's coast and initiated trading relations directly with the Hova in the central highlands (Brown 1995:31), trading Piastres (Spanish Dollars) and firearms to them in exchange for slaves, either from within Madagascar or from Africa. The proto-Merina highland leaders and their subjects continued to vie for competitive advantage in the slave trade, which was their primary occupation from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century.

These *andriana* were later characterised as "culture heroes," credited with having "invented" and established the various techniques, concepts, institutions and rituals that supposedly inaugurated a new epoch in breaking with Vazimba ("uncivilised") times (Ottino 1983:282), encouraging wealth and a prosperous trading environment. The two *andriana* most often mentioned are Andriamanelo for "inventing" iron and Ralambo for "inventing" the annual royal bath ritual (*fandroana*) (Callet 1974:179,237). Of course we know that the Indonesian immigrants brought iron making technology with them to the high plateau as well as the annual purifying bath, the most important ritual for mediating between chaos and order. Ralambo was also credited with the first "unification" of Imerina. Although he may have had imperial ambition, Ralambo did not accomplish the unification of the region under one ruler. The Indianised-Indonesian immigrants aimed towards the state-model they imported to Imerina, but they were unable to execute it effectively until the Late Kaloy Phase, under King Andrianampoinimerina. It is interesting, however, that these rituals and accomplishments have been attributed posthumously to historic Malagasy personages, demonstrating the importance of age and ancestral continuity in order to obtain legitimacy.

The Ambohidray Phase (Circa 1660-1680): Andrianjaka at Ambohimanga

Chief Andrianjaka, Ralambo's son, occupied Ambohimanga during the Ambohidray Phase (mid to late seventeenth century). Both the oral histories and archaeological evidence confirm that Ambohimanga was occupied for the first time during this period (see Callet 1974:146, 148). Andrianjaka is famed for enhancing the cult of ancestors through burial rituals and emphasising the hierarchy of mediation. For unknown reasons, Andrianjaka eventually left Ambohimanga for Alamanga (Antananarivo), a hill to the southwest, conquered the Vazimba who lived there, and took the hill for himself (Callet 1974:237). As was customary at the time, he would have been accompanied by his supporters from Ambohimanga in order to establish a *hova* population at Alamanga (Callet 1974:237). There, he would have created a settlement similar to that he left in Ambohimanga. It is important to note that although Andrianjaka moved his government to Antananarivo, he was responsible for establishing Ambohimanga as a legitimate and successful kingdom, planting the seeds for its development.

The Early Kaloy Phase (Circa 1680-1770): Andriamborona, Asimitoviaminandriana, Andriambelomasina, and Andrianjafy at Ambohimanga

Andriamborona *(Circa 1680-1700) and Andriantsimitoviaminandriana (Circa 1700-1730)*

Chief Andriamborona assumed a position of power in Ambohimanga after Andrianjaka left the hill, ruling over a population that he brought with him from Imamo. They remained at Ambohimanga, successfully trading, until Andriamasinavalona, the chief of Alamanga (Antananarivo), who succeeded Andrianjaka after his death, decided that his son Andriantsimitoviaminandriana should command the hill (Callet 1974:299).

Andriamasinavalona had four sons and imperial ambition to unite the central highlands by placing them at strategic locations to rule: Antananarivo (south), Ambohimanga (north), Ambohidrabiby (east), Ambohidratrimo (west), just as the four divine brothers of La Galigo were placed to unite the four corners of the world (Winstedt 1925:3). Although this ideal of unification was not achieved, it was the first attempt at organising a territorial unity, or state, following the Indianized Indonesian example. Andriamasinavalona organised the kingdom into a royal domain and fiefs and initiated a far-reaching restructuring of society by ordering a reclassification of the nobility and instituting the concept of *fokonolona*, or work owed the sovereign exchange for *hasina* (blessing) (Callet 1974:360).

The Tantara recounts a peaceful take-over of Ambohimanga by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, in which Andriamborona complied and happily submitted to his usurper. However, this compliance was most likely not voluntary. During the Early Phases internecine wars and take-overs were common in the central highlands; territory shifted almost continuously and generally not peacefully. Once installed at Ambohimanga, Andriantsimitoviaminandriana elevated the existing population from Imamo to noble status in an effort to gain their support (Callet 1974: 712-713, 494, 510, 707, 708, 711). They took their place at the top of the social hierarchy, the closest humans to the semi-divine ruler who mediated between them and the divine ancestors. He augmented the population with the Tsimahafotsy from *Imerina-du-sud*[60] who held *hova* (or middle class) status. From this point forward all residents of Ambohimanga, whether originally from Imamo or *Imerina-du-Sud*, were referred to as Tsimahafotsy in the oral traditions. Over the years, the Tsimahafotsy became stronger, wealthier and more powerful. They were united through a common world-view reinforced by ritual and a desire for wealth. The semi-divine leadership of Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's government was strong and the Tsimahafotsy benefited directly from their proximity to the monarch.

Andriambelomasina (Circa 1730-1770) and Andrianjafy (Circa 1770)

Following Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, his son Andriambelomasina took control of Ambohimanga. This is significant in that genealogy was becoming an important element in succession, in addition to strength, wealth

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61 It is possible that *Imerina-du-Sud* referred to Antannarivo, where Andriantsimitoviaminandriana was born and raised.

and the ability to rule. Also, the ancestral connection was associated with place, Ambohimanga, which was becoming the *tanindrazana* (ancestral land) of powerful Hova ancestors. From this point forward all Imerina's rulers would originate from Ambohimanga (just as they originated from Luwuq in the La Galigo tradition). Andriambelomasina's reign has been remembered as relatively peaceful: "In the time of this King no wars ever took place in Imerina" (Raombana I:320). The reign was also successful, in that Andriambelomasina held the Tsimahafotsy population together and managed to increase his and their wealth and armoury substantially through slave trading. As a result, Andriambelomasina became rich, possessing the most firearms of his time, and Ambohimanga was considered one of the most powerful hills of Avaradrano (ibid.).

Andrianjafy (Circa 1770)

Andriambelomasina named his eldest son Andrianjafy as his immediate successor, but ruled that after Andrianjafy power should pass to his grandson Ramboasalama, the son of Andriambelomasina's eldest daughter (Callet 1974:383). Although he was genealogically eligible to be Chief, Andrianjafy was unpopular with the Tsimahafotsy and therefore unsuccessful. He ruled largely in absentia, spending most of his time at Ilafy, a neighbouring hill, perhaps helping Ilafy to gain the upper hand in the slave trade. From the Tsimahafotsy point of view recorded in the Tantara, he was rumoured to be a corrupt ruler who exploited his subjects for his own benefit (Callet 1974:425). By the time Andrianjafy came to power, the Tsimahafotsy had grown powerful and wealthy enough to choose their own rulers. Thus, Andrianjafy was chased from the seat of power and murdered by the supporters of Ramboasalama, later named Andrianampoinimerina, a name that signified "the desire of Imerina," in an attempt to re-establish the old order, with the Tsimahafotsy at Ambohimanga in the most dominant position, in command of Avaradrano's trading activities.

Conclusion

By the end of the Early Phases, the Tsimahafotsy of Ambohimanga and their leaders had risen to a position of superior wealth, power and prestige in the central highlands. I argue that this is primarily because of a shared world-view, based on tradition, and imperial objectives which they worked hard to achieve and maintain. But, although the Early Phase rulers may have attempted to create a unified empire, it was not actually accomplished until the Late Kaloy Phase, with Andrianampoinimerina. He used and added to the existing socio-cosmic system to create enduring order and firmly establish Ambohimanga as the Luwuq of Madagascar, the *tanindrazana* of Merina kings and queens.

2. The Late Kaloy Phase (Circa 1770-1810)

Andrianampoinimerina Comes to Power

Andrianampoinimerina, supported by twelve Tsimahafotsy chiefs, was established as an independent ruler at Ambohimanga around 1770, after Andrianjafy was murdered. Although Andriamasinavalona had envisioned it, Andrianampoinimerina was the first ruler to unify the region of Avaradrano under one government. According to the oral histories, turmoil reigned in the region before Andrianampoinimerina conquered and "unified" the area into Imerina (Callet 1974). This was confirmed by European eye-witnesses. For instance, Mondave (1767) noted that the Malagasy were "*divises en petits états politiques, tourmetes par leurs maîtres.*" [61] Rochon (1791) also reported that Madagascar consisted of a number of petty kingdoms, and/or independent provinces before Andrianampoinimerina took control. Among many of these, and their respective rival chieftains, wars were incessant. "Hostile attacks were made rather for the purpose of plunder, and by way of reprisal and retaliation, than with any direct view to acquire an augmentation of territory, or to reduce the whole island under one government" (LMS(C) 1829-32:384). Essentially, these chiefs were fighting over dominance in slave trade and to secure control over the economy.

The Tsimahafotsy would have become disadvantaged as a result of Andrianjafy's government centred at Ilafy and were likely to have seen the political-economic climate as a radical departure from "traditional" norms, where they held a dominant position. Andrianampoinimerina was presented as the "saviour of traditional rites" (Berg 1988:200), offering the Tsimahafotsy a return to their powerful position and offering them noble status. "*Andrianampoinimerina, pour récompenser les Tsimahafotsy d'avoir été fidèles, leur aurait propose le titre nobiliaire*" (Razafintsalama 1973:26). Thus, through promises, demonstrations of his wealth and his ability to rule, Andrianampoinimerina secured the support of the Tsimahafotsy at Ambohimanga, making them even wealthier and more powerful in return. As a result, with the help of the Tsimahafotsy, he was able to secure the support of the Mandiavato at Ambohidrabiby, the Tsimiambolahy at Ilafy and the Voromahery of Antananarivo, the three other main *hova* groups of Avaradrano to control the region, thus accomplishing Andriamasinavalona's objective of unifying the four strategic hills. These four groups served as the military and administrative support for Andrianampoinimerina's government (Callet 1974:711). In return, Andrianampoinimerina promised certain privileges to his supporters, recognising them publicly, assigning them a high social rank and important responsibilities (see Kus 1979), and the Tsimahafotsy at Ambohimanga were given the highest rank of all (Callet 1974:711).

However, whereas "insiders" (the Tsimahafotsy) viewed Andrianampoinimerina as the exemplar of custom, the legitimate monarch entitled to the throne, and the choice of the ancestors; outsiders (other Merina groups) stressed his obscure birthright and viewed him as a manipulator. The *emic* opinion, recorded in the Tantara,

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61 Mondave to M. Le Duc, British Museum, fol. 10: 26

was held by those whose only reference was the culture that nurtured them (Berg 1986:194). By contrast, Raombana, a Malagasy who had been schooled in England, represented *etic* opinion, and regarded Andrianampoinimerina as a "usurper." This "insider" vs. "outsider" interpretation explains the vast gulf between Raombana's account of Andrianampoinimerina and those offered by the oral histories collected by Callet, primarily from the residents of Ambohimanga, the Tsimahafotsy, who would have directly benefited from supporting Andrianampoinimerina.

Building on the Past to Create a Power Base and Fundamental Order

It is clear that wealth created power in the Late Kaloy Phase, and Andrianampoinimerina achieved great wealth as a successful slave trader. Ambohimanga served as a centre for trade during the Late Kaloy Phase, just as it had during the Early Phases. "Europeans visited Ambohimanga for the purpose of buying slaves from him and his people, and thus he obtained enormous sums of money which he employed to bribe head men and procure good and new muskets, that with them he may achieve the conquests of Avaradrano" (Raombana I:48, 55). On his visit to Ambohimanga in 1788 LaSalle noted a huge commerce in slaves there.

By obtaining the power of great wealth, Andrianampoinimerina was consequently invested with an increased sense of supernatural power. This was reinforced by the Ibonia epic, widely known during the Late Kaloy Phase (Ottino 1983), which stemmed from the La Galigo epic of the Hova's southeast Asian heritage, discussed above. Essentially the legend outlined the Hova's cosmological foundations based on complimentary opposition. Adapted for Madagascar's historical circumstances, it clearly placed the chief in a semi-divine position as mediator between the ancestral and earthly realms, with a distinct human hierarchy below him and ancestral hierarchy above.

Andrianampoinimerina used the oral traditions to his political advantage by stressing and expanding the chief's role as mediator during his reign. He enhanced the national[62] rituals, added the *vintana* system to supplement the current earth harmony and divination system, collected all the most powerful idols into a national pantheon, and emphasised the power of ancestral *fady* in building a society based on tradition. As a result, many scholars tend to date the concept of divine kingship and an organized state from the time of Andrianampoinimerina. Although both were actualised during his reign, the concepts were well known to the proto-merina from their southeast Asian heritage, as outlined above (see Ottino 1983:247). In Ibonia, as in La Galigo, the motivating force was the need to ensure posterity for the ruling class by emphasizing the divine origin of nobility from a particular place, Ambohimanga or Luwuq respectively.

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62 In this case and throughout this thesis "national" refers to the Merina state established by Andrianampoinimerina.

The Evolution of La Galigo into the Ibonia Epic

The oral traditions, epics and histories that were important to the proto-Merina were recorded in and around Ambohimanga by Otto Christian Dahle and Father Callet in the nineteenth century (later analyzed by Paul Ottino and Lee Haring). These oral traditions bear remarkable resemblance to the legends the Indonesian immigrants brought with them to the central highlands – just modified by the years, added to and molded to suit the growing Merina nobility and their imperial ambitions. In fact, the Ibonia epic could well have been read as allegorical charters for Merina hegemony over other Malagasy groups.

The extraordinary figure of Andrianampoinimerina recognized the importance of communication in order for his goal of unifying Imerina under his rule to be achieved and therefore engaged the verbal and visual arts to his advantage. Thus, he influenced Merina folklore as much as he did social and political life in the central highlands, enhancing the great Merina art of oratory by his widespread use of *kabary*. The narrative repertoire was most powerful around the sacred capital of Ambohimanga, which was becoming a "land of words and symbols."

Performances by minstrels for an Andriana audience was probably the principal channel for transmission of stories like Ibonia, adapted to the service of the monarchy (Raison-Jourde 1983:33). When Father Callet arrived in Imerina in 1864, he joined that elite, spending his time among old, unlettered, yet learned Tsimahafotsy men whom he used as the informants for his oral history. Callet became a scribe, avidly collaborating with these Tsimahafotsy Merina elders who dictated their people's history to him. The Tantara therefore reflects a tendentious symbolic consolidation of Merina hegemony over the island's other groups beginning with Andrianampoinimerina. Ottino calls Callet's informants "theoreticians, careful to transpose into the operative terms of applied politics the theological and religious concept of Ibonia" (Ottino 1983: 247-48).

The Ibonia Epic

Like the La Galigo legend it is based upon, the Ibonia epic depicts a cosmic hierarchy where above everything is an eternal spiritual entity, in this case referred to as Sky-Father (Andianhary, later called Andriamanitra) "the one God." Sky-Father created a three part cosmos: an upper world, middle world and the underworld. His son, Heaven-Watcher, begot humanity, represented by his children, the gods of the four cardinal points of the earth: north, south, east, and west (the four Andiambahoaka, or Princes-of-the-People) (see Lee Haring 1994). His fifth son, Prince-of-the-Centre (the Great-King-Maker) was the most important and powerful of Heaven-Watcher's offspring. When Prince-of-the-Centre made the journey with his wife, Beautiful-Rich, to visit his grandfather, Sky-Father, "even the sky was stirred, and the earth was overturned where they passed with their subjects, the Clan-of-a-Thousand-Warriors." This demonstrated the symbolic importance of the centre in proto-Merina thought (Ottino 1991:965).

The Prince-of-the-Centre and Beautiful-Rich were having trouble conceiving and went to Sky-Father for advice. Sky-Father called in Great-Echo, a priest or *ombiassy*, to help. Great-Echo gave Beautiful-Rich a childbearing

amulet, a locust, which eventually became a fetus that settled in her womb. Throughout an extraordinarily long gestation of several years, Ibonia communicated with his mother constantly and proclaimed that he would be the ruler of the earth: "Mine is the earth, heaven is Sky-Father's" (Haring 1994:47). Beautiful-Rich settled in the village of Long-Standing (Ambohimanga, echoing Luwuq) in the land of Prince-of-the-Centre. Finally, Ibonia decided it was time to be born and led his mother to several potential birthing places. In doing so, he established his preeminence over the four cardinal points of the earth, and the natural elements (the forest, mountains, and water). He finally decided that the tie beam of a house in Long-Standing, a microcosm of the macrocosm, would be the best place for him to be born, when the sun was positioned directly overhead. As part of the birthing ritual, he established a particular bond with the east, representing life, growth, and power, and associated himself with the sun (Winstedt 1925:3).

Thus, at a time determined by himself, Ibonia climbed directly out of his mother's womb, refusing to descend, just like Krishna's birth in the Puranas. As an infant, he demonstrated his supernatural power by jumping into the blazing hearth of his birthplace and emerging unscathed, causing the sky or the earth to open with his gaze and demonstrating how his breath could change to water. His extraordinary powers were recognized, and he was immediately known as the unique Prince who pacified the earth. "Put to work, he beautifies the land. He is victorious. From him the people draw their strength" (Haring 1994:79). In his person, he is a central "single trunk" (ibid:83) who unites earth, wind, fire and water - the four opposing elements - along with the cardinal directions, north, south, east and west.

As a child, Ibonia played several naughty pranks, resembling Krishna in the Hindu Puranas[63] and La Galigo himself. Later, as Ibonia matured, he set out to find and marry Joy-Giving-Girl, a mate he had chosen while still in his mother's womb, overcoming countless challenges in his quest. He was able to marry only someone so close to him as to be nearly identical (symbolizing the importance of endogamy). The story is reminiscent of Ramayana, where the hero's quest for Sita can be read as a quest for his other half. Likewise, in La Galigo, Sawerigading sought to marry an identical twin, then settled on an identical cousin. Without his mate, Ibonia would have been condemned not to participate in the renewal of the fertility of the crops, herds and people. The harmony of microcosm and macrocosm that he symbolized would be broken (Ottino 1983: 560). Hence Ibonia's insistence on retrieving only the wife of his destiny. Behind the quest, Ottino noted, was the Indian and Indonesian tradition of a hermaphroditic universal sovereign (Ottino 1991:969).

Before Ibonia died, he proclaimed "do not untie the bonds of marriage. The road of marriage is binding even unto death. Do not divide it". This affirmed that marriage was sacred and endogamy essential to the propagation of the ruling Merina class (a lesson also taught by the Brahmins). As a result, all Merina nobility was thought to have emanated from Ibonia and Joy-Giving-Girl at the Village of Long-Standing

63 For example, Ibonia often dug himself into the dry earth of the gate of Long-Standing. As people were coming out from and going into the village carrying bundles he would pierce them with his spear, and everything would fall through into the ditch (Haring 1994:86), resembling Krishna's prank in the Bhagavata Purana.

(Ambohimanga). Like the Hindu and Indonesian epics, although wording and names have changed, the story illustrated the divine origin of the ruler capable of uniting the heavens and underworld, the four corners of the globe, yet rooted in the realm of humanity, connected with the place (*tanindrazana*) of his ancestors.[64]

Key Concepts in Ibonia

As with the Hindu and Indonesian epics, the Ibonia world was divided into three parts – upper, middle and lower. The ancestors (gods) of the celestial world were clearly superior to the men of the terrestrial world, and both were in opposition to the underworld. A link between them was established with the monarch possessing a dual divine and human nature while remaining nearer to the divine realm.[65] Thus, a hierarchy of mediation was created with gods and ancestors at the top, human beings in the middle and the Vazimba and other disgruntled spirits at the bottom, with the semi-divine king (*mpanjaka*) mediating among the realms (Chart B).

Ancestral burial and *Famadihana*

The ancestral world remained firmly at the top of the power hierarchy. Similar to the Indonesian practice, there were two phases to becoming an ancestor in the Merina tradition. First, there was a "wet" phase of disintegration, when the corpse is buried in a temporary tomb, accompanied by mourning. This was followed by a second burial, *famadihana*, when the "drier" body was installed in the family tomb, marked by celebration. "*Famadihana* signalled the official end of mourning, when it is believed that the soul has been incorporated into the world of the ancestors and has settled down" (Bloch 1992:4). From that point, during subsequent group *famadihana*, the remains were taken out of the tomb to be wrapped in a new shroud, re-interred, and the body literally moved up, step by step, until it reached the top shelf of the tomb. There were normally three levels in each tomb (personal observation). Therefore, ideally, *famadihana* should be performed three times for each corpse, moving it up shelf by shelf as it became progressively drier and more "ancestral." Thus, becoming an ancestor was marked by a logical evolution from a wet "polluted" body buried alone under the earth to a dry "celebrated" ancestor, one of many, on the top shelf of the family tomb (Bloch 1971). Following Indonesian precendent the process was presided over by a priest (*ombiassy*).

The Merina second burial closely resembled Bugis practice in that it signified the resolution of oppositions favouring the "male" characteristics of dry order, represented by the dry bones of the skeleton, over "female" characteristics of vitality represented by the wet substance of the decomposing body. As with the Indonesian perspective, gender is dissociated with sexuality in this process. Female characteristics include wetness, flesh

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64 Resembling La Galigo, the Tantara traces the lineage of monarchs back to the fourteenth century where tradition becomes legend, with the first king said to be the son of God (Brown 1995:98).

65 By marrying his sister, Andrianerinerina secured his lineage of celestial origin, "exiled" to earth yet remembering heaven, which made him eligible for divine right, authorising him to reign over human beings (Ottino 1983:250).

THE LATE KALOY PHASE POWER HIERARCHY

UPPER WORLD

Andrianhary

Gods

Royal Ancestors

Royal Wives

The Andriamasinavalona

Tsimahafotsy Ancestors

Other Noble Ancestors (12 hills)

General Merina Ancestors

MIDDLE WORLD

Monarch (assisted by ombiassy)

Royal Wives

The Andriamasinavalona

Tsimahafotsy

Other Andriana (12 hills)

Hova

Andevo

LOWER WORLD

The Vazimba and other malevolent and disgruntled spirits

CHART B

and decomposition, while male characteristics are associated with true ancestral fertility, a mystical process symbolised by the tomb and the dry (male) bones (Bloch 1992:21). Also, resembling Indonesian tradition, "ancestorhood" is a state which both males and females could achieve, holding equal power to bless the living. Thus, with *famadihana*, death was transformed into life in the form of fertility blessings, broadly defined to include crops, wealth, health, strength, as well as children (Bloch and Parry 1982:220). In an attempt to control biological death, the Merina dramatised the victory of their imposed order over biology, to create a life-giving source (Bloch and Parry 1992:19-21).[66] Another essential feature of *famadihana* is that it functioned to unite the descent group. If an *andriana* or *hova* died away from their *tanindrazana*, the body would be brought back to the family tomb, to be joined with his or her ancestral family. If the body was lost, a standing stone would be erected outside the tomb, which was thought to attract the spirit back to the tomb. It is this unity that allows the Merina ancestors the power and "fertility" to produce blessing for the living.

Royal Burial

As outlined above, in the central highlands the lay person, distant from the divine ancestral realm, required more steps to "ancestorhood" than the monarch, the epicentric Andriana. Because of the monarch's status, hovering between the ancestral and earthly realms, s/he was considered to be a full ancestor, capable of bestowing blessing immediately at the time of his or her death. Therefore, s/he did not require a temporary burial to separate the wet flesh from dry bones. Once buried, his or her tomb needed never to be reopened as *famadihana* was not required to move the body shelf by shelf towards the ancestral world. Also, unlike the lay person who was unified with his or her ancestors in a communal family tomb, the sovereign was buried alone (Callet 1974:248). Yet the monarch was united with his or her ancestors by proximity to their tombs in their sacred burial ground, at the highest and most eastern part of a royal compound. The burial system thus illustrated the ancestral hierarchy in which the ancestral monarch, as the ultimate source of blessing in the hierarchy of mediation, was situated at the highest point in the *rova* complex. Because Ambohimanga was the burial place of important and noble Merina rulers and their families in the Late Kaloy Phase - Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, Andriambelomasina and eventually Andrianampoinimerina himself - its *tanindrazana* was particularly potent.

Fady – "Preserving the Ways of the Ancestors"

Keeping the ancestors content and invoking their blessing was central to the Merina belief system from earliest times. Ancestors made their wishes known by issuing taboos through mediators such as the monarch or priests. The Indonesian concept of *adat*, taboos related to upholding the "way of the ancestors" and tradition, an all-important driving force in maintaining continuity of worldview, was called *fady* by the Late Kaloy Phase in

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66 Bloch drew an interesting parallel, recognising that similarly antagonistic dichotomy applies to the process of Merina birth: physical birth, an exclusively female activity, is polluting and is subsequently transcended by the circumcision ceremony at which the child is torn away from the divisive and impure world of women to be reborn into the pure and undivided world of the descent group. "They take upon themselves the negative aspects of death and act as the defeated protagonists in a mock battle from which rebirth and fertility emerge victorious" (Bloch 1982:24).

Madagascar's central highlands. *Fady* proved to be more effective than government decree (Brown 1995:7). It was believed that *fady* must be observed scrupulously and foreigners must also respect the taboos, otherwise misfortune could occur for the entire settlement. Thus, great effort was made to uphold the "ways of the ancestors," or *fombandrazana*, in Ambohimanga. Often *fady* were established by Andrianampoinimerina himself in an effort to preserve tradition and limit external influence.

Spirits and Sacrifice

In addition to respecting the "ways of the ancestors" by recognizing *fady*, sacrifice was also a central tenet used to keeping the Merina ancestors content, just as it was in Indonesia. Zebu, poultry or other desireable objects and substances were often left on tombs of the ancestors as well as on rocks and streams thought to be inhabited by unpredictable nature spirits, or Vazimba (Callet 1974:239-240). The Tsimahafotsy were responsible for sacrificing on their family tombs while Andrianampoinimerina made sacrifices on the royal tombs and cared for the them in accordance with the established ancestral hierarchy.

The Middle World

The Middle World was organised hierarchically into three levels along a continuum, as per Indonesian tradition. At the top were the *andriana*, the humans closest to the ancestral world, associated with the colour white and white blood. In the middle were the *hova*, associated with the colour red and red blood, and at the bottom were the *andevo*, or slaves, closest to the underworld, associated with the colour black. As with the Indonesian system, the human world was considered to be in opposition to the ancestral world. Ottino (1983) was the first to note this binary hierarchical structure between heaven and earth, ancestors and men, in the central highlands.

As mentioned above, upon taking office, Andrianampoinimerina formally declared that all Tsimahafotsy would from that point forward be considered noble (*andriana*) (Razafintsalama 1973: 26). Within the Tsimahafotsy nobility, residents of Ambohimanga were organised by family group (*deme*) (Bloch 1971:46; Mack 1986: 47) and these groups were further organised by rank along a scale that placed them either closer to the purified ancestral world or closer to the impure volatile underworld. Their social position could only be changed by the monarch or by adoption. To illustrate the social hierarchy, Andrianampoinimerina ensured that the Tsimahafotsy citizens remained in their *tanindrazana*, allocated to them in accordance with their *deme's* rank (Callet 1974:586).

Semidivine Mediators and the Axis Mundi

The Semidivine Ruler and *Ombiassy*

In Madagascar the forces of the ancestral and human world were mediated by a semi-divine ruler, supported by the ancestors and supernatural system. This concept of resolution of oppositions and complementarity is

extended to an almost infinite range of associated oppositions, which are essential to each other. Following from the basic oppositions between heaven and earth, ancestors and humans, are those between male and female, dry and wet, east and west, north and south. One of the most important of these is the opposition between male, associated with order, and female, with disorder. Again, the "male" principle is associated with enduring order, represented by the imperishable skeleton. The "female" principle is associated with change, growth and decay, as represented by the perishable flesh (Bloch 1971). There is a clear contrast between male "structure" and female "vitality." So, "male is to female as light is to dark, as day is to night, as life is to death" (ibid.). In the Merina view, the harmony of the world depends on the capacity of human beings to maintain a dynamic equilibrium between these opposing principles, harmonised by continued effort and cyclical ritual renewal.

This process was mediated by the ruler himself, assisted by priests (*ombiassy*) who resided outside the hierarchy of mediation. In Avaradrano, the Indonesian *bissu* evolved into the concept of *ombiassy* by the Late Kaloy Phase. Like the *bissu*, the *ombiassy* possessed the ability to divine, cure, or wield magic. He or she used several skills, including geomancy (*sikidy*), earth harmony and astrology (*vintana*), talismans and trance dance (*tromba*) to diagnose problems and prescribe solutions. *Ombiassy* also presided over rituals, such as the purifying bath ritual for humans (*fandroana*) and talismans (*alakaosy*), and second-burial (*famadihana*) ceremonies. The *ombiassy* essentially combined the functions of diviners, traditional healers and astrologers to maintain socio-cosmic order.

Adding the Antaimoro and the "Sorabe"

Ombiassy became more knowledgeable and effective during the Late Kaloy Phase because of foreign ideology imported into the central highlands by the Antaimoro. The Antaimoro "People-of-the-Shore" are thought to have been the last significant arrivals in the waves of immigration to Madagascar, settling on the southeast coast (Kent 1970:88). Although the original Indonesian immigrants to Madagascar would have brought geomantic knowledge with them, incorporating principles of *feng shui* and *vastuvidya*, the systems were reinforced by the Islamized Antaimoro, invited to the high plateau by Andrianampoinimerina in the Late Kaloy Phase.[67] They possessed superior skills to the *ombiassy* already in the central highlands, so could add to their knowledge base, perhaps replacing them in some cases.

The Antaimoro trace their origins to Islamic traders of mixed Indonesian origin who settled on Madagascar's coasts after the fourteenth century, known as Antalaotra ("People-of-the-Sea"). As a result of their Indonesian connections, they spoke an Austronesian language, and their belief system would have been based on the tripartite division of the world and complimentary opposition. But, because they had been exposed to Islamic forces longer than the original Bugis immigrants to Madagascar, the Antaimoro would have incorporated more

67 Many authors refer to the Antaimoro as "Arab" immigrants. "Arab" is a convenient name covering various groups affected to a greater or less extent by Islam (Brown 1995:20).

sophisticated methods than those possessed by the Bugis settlers. Thus, when their powers were discovered, the Antaimoro *ombiassy* were invited into the central highlands and became celebrated healers, diviners, legal arbitrators and purveyors of amulets and magical medicines.

The Antaimoro were the only Malagasy people from the nineteenth century to possess a system of writing, which was based on Arabic script. Their books, the *sorabe* (from the Arabic *sura*, meaning "writing" and the Malagasy *be*, meaning "big" or "great") were inscribed in ink on special paper made from beaten wood bark, and incorporated astrology, divination, medicine, and historical chronicles.[68] For many years the Antaimoro were the only indigenous literate recorders of local history and culture, although the Arabic texts left by early Antaimoro authors have yet to be examined systematically.[69]

The *Vintana* System

Perhaps the most significant contribution of the Antaimoro to the central highlands was the system of *vintana*, an earth harmony science that was applied to the existing system in order to rework spatial relationships and their symbolic content in Andrianampoinimerina's domain. The *vintana* system was acceptable and comprehensible to the people of Imerina because it was based on complementary opposition, the fundamental principle that had organized their cosmological world from the earliest times. In fact, the entire spatio-temporal life of the Merina was regulated by the *vintana* system in the Late Kaloy Phase. "With regard to its functions and encroachment on the daily life of the people, it acts like a despotic and independent power" (Ruud 1970:28).

Vintana was considered to be another outlet for the ancestral voice. As Mack (1986:39-41), and Vérin and Rajaonarimanana (1991) have described, things as well as humans have destinies which are controlled by the ancestors. According to one's birth date (or an object's construction) one's destiny varied in relation to the time of the day, the day of the week and month of the year. *Vintana* also encodes ideas concerning which actions, in relation to the cosmological calendar, are considered appropriate, which colours of clothing should be worn, which taboos (*fady*) should be heeded and what particular sacrifices, markings or colour of the sacrifice, must be made (see Vérin and Rajaonarimanana (1991: Fig 3) for an illustration of these complex ideas).

In short, the *vintana* system worked as follows: the Arabic year of three hundred forty-five days was divided into twelve lunar months of, generally, twenty-eight days. This calendar could be mapped onto any rectangular space, most usually a house. The months possessed certain characteristics associated with their placement in space, understood exclusively by *ombiassy*. Each month had a characteristic destiny, or *vintana*, associated

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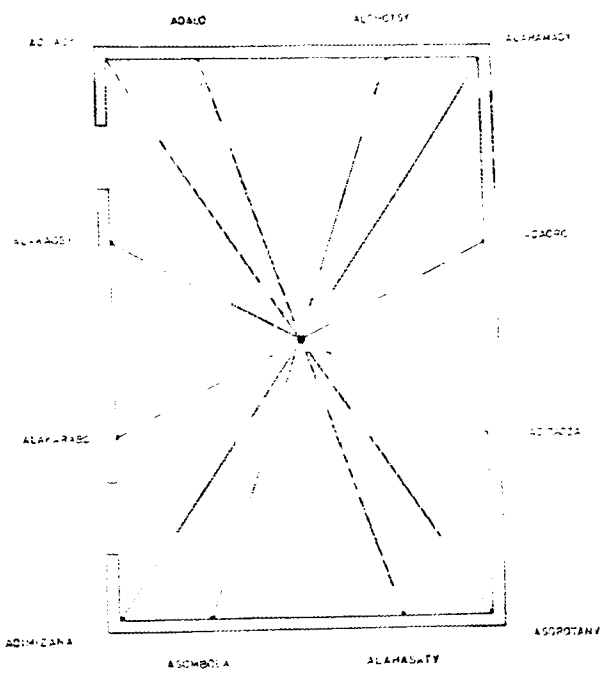
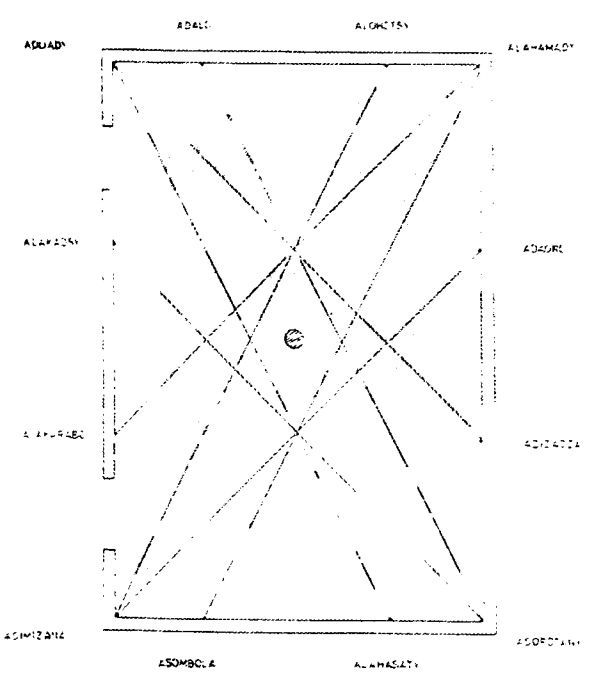
68 www.1upinfo.com/country-guide-study/madagascar/madagascar22.html

69 Flacourt (1661) reported that these books, held by the *ombiassy* of Matatane, included tomes on medicine, the weather, the earth and geomancy. A major work on the subject was carried out by Dahle in the 1890s. Other good accounts of the system can be found in Vig (1969); Ruud (1970); Julien (1931); Pennick (1975); and Kus (1979,1989).

with it. The four corner months were called the "*vintana* mothers," and they were the most powerful. The eight months on the sides were the "*vintana* children." They were considered dependent on their mothers (Ruud 1970:29), and were less powerful.

To map the *vintana* of a household, each person's birth month was determined, then *vintana* could be calculated by drawing lines between the places of the twelve months on a rectangular form (resembling the Chinese *ba-gua*). If the lines crossed the centre of the rectangle, opposing destinies, or "negative *vintana,*" were revealed for persons in the household (*below left*). This meant that "they were enemies, which can never be united" (Ruud 1970:58). If a couple had opposing destines they should not marry, and a child born with an opposing destiny to its parents would have to undergo a certain exorcism. Destinies that agreed were determined by lines drawn from the birth months that pass closest to the centre without touching it, denoting "positive *vintana*" (*below right*).





Andrianampoinimerina most likely applied the imported system in order to rework spatial relationships and their symbolic content in his domain. This served to order Avaradrano more completely and effectively; illustrating the tripartite world with himself as the semi-divine monarch positioned at the boundary between the human and ancestral worlds, and his population organized beneath him. *Vintana* effectively represented Ambohimanga as the *axis mundi* of the kingdom as well as the universe. Thus, the *vintana* system, added to the former system, created a powerful mechanism with which to illustrate the ideals of the nascent Merina state (Delivré 1974; Kus 1989).

Sikidy **Divination**

Another language of the ancestors consulted during the Late Kaloy Phase was a form of geomancy called *sikidy*. While the Hova already possessed a form of divination based on reading patterns of seeds or stones

thrown upon the earth, as imported by the thirteenth century Sulawesi immigrants, the Antaimoro brought modern expertise to the practice. The seventeenth century French traveller de Flacourt reported in 1661 that Matatane country in southeastern Madagascar (where the Antaimoro lived) was a centre of astrological study as early as the fourteenth century (Flacourt 1661:172, 195).

The Antaimoro formulated their system in terms of the fully-fledged astrologically oriented divination system of *ilm or kha/t al-raml*, science of the sand.[70] For divination the *ombiassy* used a structure in which fruit seeds or grains of corn were put into rows of eight. Various figure combinations indicated the future and advised courses of action regarding sickness, love, business and other enterprises, as "spoken" by the ancestors. The acceptance of new divination techniques demonstrated that Madagascar was not merely a passive importer of culture but also a place of active production and transformation of culture to suit its purposes.

Trance Dance

Priests continued to use human mediums to communicate between the upper and middle worlds through a form of trance dance, now called *tromba*.[71] Clients consulted *ombiassy* for physical complaints, psychosomatic and psychic problems and for problems of a social nature, such as bad luck in business and amorous affairs, conflict and competition, bereavement in the family, travelling, etc. The spirit or spirits were summoned through a ritual including a symbolic offering to the spirit (usually a bowl of water infused with aromatic medicinal plant gratings) and a spoken incantation accompanied by music and incense. Once the spirit entered the medium, it would give insight on the origins of the "illness," such as disrespect of the ancestors or a neighbor's jealousy, and would prescribe the cure. This message would be interpreted by the *ombiassy* and communicated to those gathered. The *ombiassy* would then sell herbal medicines or talismans made of dried or powdered vegetables, glass beads or animal teeth, intended to protect and heal the wearer from his or her illness (Callet 1974:104; personal observation). Throughout the Late Kaloy Phase, a constant movement back and forth between death and reincarnation, past and future, was the norm. Ancestors remained a source of security for people threatened by the potentially evil forces of their living kinsmen, foreign visitors and neighbours.

Incorporating Talismans into a National Pantheon

As mentioned above, amulets and talismans were another medium for ancestral power. Imported from Indianised Indonesia, amulets and idols served as an essential part of the power hierarchy since the earliest phases in the central highlands. However, during Andrianampoinimerina's reign their roles were enhanced. Andrianampoinimerina is credited with expanding the idols' functions and creating the "national pantheon," which served "as an instrument to connect social unity with the well being of the sovereign" (Berg 1986). Andrianampoinimerina consolidated the most powerful idols and their creators/keepers (*ombiassy*) in the

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70 www.princeton.edu/~ezb/geomancy/geostep.html

71 By the Late Kaloy Phase, trance dance may have been influenced by the influx of African slaves to the region.

region, designating them as a national pantheon which all would revere (Berg 1986). Idols in Imerina during the Late Kaloy Phase could be categorised into three groups, *ody* (owned by individuals) which could become *sampy* (idols collectively owned by villages) which, in turn, could become national *sampy* (if chosen by the monarch) to create the pantheon.[72]

Ody often served as war charms during the Late Kaloy Phase, protecting the wearer from being wounded in battle (Callet 1974:132). The first mention of a war charm in Imerina was in 1787, with de LaSalle's description of a bandoleer of ox horns filled with a substance that rendered soldiers invulnerable to bullets.[73] Outside war, the charms were used to encourage general good fortune (ibid.). Ruud noted that *ody* took three general forms: (1) ox horns filled with a variety of objects, decorated with beads and fastened to a long strip of material; (2) wooden pegs on a string, worn like a chain around the neck. (3) figures representing living creatures such as zebu or crocodiles (Ruud 1970:187).[74]



If the owner of an *ody* became wealthy or otherwise successful, the *ody* thus might become a group protector, a *sampy*. These were considered more powerful than individual protectors as they could protect an entire village.[75] Correspondingly, the *ombiassy* who created the charm also increased in importance. The group protector *sampy* could, in turn, "give birth" to an *ody* (Johns to Freeman, 29 May 1833;[76] Ellis 1838: 395-96). In other words, one could buy an offshoot of the group protector to serve as a personal amulet. Protective power was thereby transferred from the group to an individual when the individual made gifts to the group in return for *ody* consecrated by the group protector. Thus, personal protectors created group protectors, which in turn created personal protectors in a cyclical process.

Andrianampoinimerina established his national pantheon from personally selected talismans. According to the oral traditions, after the "unification" of Avaradrano into Imerina, Andrianampoinimerina ordered the populace to assemble all their *sampy* (Callet 1974:228). From these he chose twelve *sampy* which, he felt, were the most powerful and had the potential to maintain the unification. "*Ces douze saintes idols sont dignes de confiance: elles ont opéré l'unité du pays et de l'état, elles ont fait un tout de l'Imerina*" (ibid.). He singled out

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72 Berg chose to refer to personal protectors (*ody*) as "talismans" and to the generative group protectors (*sampy*) as "palladia" (Berg 1986:177).

73 De La Salle (1816), fol. 219 (British Museum)

74 Charles Renel (1915) and Lars Vig (1969) have produced the most comprehensive studies of Merina protectors.

75 In form, however, *ody* and *sampy* were identical. This similarity has led many observers to use the two terms interchangeably, thus obscuring an essential difference in function.

76 LMS-IL, box 4

four as particularly special, to serve as "royal" *sampy*. These were Kelimalaza, Manjakatsiroa, Fantaka and Mahavaly, and were kept at Ambohimanga when the King was in residence. Their guardians were designated by Andrianampoinimerina to serve as royal *sampy* guardians and subsequently given a highly respectable advisory position (Callet 1974:229). Of these *sampy*, two were especially significant: Manjakatsiroa which belonged to Andrianampoinimerina personally rather than to the population as a whole (Callet 1974:810), and Kelimalaza which was considered "sovereign" of all the idols, and the protector of the Merina empire (ibid.).

By incorporating a group's *sampy* into a national pantheon, regional loyalty was then directed towards the sovereign (an elder to D. Jones, cited in Berg 1986:176). Thus, the idol system was flexible and responded to fluctuating political exigencies: "Shifting political conditions and the desire to appeal to different groups at different times determined the names of royal palladia [idols] invoked on any given occasion" (Berg 1986; Vig 1969:82-96). *Sampy* could be included and excluded from the pantheon and its group raised or reduced in status, as circumstances required (Callet 1974:178). Often, when a group backed the monarch, they entered into an alliance with royalty and the group *sampy* entered the pantheon. Thus, for example, when Andrianampoinimerina secured the support of the Ambohimanambola, their *sampy*, Kelimalaza, was incorporated as a royal idol. In return for supporting Andrianampoinimerina, the Ambohimanambola retained legal autonomy and performed important functions in royal ritual (Berg 1986:178). This combination of political and supernatural power was particularly effective in binding social groups to the King.

The Monarch and Ombiassy *as Mediators and the Concept of* Fady

Once Andrianampoinimerina was established as legitimate, backed by the ancestors and idols, he could act as a mediator for change - communicating by issuing decrees from the ancestral world thorough oratory (*kabary*) and by example through conspicuous consumption. By arbitrating foreign influence, Andrianampoinimerina exercised control over change in Imerina. For example, the King controlled the frequency of Imerina's domestic markets and took care to ensure that they were not flooded with imported goods, thus giving the people a taste for imported luxuries which they would be unwilling to renounce (Ellis 1986:5). "Andrianampoinimerina forbade the import of foreign goods other than those he judged essential for the developing kingdom which, in 1808, he defined as coins (Piastres) and firearms, and he forbade the sale of slaves in exchange for any other commodity except these two" (Roux to Decaen, Tamatave, 26 May, 29 July and 21 December, 1808).[77]

As mentioned above, mediation of foreign influence was also achieved by the notion of *fady*, or taboo. Ancestors were thought to communicate their wishes and taboos through *sampy* – which would take on their "likes and dislikes." In order to protect a *sampy* and endear oneself to it, its preferences had to be respected, or the idol would become ineffective as a voice of the ancestors, and lose its sacred power or ability to bless the living. An idol's *fady* was largely determined by its keeper. Thus, the idol keepers (or *ombiassy*) were characteristically known as the "guardians of tradition," an appropriate title for their mediating role.

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77 Archives Nationale, Madagascar, 234/513

Rituals of Purification

Perhaps the most important role of the monarch and priests as mediators was their function in national purification rituals, such as the royal bath (*fandroana*). Andrianampoinimerina inherited the ritual of the royal bath from his predecessors, but like other traditions, he enhanced it and used it to serve his political purposes, making the ritual "national" in scope. *Fandroana* thus served as the quintessential illustration of the ideal Merina socio-cosmic order, incorporating all of its important elements: wet/dry, Vazimba/ancestral, female/male, the monarch (assisted by *ombiassy*) as mediator between the earthly and ancestral realms; and emphasised the social hierarchy. [78] The ritual of the royal bath functioned to bind the Merina together and always took place at Ambohimanga, reinforcing its position as the *axis mundi* of the Merina universe.

Although the ritual of the royal bath was almost certainly practised annually by the Indonesian immigrants who recreated the New Year's rituals they knew at home, Andrianampoinimerina enhanced the ritual and used it as a way to unite his population and reinforce the cosmological and socio-political order he expanded. The earliest eyewitness account of the royal bath in Imerina was given by James Hastie in 1817. He confirmed that the ceremony occurred annually, originally at the new moon between the end of Alahotsy and the beginning of Alahamady (about the same time as it was in Sulawesi, according to the *saka* calendar) and corresponded with the New Year of the *vintana* system. When the oral traditions were collected in the nineteenth century, the days of the royal bath were said to relate to the days of birth of the three most celebrated rulers in Avaradrano: Ralambo, Andriamasinavalona and Andrianampoinimerina; further pointing to the divine origins and powers of these proto-Merina ancestors.

As with the Indian and Indonesian ritual, the objective was to procure order from chaos, achieved by dramatising its opposite. The night before the bath was characterised by a night of orgy and collective abandon, representing the natural state of chaos (Callet 1974:167-8). Then, the dawn of the new year brought the purifying bath and order in the kingdom. The water used for the bath was taken from sources associated with the Vazimba nature spirits and was warmed over a fire in the King's dwelling. The monarch then bathed in the water that had been mixed with earth obtained from the tombs of the royal ancestors. After his bath, the King literally blew this mixture on his subjects, his inferiors, by way of blessing, taking the mixture into his mouth from a white zebu horn (*tandrompotsy*). The Malagasy word Bloch (1977) has translated as "blessing" is "*tsodrano*" and it means, literally, "the blowing on of water." This action was accompanied by a benediction that summoned fertility. Thus, during *fandroana*, the monarch was seen to unite the elements of fire, water, earth and air, just as Ibonia did during his gestation, birth and earthly life.

Like the Merina burial rituals, *fandroana* served to reinforce and preserve the "correct" cosmological and socio-political order throughout Imerina, thus uniting the kingdom and reinforcing a common cultural identity. Bloch has argued that through the rituals of royal blessing, the subjects were represented as figurative descendants

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78 For a complete analysis of this ritual, see Razafiminao (1924), Molet (1956), and especially Bloch (1977).

of the ruler and his or her ancestors, as if the whole kingdom was one family. "Receiving water is a sign of filiation, either political or kinship" (Bloch 1987:282). The blessing, originating from the past, was transmitted through the monarch into the present (Bloch 1982:212). The monarch acted as the intermediary by passing the water associated with the ancestors and ancestral land to their descendants, thereby re-establishing cosmic, social and political order. Thus, through the resolution of oppositions, the bath ritual represented a world where everything was in its place: the cosmos, the ancestors, the kingdom and the kinship system.

As with the *famadihana*, life and death (vital energy and ancestral energy) was the most significant opposition that had to be reconciled during the *fandroana*. Razafiminao (1924) and Molet (1956) have noted the similarity between the royal bath ritual and funerary rituals, where blessing is achieved by overcoming (harnessing) the vital element. Bloch has maintained that the gift of blessing, fertility and renewal is achieved by "victory" over death, individuality and division, and this victory is won in the successful battle against vitality (Bloch 1982:221). However, it is important to note that the vital element could not be completely suppressed, it had to be maintained to provide a contrast to royal order. For example, the dry earth from the tombs of the ancestors was mixed with water, associated with the Vazimba, vital nature spirits of the underworld. Also, in the days leading up to the bath, representing order, its opposite, chaos, was acted out by orgiastic activity the night before the bath. "Rituals, as many anthropologists have pointed out, are a little like theatre. They create images by dramatic means and especially by contrast" (Bloch 1987:285). Thus, disorder was acted out so that order could appear triumphant. Essentially, the ritual marked the King as an exceptional semi-divine being who had resolved *all* oppositions. However, Bloch observed that the resolution was illusory, that oppositions could not be permanently reconciled. The "royal solution" was temporary, as the King "must come out of the bath" (ibid:297). Therefore, to maintain order and the blessings of fertility, it was essential to repeat the ritual annually, just as it was in Indianised Sulawesi.[79]

In addition to restoring the order of the universe, the royal bath ritual (*fandroana*) also served to reinforce the order of the middle world. First, the Merina were bound together and strengthened by this exclusive ritual, which placed them in a perceived position of power over other Malagasy groups. Because the ritual took place at Ambohimanga, the Tsimahafotsy Merina were especially privileged to receive blessing directly from the monarch, establishing them at the top of the Merina social hierarchy. Also, *fandroana* served to reinforce the social system, in that blessing was passed down from top to bottom according to social hierarchy of the middle world, outlined below. Those physically closest to the official ceremony at Ambohimanga therefore received the most potent blessing, which reinforced their dominant social position.

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79 Another ritual that was repeated annually was the purification bath of the idols. This took place during the month of Alakaosy. Personal and group idols were bathed by ombiassy in the main square of each Merina village in a bath of water and honey. The royal idols comprising the national pantheon were assembled and bathed at Ambohimanga. The Tsimahafotsy, as well as Andrianampoinimerina, gave an offering to the national idols that demonstrated that they were subordinate to their power. For a complete description of the purification of idols, see Callet (1974: 221-223).

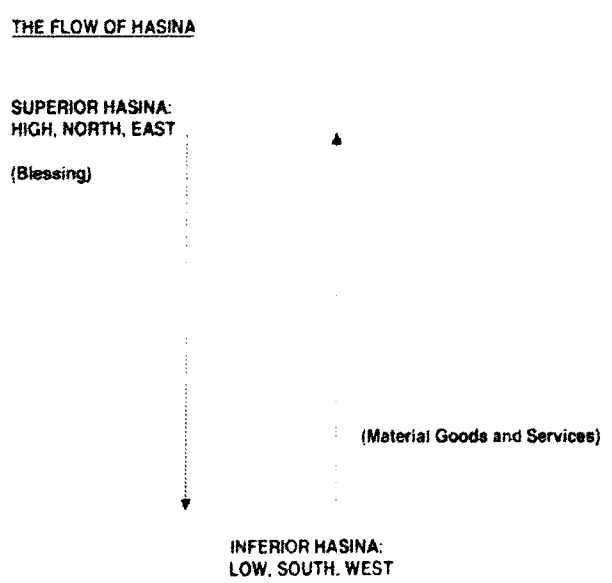
The Middle World and Andrianampoinimerina's Imperial Ambition: The Unification of Avaradrano into Imerina

Social Hierarchy

Using his powerful station, its legitimacy underlined by the Ibonia legend tradition, and ritual, Andrianampoinimerina built on this established order and set out to restructure the social system beneath him. He assigned rank and territory to groups of related individuals (*demes*) in accordance with their political alliances, and implemented and built on the state-model imported by the Indianised-Indonesian immigrants during the early phases, which placed him and the Tsimahafotsy in a dominant position in the power hierarchy. Essentially, he used the Ibonia epic to his advantage to emphasise the divine origin of his kingship and the national ritual of *fandroana* to maintain this position.

As discussed above, "the basic state-model was derived from India, with its concept of kingship, the court, the army, the civil and religious bureaucracy and royal overlordship of lands" (Dwyer 1990:21). Administration was centred on a royal capital , in this case Ambohimanga, where the wealth from land taxes was concentrated and used to support the royal retinue and finance military operations for the defence or expansion of the state. The construction of royal cities absorbed considerable resources but they provided centralising symbols of statehood. Thus, Andrianampoinimerina was able to unite the population under his rule not only because of his wealth as a result of the slave trade, but also because of the symbols of divine kingship he created in Ambohimanga's cultural landscape, as will be discussed in Chapter Five.

The *Hasina* System



The *hasina* system worked to ensure a functioning society by reinforcing correct social order as assigned by Andrianampoinimerina. The concept of *hasina* demonstrated the same aristocratic root character as the word *mana*, which is derived from the Indonesian *manang* ("to be influential, superior"). [80] The hasina system served to enhance the ruler's importance, fill the royal coffers and underline the various social strata considered necessary for a functioning state, thereby making Ambohimanga by far the richest and most powerful hilltop settlement in the Late Kaloy Phase.

The system operated as follows: Ancestors, when pleased, bestowed blessings, "superior *hasina*," upon those who honoured them via the monarch, who acted as an intermediary in the exchange. In return, the population

80 www.darkshire.org/~jhkim/rpg/magic/mana.html

offered "inferior *hasina*," material goods, coins, or labour, to their ancestors, also via the monarch. Bloch has suggested that superior *hasina* (which he has termed "*hasina* I") was the possession of "innate religious superiority." Whereas, inferior *hasina* ("*hasina* II") was the "homage rendered by inferiors to superiors." The opposing flows of inferior *hasina* upwards and superior *hasina* downwards reinforced the recently established hierarchy in which all groups were ranked in order of status with royalty at the apex (Bloch 1977:185).

Inferior Hasina

Inferior *hasina* often took the form of material goods, such as an uncut silver coin (Piastre) or the hump of a zebu. The uncut Piastre was essentially a tax due to the monarch at all ritual events, speeches (*kabary*), and state visits, as a sign of homage. Another form of inferior *hasina* was *fanompoana*, or obligatory labour, performed by the *demes*. Berg (1988) wrote that "Andrianampoinimerina needed working hands as well as believing hearts" and toward this end he adopted the concept of *fanompoana*. Thus, Andrianampoinimerina would "honour" his supporters by assigning them services to the state.[81] "If I give you money, it can be spent; if I offer you a *lamba*,[82] it can become torn. But here is what I give you, the memory of your worthy deeds will follow you always" (Kus's translation of Callet 1974: 591). We will see evidence of *fanompoana* in the construction of the fortifications and the royal residences at Ambohimanga during the Late Kaloy Phase (Chapter Five).

Superior Hasina

While inferior *hasina* illustrated Andrianampoinimerina's control of material resources, superior *hasina*, in the form of blessings at national ritual events (*fandroana*) and during speech making (*kabary*) left the recipient satisfied, yet powerless. For example, Andrianampoinimerina used *kabary* in bringing the population of Imerina under his control. This was a form of blessing in which the King would speak to the populace, guided from the ancestral realm, thus making his words sacred, inviolable and a blessing for the living. "We understand therein the function of the *kabary*. There is a master of the words. There is somebody who answers. It is the master of the words who rules the kingdom. As for the one who answers to the *kabary* it is the public acknowledgement of his submission" (Ottino's translation of Callet (1983:261)). Thus, resembling *mufakat*, *kabary* was not the democratic practice some may believe it was. "The monarch would assemble his people under the pretext of consulting them and laying before these *kabary*, from which, however, they never dissented - as the final responsibility and decision in all affairs of government rested with himself" (Oliver 1886:110-11). Also, there were strong verbal and visual incentives for compliance to Andrianampoinimerina's laws, which will be discussed below.

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81 Berg noted that unpaid service was a symbol of political loyalty and therefore could not be undertaken by a slave, since it would suggest that the slave had acquired the political rights and obligations of a free citizen (Berg 1988:7).

81 A *lamba* is a textile resembling an *ikat* cloth (Indonesia) used for clothing and as a burial shroud. See Mack (1986:25) for a discussion of weaving techniques.

These *kabary* followed the social hierarchy established by Andrianampoinimerina. They were given first at Fidasiana in the centre of Ambohimanga, by Andrianampoinimerina himself or at Ambatorangotina by Tsimahafotsy chiefs (the Andriamasinavalona), speaking on behalf of the monarch. Then, they would be proclaimed on the other "sacred" hills by the King's wives (see below) and, thereafter, in all the provinces of Imerina. This set a pattern whereby, at regular intervals, information was communicated to the expanding kingdom (Callet 1974:294). These proclamations and decisions were seen to be supported by the ancestors and by physical and ideological association with the twelve hills and the monarch, the messages were sacrosanct.

Andrianampoinimerina's Incentives for Compliance

In addition to burial practices, the *hasina* system, national ritual activity and the monarch and idol keepers acting as mediators between Imerina and the outside world, Andrianampoinimerina also maintained order by imposing strong incentives for compliance (the "oaths of allegiance") and an organised justice system.

The Oaths of Allegiance

According to the oral histories, "oaths of allegiance" (*lefonomby* and *sotrovoakaka*) were used by the chiefs preceding Andrianampoinimerina to control their subjects. The oaths are said to have originated with Andriantsimitoviaminandriana (Callet 1974: 388) but they were certainly venerated, if not actually created, by Andrianampoinimerina, with his growing need to control his growing population. During the Late Kaloy Phase, these oaths were performed at Ambohimanga. *Lefonomby* was performed at Fidasiana in Ambohimanga, and *sotrovoakaka* took place at Ambatorangotina. The Andriamasinavalona, the highest ranking Tsimahafotsy *deme*, presided over all the ceremonies held at Ambohimanga. The oaths communicated the ideal of unity, fidelity, and the consequence of dissenting from the monarch's rule and causing discord (Callet 1974:387).

Tangena *and the Justice System*

In addition to the oaths of allegiance, Andrianampoinimerina is said to have organised the justice system for the first time. Laws were proclaimed orally and handed down via *kabary*.[83] In the event that any of Andrianampoinimerina's laws were broken, he established degrees of judgement, based on methods used by his ancestors: trial by fire, water and poison; the most severe being poison extracted from the Tangena nut (Oliver 1886:117-18). The Tantara has revealed that the *tangena* trials were first performed on chickens (Callet 1974:112). If the bird died, a sign of guilt, the poison was then administered to the human (ibid:113). In addition to judging guilt surrounding a breach of law, Andrianampoinimerina also used the *tangena* method to determine "*les dispositions bonnes où mauvaises*" of individuals, thus establishing whom he could trust in his rapidly expanding kingdom. The Andriamasinavalona, Andrianampoinimerina's closest advisors, administered *tangena* and served as judges. But, essentially, judgement was seen to come from the ancestral realm and

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83 See Oliver (1886:114) for the ancient hova code recorded by M. Charnay when visiting Madagascar in 1863; see also Berg (1985:274).

therefore was indisputable. The *tangena* ordeal served to reinforce proper order in Imerina in that "it was administered that the people may reverence their kings, by making them suppose that they are in possession of a divine or sacred thing capable of finding out those who commits the most heinous crimes, and indeed so convinced were then the people of the sacredness of the *tangena* ordeal" (Raombana I:326).

The Twelve Sacred Hills as a Unifying Mechanism



To oversee his growing empire, Andrianampoinimerina established a central governmental core spread over a network of twelve hills of Avaradrano (*left*),[84] with Ambohimanga serving as the power centre.[85] The significance of these hills was established based on their association with the royal ancestors (see Callet 1974: 251), having been the birthplaces, abodes, or burial places of former monarchs (Oliver 1886). Andrianampoinimerina began to call the hills the "twelve mountains of the twelve who reigned."[86] By emphasising their ancestral significance and erecting shrines to the former rulers on the summits of the hills, he created a real and symbolic source of ancestral blessing that would serve as the nucleus of his power. This demonstrated Andrianampoinimerina's legitimacy and sacred authority to the population, based firmly on tradition.

Andrianampoinimerina maintained control over these centres by installing one of his wives on each hill as a figurehead for his government (Callet 1974:715). His practice of wife-taking contributed significantly to Andrianampoinimerina's ability to pacify and eventually unify Imerina. In fact, Andrianampoinimerina's wives were called *entina manpandry tany*, literally meaning "pacification of the kingdom" (Callet 1974:715). Andrianampoinimerina generally acquired his wives through war. After conquering an area of Avaradrano, he would marry a wife of the reigning sovereign. By wife-taking, a bond was formed between the Merina King and those he conquered. The wives were then each placed in a *rova*, an enclosure of royal residences, constructed

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84 Map by Raison, J. –P. (1977:130)

85 The hills that comprised Avaradrano were Ambohimanga, Ambohidratrimo, Ambohidrabiby, Ilafy, Ambohimalaza, Imerikasina, Analamanga (Antananarivo), Ambohidrapeto, Alasora, Antsahadinta, Ampndrana, and Merimanjaka.

86 As per the Ibonia legend, Andrianampoinimerina was associated with the divine ancestral realm and could be considered the successor of those former rulers, even if they were not blood relatives.

on the tops of the twelve hills. These centres, spread over Avaradrano, effected a wide-ranging royal presence. Thus, the twelve hills symbolised the unification of Avaradrano into Imerina. They assured the kingdom's sovereignty by serving as government centres and illustrating the cult of the royal ancestors, from whom Andrianampoinimerina had "descended." Like the monarch himself, the twelve hills were considered sacred as well as political, with Ambohimanga clearly in a superior position to the others.

The hills were almost exact replicas of Ambohimanga in function as well as form. As mentioned above, *kabary* would be given on the hills after they were heard at Ambohimanga. Also, after being performed at Ambohimanga, the *fandroana*, or national bath ritual, was repeated on all the other hills by the royal wife stationed there. The time to perform the ritual was signified by fires (*herindrina*) lit on the hilltops after the ritual took place at Ambohimanga. Further, the *sampy* comprising Andrianampoinimerina's "national pantheon," considered the most powerful talismans in the empire, were housed on the twelve hills, with Kelimalaza at Ambohimanga as the "sovereign" of all idols (Callet 1974:531).

Conclusion: Expansion and Merina "Superiority"

Andrianampoinimerina utilised the socio-cosmic system he inherited from his predecessors to unify Imerina and expand his kingdom, instituting Merina political superiority over much of the island. Once conquered, his subjects were required to take "oaths of allegiance" to him, and/or undergo the *tangena* ordeal. Their *sampy* were sometimes incorporated into the national pantheon, binding the group further to the King. They participated in national rituals, such as the royal bath (*fandroana*), at which they were blessed by the Monarch. They were required to pay a tax (inferior *hasina*) in exchange for this blessing (superior *hasina*). They entered a highly organised symbolic system based on the *vintana* system, clearly illustrating the social order through the structuring of time and space. Also, Andrianampoinimerina's presence at the apex of the middle world and his mediating power with the ancestral world, were clearly felt throughout Imerina through *kabary* (verbal communication) and the symbolic visual language mapped onto the cultural landscape. Finally, new citizens of Andrianampoinimerina's empire were made afraid of the fate that would befall them if they did not comply with his laws communicated verbally and visually thorugh the "oaths of allegiance. Thus, Andrianampoinimerina was recognised as a semi-divine figure, in control of all aspects of the life and ultimately the death of his citizens.

As a result of Andrianampoinimerina's imperial ambition and carefully organised population, united through explicit social and ideological systems, the Merina became the dominant ethnic group in Madagascar, with Ambohimanga's Tsimahafotsy at the helm. Mayeur, in the late eighteenth century, expressed his surprise to see the social organisation and industry of the Merina. "The Europeans who frequent the coasts of Madagascar could hardly believe that in the centre of the island, a hundred miles distant from the sea,....there is more enlightenment, more industry, more efficient government, more advanced civilisation, than on the coasts; and yet the coast tribes having for long been in constant connection with Europeans, ought to have

much increased in knowledge and intelligence" (Grandidier 1900:393). Thus, by the end of the Late Kaloy Phase, the Merina had risen to a position of power, establishing political suzerainity over much of the island.

Ambohimanga remained the most important hill of the Merina Empire throughout the Late Kaloy Phase. Even when Andrianampoinimerina moved the capital of Imerina to Antananarivo in the early nineteenth century, Ambohimanga was still considered the *axis mundi*, the sacred centre of the Imerina world, just as Luwuq served as the sacred centre for the Bugis. Also, it remained the *tanindrazana* of the Merina ancestors. Anthropologists have described the Merina as living in effect in two localities: the place where one works and keeps one's household and the *tanindrazana*, a locality of much deeper sentimental significance, the spiritual centre where the family tomb is located. In this case, the tomb of Andrianampoinimerina, the monarch responsible for uniting the Merina and elevating the Tsimahafotsy to a position of unprecedented power, gave Ambohimanga an added importance that would never be forgotten.

3. The Fiadanana Phase (1810-1897)

The nineteenth century Fiadanana Phase was characterised by continuous population growth in Imerina, the integration of western knowledge and technology into many aspects of life, and Merina hegemony, as the group expanded incorporating more and more of Madagascar. During this period, although the Merina were exposed to many internal changes and outside influences, they maintained a unified power and strengthened their notion of dominance over other Malagasy groups. The Tsimahafotsy remained at the top of this power hierarchy. Divinely inspired rulers continued to emanate from Ambohimanga, building on tradition and operating within the established socio-cosmic order, despite extensive outward change (Chart C).

The Merina ruler proceeded to act as mediator to external influence during the Fiadanana Phase, but often he or she was lured into western thinking by powerful missionaries and other European visitors. If change within the government was perceived by the *ombiassy* and general public as too extreme, if there was too much break with tradition and the underlying socio-cosmic system was threatened, especially in combination with weak incentives for compliance to the changes, revolution occurred. In most cases, the ancestors were said to be "displeased" with the change that had taken place and would revolt through *ombiassy*, and members of the general population who, acting as mediums for their discontent, responded by reasserting *fombandrazana*, or the "ways of the ancestors," in order to return to established norms. These revolts often involved the systems or rituals under threat, where the population led by *ombiassy* would access the ancestors directly for guidance and blessing, bypassing the monarch in the process.

Ombiassy were the protagonists in these revolts because they functioned as the official guardians of tradition. Participants in the revolts were often women. Because of their place in the cosmological system, closer to nature and the "wet" vital realm, females were considered easier for the spirits to possess, and thus often served as mediums. Also, women traditionally took on the role as protectors of tradition in Merina society. Finally, on a practical level, the men could not afford to leave their fields and occupations to participate in the often-protracted protests.

It is interesting to note that most of the unrest originated with the Tsimahafotsy, from Ambohimanga. The Tsimahafotsy were, by nature, conservative and committed to preserving *fombandrazana* and the fundamental principles upon which the Merina kingdom was based and in which they held a dominant position. All Merina rulers since Andrianampoinimerina either originated from Ambohimanga themselves, or at least had close family there. It was thus considered the *tanindrazana* of royalty and was likewise respected as sacred. Throughout the Fiadanana Phase, the Tsimahafotsy supernatural leaders took on the pro-active and privileged role of communicating with the ancestors directly, in an effort to retain essential elements upon which the Merina *imago mundi* was based, when they were threatened by potentially destructive foreign influence and weak rulers.

THE FIADANANA PHASE POWER HIERARCHY

UPPER WORLD

Andrianahary

Gods

Royal Ancestors (especially Andrianampoinimerina)

Royal Wives

The Andriamasinavalona

Tsimahafotsy Ancestors

Other Noble Ancestors (12 hills)

Other Merina Ancestors

MIDDLE WORLD

Monarch (assisted by ombiassy)

Royal Wives and Idol Guardians

The Andriamasinavalona

Tsimahafotsy

Other Andriana (12 hills)

Hova

Andevo

LOWER WORLD

The Vazimba and other malevolent and disgruntled spirits

CHART C

Radama I (1810-1828)

Andrianampoinimerina's son, Radama I, fostered his father's imperial ambition throughout his reign. Warfare was continuously waged against the non-Merina inhabitants of Madagascar and slaves were taken to be sold. Most importantly to this end Radama conquered the Sakalava, the Merina's most significant adversary. By a mixture of force and diplomacy, Radama obliged the Sakalava to submit to his authority. "By a late treaty with the chiefs of an extensive portion of the island, inhabited by the people called Sacalaves, he has become ruler of, at least, two-thirds of Madagascar" (LMS(R) 1824).

However, Radama faced internal struggles. Andrianampoinimerina's Tsimahafotsy advisors, still present in government, were not content with many of Radama's Europeanised policies. There was ensuing conflict within the government over issues of war, slavery and religion, basically because of the King's apparent break with tradition and increasing reliance on European people, things and institutions, which threatened the established power base. Most significantly, Radama allowed the London Missionary Society (LMS) to establish itself in Antananarivo in 1820, and Christianity presented an alternative to *fombandrazana.* Though Radama maintained key customs and rituals ordained by his ancestors, he allowed significant change, such as Christianity, missionary education, European technology (which altered the appearance of Imerina's cultural landscape significantly), printing; and established a European–style army to maintain his authority (Berg 1986:189). He abandoned the "oaths of allegiance," which served this purpose under his father's reign, and encouraged European education in his country. Significantly, he entertained British insistence that he abolish the slave trade, thus dramatically threatening the economy and the cycle of wealth and power creation based upon it.[87] Also, the King abandoned the national pantheon for a short time, thereby removing a large part of his power base and disturbing the hierarchy of mediation.

Nevertheless, components of the traditional order remained strong and intact. The cult of the ancestors persevered, the human hierarchy supported by the *hasina* system continued and national rituals were celebrated regularly (see Raombana vol. I). Fundamental order was maintained and fertility was seen to be renewed each year. Thus, Radama continued to be seen as the mediator between the ancestral and earthly realms, resolving the oppositions between them and maintaining his position as the semi-divine pinnacle of human society organised below him. Also, the twelve "sacred" hills continued to function as the governmental core of Imerina, each inhabited by one of the King's wives. [88]

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87 The export of slaves was "abolished" on 11 October 1817 by virtue of a treaty between Madagascar and England. Radama agreed to prohibit the exportation of his subjects as slaves. In return he was to receive ammunition, clothes, gold and silver, yearly, from England (Howe 1938:150). However, slaves could and did remain in a domestic capacity.

88 Wife-taking continued to be important in forming political alliances during Radama I's reign. For example, when Radama forced the Sakalava to submit to his authority, he married the daughter of the Sakalava king of Menabe, Rasalimo, as a symbol of this submission, thus literally and metaphorically uniting the Sakalava with the Merina (Oliver 1886:35).

To maintain order, in addition to implementing a permanent well-trained army, Radama enhanced Andrianampoinimerina's legal system and laws became progressively more regulated (Bloch 1983:24; Ellis 1838:370). However, trial by poison (*tangena*) was temporarily abolished by Radama I at European request (Bulpin 1958; LMS(R) 1824:122). Eliminating trial by poison, and softening other measures of discipline seen to be supported by the ancestors, weakened Radama's ability to maintain civic control, opening the door for protest.

The First Revolutions

Although some of Radama's power base and maintenance institutions remained the same as during Andrianampoinimerina's reign, change was too abrupt for the Tsimahafotsy population. Because Radama abandoned many of the traditions utilised by his father, upon which the order-creation system relied, and because he encouraged foreign ideology and practice, there was generalised discontent. This was notably expressed through minor protest movements led by Tsimahafotsy *ombiassy* from Ambohimanga, in their role as guardians of tradition.

For example, on 1 April 1822 Griffith noted that "his Majesty employed an Englishman to cut his hair at his country seat. "The news that the King had cut short his hair was soon spread in Imerina and caused the astonishment of the people much for changing the custom of his ancestors by cutting short his hair" (Raombana II:800). [89] In response, on 15 April Griffith reported that a "mutiny of women" from the district to the north (Ambohimanga), rose against him and the Europeans. "On the 16th of April about four thousand females arrived at Antananarivo and sent a message to the King expressing their discontent, and Radama put four of the principal instigators to death" (LMS(C) 1821-4). In 1825 there was another female revolt (also led by Tsimahafotsy *ombiassy* and women from Ambohimanga) against formal missionary-led education. "These women [Radama said] were disaffected, because they wished to remain forever in ignorance, and be like beasts, and because I would have them instructed and become wise, and like Europeans" (ibid:308). In 1825 there was another revolt by women who refused to cut the hair of the men going into the military. Although relatively minor, these were the first examples of popular revolution which would occur in Imerina when the break with tradition was too great and the government's power base relatively weak.

The movements towards a return to tradition were somewhat effective. As a result of popular discontent and continuous pleas and demonstrations from the *ombiassy* and female followers, Radama's confidence in the talismans was eventually restored: "*Je vois maintenant et je crois,*" said Radama (Callet 1974:233). In the Bennet papers it is reported that "the idol Kelimalaza, and the *sikidy* which Radama had chased away some years past, re-entered into court to direct and govern all things as they did twenty years prior."[90] This would

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89 The length of one's hair was symbolic of the power they held.

90 LMS-IL, box 3

have been largely due to the influence of Andrianampoinimerina's Tsimahafotsy advisors still present in court who acted as a guiding force for Radama, encouraging *fombandrazana*, and warning of the threat of further revolution. Thus, Radama was re-invested with the power of *hasina*, fuelled by his ancestors, talismans, *ombiassy* and Tsimahafotsy advisors, and the kingdom was peaceful once again.

From an *etic* perspective, Radama's reign appeared to bring great change. But, upon closer examination, we see that the conservative elements of society from Ambohimanga kept change in check and *fombandrazana* prevailed. Thus, Ambohimanga remained in a dominant position as the sacred centre of Imerina and nucleus of ancestral power, just as Andrianampoinimerina had intended it. Also, the Tsimahafotsy retained and enhanced their positions as guardians of this power.

Ranavalona I (1828-1861)

After Radama's death, his senior wife and cousin, Ranavalona I, succeeded him as Queen. For the first time, a woman was the figurehead of government.[91] She was assisted by a Prime Minister (first Andiramihaja, assassinated in 1830, then Rainiharo who died in 1852, and then by Rainiharo's sons, Rainivoniahitriniony (1852-1864) and Rainilaiarivony (1864- 1895). During the early 1830's a struggle ensued between European Christianity and *fombandrazana*, but the latter ideology prevailed. Ranavalona I's monarchy became characterised by conservatism and a reliance on tradition, and during her reign the traditional socio-cosmic order was reinforced and significantly enhanced.

Ranavalona I continued the aggressive expansion policy initiated by Andrianampoinimerina and carried out by Radama, focused on acquiring the southeastern parts of Madagascar. But, home in Imerina she was staunchly conservative, and used her power to return strictly to all the policies instituted by Andrianampoinimerina. She did this by eliminating European influence as much as possible, forbidding Europeans on the island and banning trade with them. She reversed most of the pro-western changes allowed by Radama I returning to a wealth and power creation cycle based on the slave trade, as it was during Andrianampoinimerina's reign. Thus, many Tsimahafotsy resumed their privileged status as prominent slave traders at the top of the human power hierarchy. During Ranavalona's reign, countless non-Merina Malagasy became slaves in consequence of capture in war. Ellis, writing in 1856, reported that recently the Hovas [Merina] returned from their military expeditions into distant parts of the island with vast numbers of captives, often hundreds, and sometimes thousands (Ellis 1859:149). She also imported slaves from Mozambique, who brought with them their animistic beliefs and ways of communicating with the ancestral world, which infiltrated Merina society.

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91 A female was chosen most likely because women were considered easily influenced, but ironically Ranavalona I was an extremely powerful leader.

In February 1838, Ranavalona attempted to curtail European influence even further. She prohibited her subjects from observing the rites of Christianity (Oliver 1886:103) and persecuted converts.[92] She also exalted the "rituals of the royal order," such as *fandroana*. Essentially, Ranavalona I utilised and inflated the symbolism made significant under Andrianampoinimerina to illustrate her philosophy, hosting grand national rituals to promote her role as mediator[93] and building vast tombs to promote the cult of the ancestors.

During Ranavalona's reign her authority rested largely upon the royal and national pantheon, which continued to unite Imerina and serve as a medium for the ancestral voice. "Their idols are numerous and of different degrees of honour and renown, the most renowned in this part of the island are those which belong to the sovereign, these are (as far as we can ascertain) about twelve in number" (Johns, 30 May 1833). These proceeded to be housed with their guardians on the twelve sacred hills of Imerina.[94] She honoured them regularly, bathed them during *alakaosy*, and received blessing (superior *hasina*) from them (Raombana IIIc:141; see also Raombana IIIb:17-18). "The present reigning sovereign [Ranavalona I] firmly believes in the powers and virtues of the above idols and gave great privileges to their ministers or keepers, and they have been much enriched by her" (Raombana I:61). Also, during Ranavalona I's reign, *fady* were added to the *sampy's* lists of dislikes, including Europeans themselves. From that point forward, Europeans were banished from most of Imerina and strictly prohibited from Ambohimanga.[95] Berg (1986) noted that in the 1830s when Christianity and the missionaries were seen as causes for unrest, a national idol (Mahavaly) was attributed with the power to "smell out" Europeans and their converts.

Beneath the Monarch, the social hierarchy was rigidly enforced, maintained by the *hasina* system as it had been previously. At Ranavalona's coronation, after the Queen's presentation of inferior *hasina* to the royal *sampy* and her ancestors in return for assuring her royal power, each *deme* presented inferior *hasina* to the sovereign (an undivided Piastre) in exchange for her divinely inspired blessings, or superior *hasina* (Colonial Office Memorandum, March 1830;[96] Ellis 1838:422,424-425; Berg 1986:175).

There were strong incentives for the population's compliance to Ranavalona and the Prime Minster's ideals. First, the "oaths of allegiance" were reinstated as a requirement for any new subject entering Imerina. In

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92 In a *kabary* for about 150,000 people, Ranavalona I issued a decree "forbidding anyone to refuse to worship the idols, and observe old customs of the land. It also prohibited Christian baptism, the observance of the Lord's supper and the Sabbath, and required all persons who had become Christians to report themselves at the palace within a month," under penelty of death (Townsend 1892: 67; also see Ellis 1856:168).

93 "To this day, the above ceremonies and festivals are still kept in great force, and in my opinion more so than formerly" (Raombana I:130).

94 The conservative nature of the idol guardians at this time is expressed in the "Merina Manuscripts" which Grandidier elicited from informants in the mid 1860's. The idol guardiens essentially took the place of Andrianampoinimerina's wives as figureheads on the twelve sacred hills of Imerina.

95 This demonstrates the flexibility of the pantheon and the ancestors' commandments to suit changing political circumstances.

96 LMS-IL, box 3

addition, the justice system was strengthened, and in 1828 the Queen published a code of forty eight laws based upon the ancient traditions. The poison ritual (*tangena*) was reinstated with a vengeance (Howe 1938; Raombana I:71), and Ranavalona punished Christians by having them thrown off a cliff in Antananarivo, a visible reminder to the public to comply with her anti-European, conservative government.

However, Ranavalona I faced a dilemma - how to protect Merina tradition from foreign ideology while advancing the country technologically. As a solution, some Europeans were allowed to stay in Madagascar if they could prove to Ranavalona I that they were useful: "I will summon them and if they cannot teach my people anything else, they will have to go" (Raombana I: 52). Jean Laborde from France and James Cameron from Scotland were deemed by the Queen to have value (LMS(C) 1925), and were allowed to remain in Imerina. As a result, they were essentially responsible for a two-man "technological revolution" during Ranavalona I's reign, manufacturing diverse items from soap to bricks to cannons, thereby eliminating any need to obtain these items from Europeans. Eventually, they too were considered a threat and were dismissed; yet their impact on Imerina's industry and cultural landscape was significant.

Essentially, Ranavalona I and her Prime Ministers did manage to advance Madagascar technologically while returning firmly to ancestral custom. During Ranavalona I's long reign, power and prestige were fully returned to the Tsimahafotsy and Ambohimanga was exalted as Imerina's sacred capital. The Tsimahafotsy worked in partnership with the conservative Queen in an effort to restore and enhance *fombandrazana* and the fundamental socio-cosmic system upon which Imerina was originally based.

Radama II (1861-1863)

After Ranavalona I's death, her son Radama II was installed on the throne. Radama II was a rather weak character, and his reign was characterised by indecisiveness and discontent. Europeans were welcomed back into the court and the battle that had begun during Radama I's reign between *fombandrazana* and *fombandrazana* (foreign ways), which was suppressed during Ranavalona I's reign, resurfaced (Bulpin 1958:356; Oliver 1886:87; A. Davidson, 4 May 1863).[97]

Within Radama II's government, the conflict raged between conservative nationalists, still primarily Tsimahafotsy who had run the country with Ranavalona I, and the Prime Minister, supported by the Menamaso, a largely incompetent group of advisors assigned by Radama II. Three years after taking office, a revolution called the Ramenjana occurred and Radama II was murdered. It is thought that those responsible were the Tsimahafotsy oligarchs who supported Ranavalona I, and who reinforced their grip on power mainly

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97 It is important to note that while Radama II accepted the Europeans, "he [like Radama I] never avowed himself a Christian, nor intimated his intention of becoming one" (LMS(C) 1863:234). Rev. Robert Toy recognised the King's uncertainty. "He could scoff at the idols and their keepers in presence of Europeans, but in heart he was evidently afraid of their influence" (ibid:240). Also, for the most part, the royal bath ritual continued to be celebrated at Ambohimanga, and the king visited the hill regularly to sacrifice at his mother's grave (ibid.).

because of a private interest in the slave trade, which was threatened by the new regime (Deschamps 1960:175). No doubt the Tsimahafotsy were also responding to the grave threat to the socio-cultural order in which they were dominant.

The Ramenjana Revolution

Radama II and his Prime Minister did much to provoke the dissatisfaction of the Tsimahafotsy old guard. The last straw came when the national purification ritual (the royal bath) was abolished, which radically disrupted the socio-cosmic order the government was based upon. At European behest, *fandroana* was replaced by the European New Year, celebrated on 1 January. As explained previously, the aim of all Merina rituals was to achieve a compromise between the ancestral and vital forces. The ancestral order needed to be imposed, but the vital also had to be retained. The royal bath ceremony achieved this compromise and was meant to be repeated annually, in order to ensure renewed fertility. Thus, the absence of the national ritual disrupted the established cosmological and socio-political world order of the Merina and caused tremendous public discontent.

Because Radama II separated so significantly from the ways of his mother, change was so abrupt and altered the socio-cosmic order so extensively, incentives for compliance were weak, rendering his justice system was ineffective, and a serious widespread protest movement occurred, called the Ramenjana.[98] Ramenjana was, essentially, a radical attempt to re-establish the traditional system of order upon which Merina identity relied, and was more extreme than the protest movements during Radama I's reign. This protest took the form of a possession epidemic, a large-scale trance dance led by the disenchanted *ombiassy*, primarily from Ambohimanga, and embraced by hundreds of women. It first swept Imerina three months before the murder of Radama II and warned of imminent destruction unless the ancestors' ways were strictly adhered to (Ellis to Tidman, 16 May 1863).[99]

The aim of the Ramenjana was to figuratively resurrect the ancestral spirit of Ranavalona I and her leadership, in an attempt to bring about a "purified" socio-cosmic order in the absence of the national rituals that previously served this purpose. Ramenjana dramatised the requisite conquest of the vital by the ancestral, the dramatic representation which is the central part of all principal Merina rituals. In fact, the whole of the revolt borrowed its symbolism from the ritual of the royal bath, a point stressed by Raison-Jourde and taken up by Bloch (Raison-Jourde 1983; Bloch 1992:86-7).

The Ramenjana took place at a time when *fandroana* should have occurred. People throughout Imerina, again especially Tsimahafotsy women from Ambohimanga, became "possessed" by the spirit of Ranavalona I. Then

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98 Sibree (1889) provides a good description of Ramenjana.

98 LMS-IL, box 7

they advanced in great processions to Antananarivo, the capital , figuratively carrying the luggage of former conservative Queen, as though they were about to reinstall her in the *rova* there. They seemed "unconscious of their actions, unable to refrain from leaping, running, dancing and communicating with the royal ancestors" (LMS(C) 1863:236). En route they performed parts of the national ritual which had been forsaken by Radama II. Order began to evolve again for the dissatisfied Merina as they carried out the abandoned ritual on their own initiatives, led by dead rulers instead of the unsatisfactory live one. It is interesting that, in this case, the authority of Radama II was undermined rather than legitimated by the rituals, a paradox of their original intention.

Essentially, "the message was brought to Radama II 'from his ancestors' to the effect that if he did not stop 'the praying' a great calamity would soon befall him" (LMS(C) 1863:236). Bulpin recorded that most of the "sufferers" of Ramenjana were supporters of *fombandrazana*; they announced their choreomania as a supernatural warning sent by the pagan Queen against the spread of Christianity (Bulpin 1958:357). In the end, Radama II was assassinated and a different political system was established, which was more sympathetic to the old order (Bloch 1992:86).

The conflict outlined above represents the main drama of all Merina rituals. In 1863 the Tsimahafotsy Merina were experiencing increased chaos and the collapse of ancestral order. The reaction to this state of affairs was that which we find in all Merina national rituals - the reassertion of order by re-establishing contact with the ancestors, in this case mediated by spiritual advisors (o*mbiassy*) instead of by the monarch. This took the form of a procession of *ombiassy* and women possessed by the royal ancestors, particularly Ranavalona I, to the heart of the kingdom, in an attempt to reassert and maintain traditional order and unity among the Merina. "When chaos threatens, the ancestors return" (Bloch 1986:4). This action demonstrated a creative and flexible approach to change by the Tsimahafotsy who acted to safeguard *fombandrazana* when it came under threat, just as they had during Radama I's reign. Thus, while Imerina experienced a change in government and foreign influence, change was held in check by the conservative Tsimahafotsy, committed to upholding the "ways of their ancestors."

Rasoherina (1863-1868)

Rasoherina, one of Radama II's widows and the favourite niece of Ranavalona I, assumed power in 1863. With her reign the system of government changed significantly, officially becoming a constitutional monarchy (but in practice a dictatorship led by the Prime Minister).[100] Rainilaiarivony combined the posts of Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief during Rasoherina's reign and real power was officially delegated to him and a council of thirty nobles. "The nobles decided that a Queen was easily the most amenable, and ornamental, head for their state" (letter from Ellis to Rev. Dr. Tidman, 16 May 1863 in (LMS(C) 1863:234). Henceforth the sovereign

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100 Rainivoninahitriniony, son of the conservative Rainiharo, served from 1861-4. Rainilairivony, brother of Rainivoninanhitriniony, then served from 1864 to 1895.

would govern as a figurehead through the help of advisors (the Prime Minister and selected nobles), and she would no longerhold absolute authority.

The Prime Minister and nobles from Antananarivo decided upon a "policy of progress" for Madagascar, including religious toleration. Much of Madagascar had already been placed under Merina control by the time of Rasoherina's reign, so the focus of the government was primarily on overseas relations. The Prime Minister's decisions were largely based on economics, closely aligning Madagascar with Europe, especially Britain. Rainilaiarivony won British public support though the creation of a government along British lines, with a monarch, Prime Minister, and a variety of ministries (Campbell 1984:15).

The LMS Christians took advantage of the government's policy of religious tolerance to spread their gospel, which they specially adapted for Madagascar by incorporating indigenous beliefs. For instance, in 1867 when the first of four memorial chapels in Antananarivo was dedicated, the missionary who preached the sermon demonstrated to the people gathered that their ancestors had some knowledge of the Christian God, and quoting familiar Malagasy proverbs, "proved" that the Christian God was the creator, that he knew all things, and that he was the regarder of both good and evil. The people "listened with astonishment to this treatment of their every-day sayings" (Mears 1873:262), equating them with Christianity.[101] The Malagasy God mentioned in the proverbs was most likely the supreme God Andrianahary of the Ibonia legend. Over time, this God was renamed Andriamanitra by the Christians, a name now used interchangeably with Andrianahary. *Zanahary* referred to the collective body of Merina ancestors. Thus, Christianity was added to and syncretised with *fombandrazana*, using familiar Merina concepts in an attempt to win acceptance.[102]

Even though the changes during Rasoherina's reign could be seen as dramatic, her power base remained firm. The new regime stripped the monarch of the power to rule, and virtually all authority went to the Prime Minister, Rainilaiarivony, yet the fact that he had a Queen as a figurehead maintained the crucial sacred link with the ancestors and the socio-cosmic order. In this way, Rasoherina maintained her power as semi-divine mediator between the ancestors and the population and guardian of tradition. The public continued to manifest their "approval" of the monarch by presenting inferior *hasina* to her, not the Prime Minister. In exchange, the Queen would administer superior *hasina* in the form of blessings from the ancestors at kabary and national ritual events. Also, revolution was avoided because incentives for compliance with the new government's ideology were high. Even though the use of *tangena* was formally abolished during Rasoherina's reign, there was a strong justice system backed by an army that limited any attempts at transgression.

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101 The practice of seeing elements of Christianity in Malagasy religion dates from early explorers to the island (e.g. Struys 1684:21).

102 There are some similarities between Christianity and Merina *fombandrazana* that made the new philosophy somewhat acceptable, such as an over-arching God and Jesus, like Ibonia, as mediator. Also, baptism fit well into *fombandrazana* via the concept of the purification bath. As a result of flexibility on the part of the Christians and the Merina, Christianity was tolerated and sometimes syncretised with traditional beliefs and practices.

Although it appeared that Rasoherina had lost control politically, she remained in her powerful capacity as semi-divine mediator and guardian of tradition, thus holding the Merina together in collective identity and keeping the Tsimahafotsy content. Resembling the monarchs who came before her, Rasoherina faced the familiar dilemma between Christianity and all it represented and *fombandrazana*. Publicly, Rasoherina followed Radama I and II, espousing increasingly pro-Christian ideas. However, privately she relied heavily on the idols, ancestors and tradition, spending a great deal of time at Ambohimanga, the sacred centre of Imerina.

Ranavalona II (1868-1883)

After Rasoherina died, Radama II's first wife, Princess Ramoma, became Queen, changing her name to Ranavalona II. Ranavalona II, led by Prime Minister Rainilaiarivony, revolutionised the government by her full public acceptance of Christianity (LMS(R) 1877-8:41). To illustrate this, the symbolism at the royal coronation was changed, and for the first time the Queen had a bible placed by her side for support instead of the national idols (Maude 1895). In fact, Ranavalona II had the royal idols upon which the kingdom was based publicly burned at Ambohimanga and she built a church in the palace yard of Antananarivo, both bold visual statements of dissent from traditional order. Royal conversion to Christianity took place because the Prime Minister, Rainiliariavony, decided that it would benefit the country by bringing the support of Christian nations, namely Britain. He essentially used Christianity as a way to consolidate international relations. "The Prime Minister's and Queen's conversion to Christianity, their subsequent baptism and marriage to each other, was a political act, as the Prime Minister could see that there was much to be gained from an alliance with the English" (Gow 1979:199). "We cannot count on diplomacy and on the sword. God alone can help us," Rainiliariavony cited in (LMS(C) 1883). However, for most Malagasy, Christianity was still a matter of outward conformity and church-going had little effect on their traditional way of life (Brown 1995:218).

Although things appeared to change dramatically in Imerina, the Queen maintained the socio-cosmic order upon which the Merina kingdom was based, which assuaged much discontent among the population (especially the conservative Tsimahafotsy from Ambohimanga). The royal bath ritual continued to be celebrated at both Antananarivo and Ambohimanga (Sibree 1900:489-490), which satisfied the Merina's need for an annual renewal of cosmological and socio-political order. This demonstrated that the Merina were flexible towards other belief systems as long as their fundamental socio-cosmic order was maintained and fertility assured. Also, the "cult of the ancestors" was perpetuated, in that great respect was given to ancestral tombs, *tanindrazana* and sacrifice was regularly performed. Finally, because idols could be replicated (a small piece of a successful *sampy* could be used to create a personal *ody*), it is possible that bits of the powerful icons were conserved during their mass burning at Ambohimanga and later regenerated, thus maintaining the power hierarchy as it had been since the days of Andrianampoinimerina. The Europeans would not have been aware of the *ombiassy's* capability to recreate the idols, but the Queen would have most likely taken comfort in this knowledge.

Finally, in keeping with tradition, Ranavalona II frequently visited Ambohimanga with her court (LMS(R) 1880). "It is the residence of one of the boldest, proudest and most conservative tribes on the island. These frequent visits are marks of respect paid to the ancient town and its inhabitants and serve to conciliate the Tsimahafotsy and to keep them all in good temper" (LMS(R) 1880:46). This statement demonstrated the power the Tsimahafotsy held and continue to hold. Thus, although Ranavalona II's reign was marked by dramatic change, she maintained many important elements of tradition that reinforced the accepted cosmological and socio-political order, with herself as mediator. Finally, when Ranavalona II died she asked to be buried with Ranavalona I at Ambohimanga, which I believe demonstrates that the Queen was never fully committed to Rainiliariavony's pro-Christian campaign.

Flexibility and Adaptation: From Ramenjana to *Tromba*

Although the socio-cosmic order essentially remained during Ranavalona II's reign, many Merina, especially at Ambohimanga, were not entirely satisfied. They were unhappy at being forced to renounce public belief in *fombandrazana* in order to show the Europeans that Madagascar had become Christian and deserved economic and political support. Widespread revolution did not occur, however, because of the strength of Ranavalona II's government, and strong incentives for compliance. Any dissenters were immediately and severely dealt with (LMS(C) 1869-1870:7,29). Therefore, there were no large-scale revolts, and a mass conversion to Christianity took place (LMS(C) 1869-1870:120; Gow 1979:95; Mullens 1875:43; Horne 1895:364; Lovett 1899:730). However, although there was general outward compliance to Christian ideas and practices, *fombandrazana* did not end. It merely moved underground, kept alive by a modified form of Ramenjana (called *tromba*) where *ombiassy* communicated with ancestors via mediums during private ceremonies, and therefore maintained ritual order.

There are records of small-scale Ramenjana-like incidents occurring in 1873 and 1877.[103] Sibree noted that since its first outbreak the "disease" occurred every year (at the time when the royal bath was to be held). However, unlike the Ramenjana during Radama II's reign, the later movement was not effected as a widespread protest, mainly because the strength of Ranavalona II's government ensured high incentives for compliance to the new regime. Thus, since efforts to publicly maintain the "ways of the ancestors" became futile, and after 1880 the traditionalists went underground and did not reappear until the French invasion in 1895 (Gow 1979:95).

Tromba became a private coping mechanism used to seek ancestral guidance and blessing lacking in the increasingly Europeanised reign of Ranavalona II. The physical manifestations of *ramenjana* and *tromba* were

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103 For the Ramenjana of 1873 see Raoul Allier, *La Psychologie de la conversion chez les peuples non-civilises*. Paris 1925: i, 364. For the Ramenjana of 1877, see Wills to Mullens, 25 Aug 1877 (LMS-IL, box 16).

essentially the same, although they served different purposes in Malagasy society. [104] The first was a form of protest, the other a means of communicating with the upper world to elicit ancestral guidance, and blessing and thus preserve a sense of traditional order when it was not satisfactorily provided by the government.

Resembling earlier protest movements led by *ombiassy*, *tromba* normally affected women; they were considered most easily possessed because of their close link with nature and vitality. Again, most incidents of *tromba* were recorded as occurring with the Tsimahafotsy in Ambohimanga. There were several eyewitness accounts of the "condition" there during the reign of Ranavalona II. Ellis in his letter to his brother, 29 November 1862,[105] confirmed that Ambohimanga was the hereditary domain of the late sovereign (Rasoherina) and her chief adherents, the Tsimahafotsy, "supporters of the superstitions of their country." They communicated with their royal ancestors via media deemed sacred to those ancestors which they had access to, such as certain tombs, streams, rocks and gates (called *douany*). In 1873 Mears reported that the Merina prayed to the spirits of their personal ancestors and kept their tombs with great care and reverence. Further, he reported that departed sovereigns were regarded as demi-gods that were addressed at all important occasions (Mears 1873:259-60). He noted that Ambohimanga was a focus for these beliefs, as the tombs of the royal ancestors were found there. On 2 January 1877[106] Wills, a missionary in Ambohimanga, reported: "We have the 'dancing diseases' in vogue around us just now....a regular example of remaining superstition." He went on to describe a girl "extremely ill with this affection."[107] Thus, Ambohimanga remained the centre for ancestral guidance and support, both personal and royal, throughout the "pro-Christian" reign of Ranavalona II, thereby keeping *fombandrazana* alive.

Ranavalona III (1883-1897)

After Ranavalona II's death in 1883, her niece Ranavalona III, also an Ambohimanga native, became the figurehead Queen, inheriting Rainilaiarivony as a Prime Minister. Her coronation resembled Ranavalona II's in that she sat under an ornamented canopy with the words "God is with us" on the awning, and a large bible on a table by her side. Although she also maintained her traditional mediating role between the ancestral and earthly realms, Ranavalona III's reign was heavily Europeanised and largely non-interventionist. It was during her time in office that the French established a protectorate over Madagascar.

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104 There is a long and wide-spread incidence of spirit possession in Madagascar. Davidson reported that a "disease" similar to Ramenjana had existed in Madagascar for fifty years called "*ambo*." This condition, resembling epilepsy, took place in sacred places where offerings were made to the ancestors. Among the Sakalava, the condition was known as "*tromba*," the name accepted by the Merina today, which appeared to be connected with the custom of "*bilo*," which resembled the Betsileo custom of "*salamanga*" (Sibree 1889:26).

105 LMS-IL, box 6

106 LMS-IL, box 14

107 Wills recounted that this dancing disease recurred evey year (Wills to Mullens, 7 November 1877, box 15). On 25 April 1878 he reported another outbreak of "dancing mania" in Ambohimanga.

Throughout Ranavalona III's reign, the Christianity/*fombandrazana* conflict continued. *Tromba* remained strongly entrenched underground, as a proactive coping mechanism, and largely based in Ambohimanga. Peill, a missionary in Ambohimanga at the time, suggested that "many semi-heathen practices still prevail. The belief in divination and witchcraft is still strong; sacred stones are still blackened with greasy oblations[108] ...and the disgusting practice of dis-interring the dead, wrapping their bones in new silk *lamba*, re-interring them with music and rejoicing, dancing and feasting, and some heathen rites belonging thereto, is still common" (LMS(R) 1888:174). At this time, it was reported by an evangelist that the residents of Ambohimanga, the Tsimahafotsy, were still "heathens clinging to traditional beliefs although the idols had been burned nearly sixteen years earlier" (ibid.). In fact, in 1892 the ninety-eighth report of the LMS related a conversion story that supports my theory that idols were still present in Ambohimanga (LMS(R) 1892). Thus, the fundamental socio-cosmic order continued privately through *tromba* and quiet reverence of the idols, which served to preserve a sense of Merina cultural identity by linking the uncertain present with an ordered ancestral past.

Because incentives for compliance remained high and Ranavalona III carried on the tradition of her predecessors by maintaining the annual *fandroana* at Ambohimanga, the *hasina* donation system, and traditional socio-cosmic order based on tradition (Maude 1895; LMS (R) 1888:173), the Tsimahafotsy and other conservative Merina *zanadrano* were assuaged and relatively peaceful during her reign until the French invasion of 1895.

Conclusion: Merina "Superiority" and Ethnic Division

The Fiadanana Phase was a time of political and economic change, rapid expansion and Merina domination. It is important to understand, however, that contrary to some authors' assertions, the Merina have never really been "masters" of the whole of Madagascar. As Oliver noted, all the groups had their own rulers. "It is therefore exact to say that there is not a King of Madagascar, for there are in the island as many kings as tribes" (Oliver 1886:140). The Sakalava especially resisted being put under Merina domination. This attitude, Howe (1938) avowed, never changed, even through they were politically conquered in the nineteenth century. In fact, this discontent opened the door for the French to gain allies for their regime by exacerbating the already deep divides that existed between the various Malagasy ethnic groups (Campbell 1984:1). It can be argued further that the resulting political and social disunity facilitated the success of the 1895 French invasion where previous offensive manoeuvres had failed. Nevertheless, the Merina (especially the Tsimahafotsy) remained bonded together by their common cultural heritage and former position of domination, fiercely fighting the French colonisation.

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108 Grandidier (1888) noted that most maladies were attributed to the Vazimba. Thus, to placate them, sacrifices were made and the stones which contained their spirits would be anointed with fat.

4. The Colonial Phase (1897-1960)

The French Invasion and the Apparent Breakdown of Traditional Order

At the end of the nineteenth century, the French took control of Madagascar. The island became one of the bargaining pieces in a settlement arranged by France and Great Britain. By a treaty signed in 1890, Britain recognised a French protectorate over Madagascar in return for the French recognising a British protectorate over Zanzibar (Brown 1995:215). Thus, in 1895 the French army marched into Madagascar from Majunga (Sakalava territory on the West Coast), via Ambohimanga to Antananarivo, and the island was declared a French territory.

The Menalamba Revolution

As a result of this threat to the Merina's fundamental socio-cosmic order, there was an insurrection against all things European, called the Menalamba (see Mathews to Thompson, 28 August 1895; Gregory 1897:70; Ellis 1985).[109] The Menalamba was a protest movement based upon the Ramenjana, but executed on a larger scale. It occurred immediately following the French occupation of Antananarivo as a full-fledged, last ditch attempt to reinstate *fombandrazana* and Merina authority. Participants were both female and male, as the thought of losing their independence was inspiration for nearly all Merina to join the movement. The battle was fought with *fombandrazana*, utilising every element of the Merina's power base, and was led from Ambohimanga.

Europeans were surprised at the recrudescence of tradition "which was thought to be extinct in Imerina, but which evidently has been scotched and not killed" (Gregory 1897:71).[110] As described above, *fombandrazana* had simply slipped underground where it remained very much alive, especially at the sacred capital. On 14 November 1895 Peill reported to Johnson that there had been a "revival of heathenism in Ambohimanga since the war."[111] On 16 December 1895 Sharman wrote to Thompson that "many of these people had prayed that their fatherland might be spared to them and now it is gone they blame the worship as they call it and have returned in hundreds to their charms, many believing that if they had only trusted their idols, instead of the God of the *vazaha* [foreigners] their country would not have been taken from them" (LMS(R) 1895).[112] In addition to a renewed public reliance on *fombandrazana*, there was a violent backlash against Europeans and what they represented. The Ambohimanga district was, for a time, "overrun by the rebels, who destroyed everything that

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109 LMS-IL, box 25. Also, S. Ellis (1985) provides a good account and analysis of the Menalamba, as does Prou (1987).

110 Gregory went on to say that one of the first moves on the part of the rebels was to reinstate a local idol, and that the performance of certain acts of worship in the presence of the idol was considered the mark of a good patriot (Gregory 1897:71).

111 LMS-IL, box 25

112 LMS-IL, box 25

seemed to them to have any connection with Europeans and with Christianity," as reported by Thorne (LMS(C) 1901:20, 243; LMS(R) 1902:223).

Ambohimanga served as the power-centre for the revolt. In his first proclamation, one of the Menalamba leaders, Rezavana, issued a plea, "*Je voulais, une fois, éprouver la fidélité de l'Ambohimanga....Si vous n'êtes pas avec les vazahas venez au camp*" [113] Ambohimanga was particularly important for the rebel cause because of its sanctity as the burial place of the Merina monarchs, the ultimate power source for the Merina. This power was mediated by *ombiassy* who had stepped into the role of the exiled monarch to direct the movement. Much of the power for the revolution was seen to come from earth obtained from the royal tombs, hence the name "Menalamba" (lit. "red *lamba*") which referred to the white *lambas* which had become red from contact with this sacred substance.

General Gallieni

Throughout the time of the French protectorate the Menalamba waxed and waned. It increased in strength after 6 August 1896 when French parliament declared Madagascar a French Colony. When General Joseph Gallieni arrived in September 1896, as the governor general of Madagascar, he successfully suppressed the rebellion (Baron 1900:260) by outwardly destroying the socio-cosmic structure as the Merina had known it and issuing extreme incentives for compliance. On 27 February 1897 he exiled Ranavalona III, the figurehead Queen and mediator, to Reunion. The next day he publicly abolished the monarchy in Madagascar and the function of the Prime Minister, who was exiled to Algiers (Brown 1995:231). On 15 March, he transferred the remains of the royal ancestors buried at Ambohimanga to Antananarivo, as earth from the tombs was considered the primary source of power for the Menalamba movement. Finally, realising the power of Merina ritual for their renewal and strength, Gallieni forbade all public religious ceremony.[114] Thus, no services or rituals, Christian or *fombandrazana*, including the national purification rituals (*fandroana* and *alakaosy*) could be publicly celebrated. Also, a permanent military post was established at Ambohimanga to watch over the Tsimahafotsy and ensure that they obeyed orders. In Drujon's notes of 12 December 1896, he recorded that Ambohimanga had been occupied by French troops since the end of January 1896.[115] As a result of the French presence, the town was officially opened to all Europeans, thus breaking the *fady* declared by Ranavalona I and upheld throughout the Fiadanana Phase, which was considered an affront to the royal ancestors and caused great discontent among the Tsimahafotsy.

Once Imerina was "secured," the French followed the same method for infiltrating the rest of Madagascar that the Merina used in their expansion efforts during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The French

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113 "Notes sur Ambohimanga," confidential, 12 December 1896, box 10, Les Archives d'Outre Mer, Aix en Provence.

114 Journal Officiel, 12 April 1897, "Le voyage du Governeur General," issue 234:1713.

115 "Notes sur Ambohimanga," confidential, 12 December 1896, box 10, Les Archives d'Outre Mer, Aix en Provence.

considered their approach of progressive penetration and government "*tâche d'huile*," (Gallieni 1908:111). Non-Merina Malagasy supported the French advances because they thought they would fare better under the French system, which promised them equality (*"politiques des races"*), something they did not enjoy under Merina domination. After they were "conquered" by the French, methods of governing were modelled after those used by the successful Merina Empire. It was settled that the administration should be "indirect," that is to say conducted through the medium of the Malagasy (i.e. the Merina), which the non-Merina naturally objected to but were forced to accept.[116] Thus, the French government was set up to work in a similar way to that established by Andrianampoinimerina and used throughout the monarchy, with central power at Antananarivo, radiating from the capital city via governors stationed throughout Madagascar.

Most Merina were discontented with this arrangement. Only those few that were appointed governors, or government officials, benefited from the new regime. The French did not understand the reciprocal nature of the special relationship manifested by the *hasina* system upon which a functioning Merina society relied. The French required "inferior *hasina*" but they could not deliver "superior *hasina*" in return, as they were not supported by the Merina ancestors. Gallieni tried to justify a system of taxation and forced labour (*fanompoana, or corvée* labour), learning that both had been routine under the Merina monarchy. But he did not understand that this method was tolerated previously because of a sense of obligation to the monarch and the reward of blessing. This ceremonial relationship was not available to the French colonial government. There was no connection to the ancestors, and thus no "superior *hasina*" offered in return for hard work or taxes paid (Griffith to Cousins, 26 March 1900).[117] Because most Merina opposed the exploitative situation, they sought solace and advice from their ancestral connections, through the private practice of *tromba*, just as they had done during the later Fiadanana Phase. The *ombiassy* at Ambohimanga thus continued to serve as intermediaries between the upper and middle world, using features in the cultural landscape as media for ancestral communication (Chart D).

The French Colony

Throughout the colonial regime, Merina protests at European control gradually increased. Finally, in 1944, General Charles de Gaulle publicly announced his vision of granting the French colonies independence. Political parties were legalised in Madagascar and began to flourish. One of the two strongest parties was the Mouvement Démocratique de la Rénovation Malgache (MDRM) or Democratic Movement for the Renewal of Madagascar. Its leaders were two Merina and a Betsimisaraka from the high plateau. The party campaigned

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116 By appointing Merina Prime Ministers and governors, the French identified themselves, in the eyes of the other Malagasy groups, with their former oppressors which upset the non-Merina (Gregory 1897:72), as they felt betrayed. Thus, the French invasion exacerbated the island-wide ethnic divide between Merina and non-Merina (*fotsy* and *mainty*) and fueled the Merina's notions of superiority. This applied especially to the Tsimahafotsy, as they continued to hold relatively prestigious posts in government and were associated with the sacred site of Ambohimanga.

117 LMS-IL, box 29

THE COLONIAL PHASE POWER HIERARCHY

UPPER WORLD

Andrianahary

Gods

Royal Ancestors (especially Andrianampoinimerina)

Andrianjazanavalona

The Andriamasinavalona

Tsimahafotsy Ancestors

Other Noble Ancestors (12 hills)

Other Merina Ancestors

MIDDLE WORLD

Ombiassy acting as the monarch

The Andriamasinavalona

Tsimahafotsy

Other Andriana (12 hills)

Hova

Andevo

LOWER WORLD

The Vazimba and other malevolent and disgruntled spirits

CHART D

for immediate independence within the French union. As opposition, the Parti des Déshérités de Madagascar (PADESM) or Party of the Underprivileged of Madagascar, was created. It rallied support for opposing independence from the non-Merina populations and the underprivileged classes on the central plateau playing to their fears that the sort of independence the MDRM were seeking might mean a return to Merina domination.

In 1947 there was a large-scale rebellion, resembling the Ramenjana and Menalamba, staged against the French government. The Merina (again led by the Tsimahafotsy) were the main planners and instigators of the revolt (Munger 1953). Casualties were high because of the inadequate weaponry the Merina possessed. Most of the protagonists were armed with spears with which they attempted to charge machine guns because they had been told that their amulets (*ody*), made with sacred earth gathered from Ambohimanga, would protect them from the bullets.[118] Resentment from years of compulsory labour on roads and public works projects (*corvée* labour) with no superior *hasina* from the ruler given in return, fuelled the rebellion. Like the Ramenjana and Menalamba, the 1947 uprising aimed at restoring Merina *fombandrazana* (and authority) in an independent Madagascar. As a result of the powerful demonstration, the French became more sympathetic to the idea of Malagasy Independence, and in 1956, a new socialist French governor-general instituted the *loi cadre*, which promised universal suffrage in Madagascar. These reforms put the non-Merina people in the majority so they no longer needed to fear Merina domination, which clearly was not the outcome the Merina had in mind when initiating the 1947 rebellion.

Conclusion

It is clear that although the colonial regime ushered in extreme change and upheaval for the Merina, their fundamental socio-cosmic order remained strong due to their connection to the royal Merina ancestors from Ambohimanga. They were able to use their common *imago mundi* to join together in an effort to regain their former position of socio-political authority. Although it was ineffective for restoring Merina domination in Madagascar, the Tsimahafotsy Merina's reliance on *fombandrazana* in times of crisis united them in a common cause and reaffirmed their collective cultural identity.

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118 Letter from Edwin S. Munger to American Universities Field Staff, Inc. New York, 28 January 1953.

The Modern Phase (1960-Present)

In 1958 General de Gaulle returned to power in France and proposed a new constitution, allowing France's overseas territories to become independent while remaining partners in the French community. Thus, on 26 June 1960 Madagascar was officially declared "independent," and the Merina were quickly voted out of power as a result of the *loi cadre* (see Brown 1995:275). The post-colonial era in Madagascar can be broken down into four segments: (1) 1960-1972: The Malagasy Republic led by Philibert Tsiranana, a Tsimehety cowherd turned school teacher, who retained many colonial structures, and continued to employ French advisors. In reaction to this, "Malgachisation" a nationalist movement, socialist and anti-French, came about which culminated in a 1972 revolution that ousted Tsiranana. (2) 1972-1993: The Democratic Republic of Madagascar led by Didier Ratsiraka, a Betsimisaraka naval officer, was formed, basing its communist platform on anti-western nationalism. Consequently, French institutions were rejected, and ties with western countries severed, which resulted in a withdrawal of capital from the country. The new government was largely isolationist, aligning itself only with some communist powers, such as the former USSR, North Korea, and the People's Republic of China. (3) 1993-2001: After the largely unsuccessful term of President Albert Zafy, a medical professor from Diego Suarez, who was ousted from power after failing a vote of confidence, Ratsiraka was re-elected on a slightly less isolationist platform. However, he quickly returned to his former policies and Madagascar's economy continued to decline. (4) 2001-Present: In December 2001 a presidential election was held, which was surrounded by corruption. The opposition, Marc Ravalomanana and his supporters, claimed that Ratsiraka was re-elected fraudulently with less than fifty percent of the votes. However, Ratsiraka refused to step down, the opposition established a parallel government in Tamatave on the east coast, and the country was in turmoil. Ratsiraka finally accepted defeat in early July 2002 and is now exiled in France. Ravalomanana is the first President to originate from Imerina since Independence and it is too early to predict the impact that he will have on the Merina and Madagascar.

"Malgache-qui es tu?"

Although to date the Tsimahafotsy Merina have failed to recoup their vast political power, they have retained their sacred connections to the upper world through historical links to their royal ancestors and the landscape of Ambohimanga. By the mid-twentieth century, the Merina basically accepted their fate and turned their focus inward, toward rebuilding their self-image and cultural identity.

Since independence in 1960, issues surrounding national identity have been paramount. The notion of national identity has been seen as problematic in Madagascar for many years and has been a focus of effort by scholars, artists and politicians alike. In the 1960's there was a museum exhibition mounted in Antananarivo entitled "*Malgache-qui es tu*?,"[119] a question just as appropriate today. Most island populations claim a high

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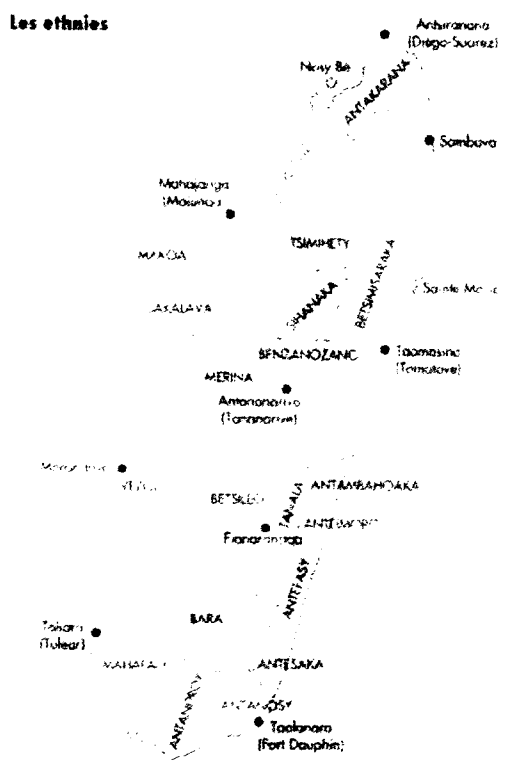
119 In 1973 the Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie in Antananarivo mounted the exhibition in association with the Musée d'Ethnographie in Neuchatel, Switzerland.

degree of homogeneity. However, as discussed in the beginning of this Chapter, Madagascar is an incredibly diverse country. There are numerous ethnic groups, with disparate origins, which speak different cultural languages. In fact, even the "national" spoken language, "Malagasy" has such distinct dialects that they are often indecipherable to one another. Physical appearance differs as well, with darker skinned people with more African characteristics living outside the central highlands, and lighter-skinned, almost exclusively Indonesian, people on the high plateau. All Malagasy venerate their ancestors and many revere idols, but they worship different ancestors and idols, in different ways. Therefore, "the use of a single term, 'Malagasy,' to refer to the island's people and its language may suggest uniformity, but in fact there is arguably as much cultural variation in Madagascar as there is diversity of climate, vegetation or wildlife" (Mack 1986:14).[120]



Today in Madagascar there are eighteen officially recognised ethnic groups that are relevant for census purposes (Covell 1987:12) (*left*).[121] Among some groups the boundaries are fluid, while among others they are rigid (Sharp 1993:54). Some covet the idea of a national unity, while others maintain clear ethnic distinctions. The deepest divide lies between the Merina and non-Merina (called *vazaha*, meaning "foreigner").[122] The Merina as a whole generally consider themselves superior in relation to Malagasy outside Imerina. In turn, the non-Merina *vazaha* generally think of the Merina as oppressors, the enemy. These non-Merina groups are sometimes labelled "*côtiers*" (peoples of the coast) a term coined during the Colonial era by the French to label non-Merina Malagasy groups, many of whom Covell has pointed out live nowhere near the coast (Covell 1987:13). The term "*côtiers*" is still used frequently by highland peoples and carries derogatory connotations. These two general geographical categories have evolved out of politically defined divisions as a result of Merina expansion and subsequent French occupation of the island. The interethnic tension between the "coast" and high plateau persists, characterised by mistrust and often racist attitudes. African, versus southeast Asian, origins is still a subject of debate. Highlanders, in general, view non-Merina as backward and uneducated (personal communication). Non-Merina, in turn, often express resentment of the Merina who were once in authority and who form the majority of the population in the capital city Antananarivo (Bloch 1971:1-5,198-201; personal communication). Ethnic distinctions remain significant as the Malagasy use them to define themselves in relation to each other.

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120 Nevertheless, the promotion of a national identity has been an especially common theme among politicians. According to Dewar (personal communication), President Tsiranana once spoke of the Malagasy as having been on the island since it separated from Gondwanaland, suggesting (albeit erroneously) a unified heritage. Ratsiraka's program of "Malgachisation" was another concerted effort towards national identity.

121 Map from De Flers (1995)

122 *Vazaha*, foreigner, when used by the Merina, can apply to people living on the island outside Imerina as well as those from overseas.

Thus, as Covell (1987) observed, one can see Madagascar more as a "salad" than a "melting pot," where ethnic groups generally remain distinct, and even within groups there is considerable division. As a result of this situation, the Merina of the central highlands, because of their former political domination, continue to consider themselves somewhat superior to other Malagasy ethnic groups. Furthermore, the Tsimahafotsy of Ambohimanga, originally the highest ranking Merina group, have maintained a conception of themselves as the most privileged of all, legitimised and protected by their royal ancestors, a notion which unifies and inspires them in a common unspoken commitment to upholding traditional *fombandrazana* and maintaining traditional (yet flexible) socio-cosmic order (Chart E).

Maintaining Merina Cultural Identity Through the Royal Ancestors

I propose that the Merina (especially the Tsimahafotsy) have remained ethnically distinct and united by a strong sense of cultural identity, despite significant forces of change through the Colonial and Modern Phases, largely as a result of *tromba*. From the late Fiadanana Phase throughout the Modern period, incidence of *tromba* has increased and strengthened as a means of maintaining a link with the Merina ancestors and *fombandrazana*.



Tromba in Imerina clearly evolved from the Merina notion and method of revolution. By retracing Merina history, we can see that the incidence of spirit possession rises dramatically in Imerina during times of social disruption and crisis. The Merina have always differentiated *fombavazaha,* or foreign customs, from *fombandrazana,* or Merina ones (Bloch 1971:8-9). This was especially evident during the Late Kaloy Phase when European influence in the central highlands increased due to trade. *Fombavazaha* were kept in check by Andrianampoinimerina's rigid mediation policy and tight control over the population. He incorporated change selectively and gradually, and there was no need or possibility for insurrection. Mild revolution occurred with Radama I. But mass spirit possession as a form of wide-spread protest began with the Ramenjana in the mid-nineteenth century, under the reign of Radama II, evolving into private spirit possession led by *ombiassy* in the late Fiadanana Phase, when Christianity was imposed on the population. Later, mass spirit possession emerged again with the Menalamba. During the Colonial Phase, *tromba* ceremonies were still held privately, because public worship of any sort was prohibited by the government (*above*).[123] However, the possession epidemic re-surfaced in 1947 in an effort by the Merina to regain power. Recorded incidence of *tromba* in the central highlands increased in 1960, the year of independence, following the new constitution of April 1959 which declared liberty of thought, belief and practice

123 "Tromba...Ceremonie Diabolique pour la Guerison d'un Maladie" (1898). Photograph number 8Fi1 (270). Archives Nationales. Aix-en-Provence, France.

THE MODERN PHASE POWER HIERARCHY

UPPER WORLD

Andrianahary

Gods

Royal Ancestors (especially Andrianampoinimerina)

Andrianjazanavalona

The Andriamasinavalona

Tsimahafotsy Ancestors

Other Noble Ancestors (12 hills)

Other Merina Ancestors

MIDDLE WORLD

Ombiassy acting as the monarch

The Andriamasinavalona

Tsimahafotsy

Other Andriana (12 hills)

Hova

Andevo

LOWER WORLD

The Vazimba and other malevolent and disgruntled spirits

CHART E

of religion (Estrade 1977). There was another large upsurge in possession activities after the socialist revolution of 1972, when President Ratsiraka's nationalist policies focused on "Malgachisation," advocating the supremacy of Malagasy customs over those of foreign origin. At that time, many French-derived practices were replaced with "the ways of the ancestors." By government mandate, respect had to be shown for local customs. Thus, *tromba* possession became a sanctioned activity and it was no longer necessary to be discrete about holding ceremonies (Sharp 1993:166) (*right*).



It is clear that *tromba* increased in Imerina whenever the traditional power hierarchy was threatened. I argue that the undermining of royal authority and the alteration of the socio-cosmic order by the Europeans and non-Merina led to a shift in focus among the Merina population from living to dead rulers. *Tromba*, a proactive response to change, enlists the aid of ancestors and *ombiassy*, as a mediating mechanism for their blessings, in absence of a living monarch. Like Ramenjana, *tromba* connects the living with an ancestral guidance system by way of possession, which is mediated by an *ombiassy* (see below). By re-establishing contact with the ancestors, both personal and royal, order is maintained. As Bloch (1986) stressed, "when chaos threatens, the ancestors return so that they might order the living." On a large scale this takes the form of mass protest movements, such as the Ramenjana or Menalamba. On a smaller scale, it takes the form of private *tromba* ceremonies. Both work to maintain a sense of cosmological and socio-political order in Imerina, in the face of significant and/or prolonged forces of change. Ambohimanga has consistently been the focus of *tromba* activity because it is the burial place, the *tanindrazana*, of the royal Merina ancestors and the *axis mundi* of the Merina cosmological world.

The Life Cycle of a Royal Ancestor

As Bloch stressed (1986), in order to understand the Merina concept of possession it is essential to understand their notion of overcoming the vital with the ancestral. In short, for the Merina, a person in their natural state is considered entirely "wet." But, as an individual goes through life s/he is gradually transformed into an ancestral being which is manifested by the increasingly "dry" substance of the body. Finally, at death, the person is literally and figuratively completely dried, achieved first by burying the corpse in an individual grave on charcoal and later by exhuming it so that it can be placed during the *famadihana* ritual into the family tomb, on the bottom shelf, and moved up at each *famadihana* until the body is considered totally dried and a full ancestor, a potent source of blessing for the living, thus completing the cyclical journey. A royal ancestor, on the other hand, is considered a full "dry" ancestor at the moment of death, and possesses the instant ability to bless the living. Royal ancestors have the added capability of returning as *tromba* spirits. Thus, as Mack has noted (1986), in a cultural sense royalty never die. The whole royal dynasty remains extant through the practice of possession (Bloch 1986:27).

The *Ombiassy*'s Expanding Role

As we have seen, throughout times of socio-cultural upheaval *ombiassy* have taken on a mediating role in place of the monarch, working to engage the ancestors, summoning them to possess themselves or other mediums. To his or her ancestors s/he is junior, but amongst his or her peers, s/he is senior, creating a new illustration of order for the Merina. *Ombiassy* are now generally part of a network of women who are hired to conduct *tromba* ceremonies (Sharp 1993:179). Although *ombiassy* are thought to possess both male and female qualities, stemming from the hermaphroditic tradition of Indonesian *bissu*, and were previously mostly male, females have entered the profession (Pelras 1996:83). Their characteristics described above, as being closer to the vital realm, make them more easily possessed.

In addition to *tromba*, *ombiassy* continue to use divination (*sikidy*) to read ancestral messages. *Sikidy* is employed when the diviner does not know the date of birth of his client or lacks other information essential for bringing the esoteric knowledge of the *sorabe* to alleviate the anxieties and suffering of his client (Mack 1986). The diviner plays an essential role, interpreting the signs and translating the texts in relation to the person's *vintana*, and situating the individual within a larger context of cosmic forces. First, the diviner calls on the great royal ancestors to aid in his or her inquiry and diagnose the client's sickness through *tromba*. Then the *ombiassy* may prescribe an amulet (*ody*), which carries spiritual powers to heal and protect the client (personal communication). Also, the *ombiassy* is often an "idol guardian" entrusted with the care of one of the former *sampy* of the national pantheon. S/he must therefore participate in the annual *alakaosy* ritual, whereby the power of the idol is renewed.

Further, the *ombiassy* knows how to attune the actions of people to changing forces of space and time, by understanding, advising on and manipulating the *vintana* system, thereby keeping it alive in the population (Kus and Raharijaona 1995:1). S/he is primarily concerned with orienting houses and tombs as well as advising on important inaugural acts of individuals such as marriage or new house construction. His or her skills include knowledge of the *vintana* system and how to interpret the significance of landscapes and certain signs in physical nature for human endeavours. The *ombiassy* learns their skill through revelation from ancestors, via *tromba*, and through practice over time, through apprenticeship. Occasionally, s/he integrates non-indigenous customs and beliefs, such as western engineering and biblical study, into his or her practice. It is this engagement, with the possible affronts to local traditions, that results in a tenacious and contemporarily viable system (Kus and Raharijaona 1990). Thus, an *ombiassy*, connected to the ancestors and ancestral ways, acts as a mediator to foreign influence, much like the role played by former monarchs.

A hierarchy of *ombiassy* still exists just as it did formerly. Many of the most powerful *ombiassy* reside in and around Ambohimanga. One of the most prestigious of these is Madame Berthine. Berthine is a highly regarded Tsimahafotsy *ombiassy* who is considered the official guardian of Andrianampoinimerina's spirit, as she claims direct descent from the great King. She is hired to direct *tromba* involving Andrianampoinimerina's spirit. Also,

she is consulted before any building or renovation project takes place in the *rova* complex at Ambohimanga, Andrianampoinimerina's *tanindrazana*, and consequently possesses a great deal of power over the site.

Becoming Possessed

Spirit Identification and Place

Since each spirit is tied to a specific tomb, it is important for the medium to locate it within the sacred geography of the cultural landscape during a *tromba* ceremony.[124] At the tomb, or *douany*, the *ombiassy* will cite a spirit's genealogy in descending order, calling first upon Andrianahary (Andriamanitra), the creator God and *zanahary*, the collective body of ancestors, and descending thorough the ancestor's specific lineage and then finally, addressing the spirit directly. Upon arrival, the spirit will normally identify itself to those gathered, stating its genealogy and tell the story of its' life, its deeds and personal history, and its death. Thus, in essence, "a *tromba* ceremony is a dramatisation of the genealogical system" (Sharp 1993:122) as well as the correct socio-cosmic order.

As a result of this process, mediums, as *tromba* spirits, play a large role in the reproduction of the past (Lambek, personal communication). They act as a sort of "time machine," the voice of the past speaking in the present. Since *tromba* spirits are generally known, historic personalities, spirit possession is a form of recorded history where the Merina preserve knowledge of both personal (and royal) genealogies, and ultimately of who they are more generally, managing the modern influx of ideas, things and people. Sharp wrote about *tromba* as a form of ethnohistory noting that, in addition to written and oral history, preservation of historical knowledge is carried out through *tromba* (Sharp 1993:145). Estrade (1977:217) also stated that the stories told through *tromba* operate as a form of "*mémoir collectif*" (Estrade 1977:151). Thus, spirit possession provides a powerful idiom for preserving the collective historical memory, which, in turn, helps the Merina to maintain their identity. From the stories that reflect different epochs of history, the Merina learn about their past and its interpretation in the present.

A large number of *tromba* ceremonies take place at Ambohimanga because of its significance as the burial place of the most important Merina monarchs and its position as the *axis mundi* of both the Merina universe and former empire. At Ambohimanga, *ombiassy* and mediums can access the great power of Andrianampoinimerina, his forefathers Ranavalona I and II. The idols which serve as personifications of the ancestors have been re-elevated in status and are now purified annually during the *alakoasy* ceremony, also held at Ambohimanga. Further, the large-scale royal bath ceremony (*fandroana*) has been recreated at Ambohimanga, led by high-ranking *ombiassy*, where it serves to re-order the Merina's socio-cosmic world and

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124 While the tomb is the most popular site for *tromba*, it can take place at any site related to the spirit and deemed sacred, a *douane*.

reaffirm the Tsimahafotsy's privileged position within that world annually. Thus, through actions in the cultural landscape of Ambohimanga, important features and their significance are kept alive.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it should be clear that foreign ideology has not altered the Tsimahafotsy Merina world-view in a fundamental way. Rather, western customs and Christian ritual have been absorbed into the existing animistic Merina theology and practice. Just as the Indonesians accepted elements from each of the invading systems of belief to the archipelago, they clung tenaciously to their ancient beliefs and practices at the same time, and each new religion was "Indonesianised." Similarly the majority of Merina, especially the Tsimahafotsy, remain faithful to indigenous religion (*fombandrazana*) in which ancestors play a central role, with *ombiassy* acting as mediators between them and the human world.[125] This cohesiveness and dedication to *fombandrazana* has served to bind the Merina together, working to maintain a strong cultural identity in a fluctuating environment. Therefore, in the face of extensive change, I argue that the Merina's ancestral guidance system, with the *ombiassy* mediating between the ancestral and earthly realms through the recreation of national rituals, supported by *ody* and *sampy*, and a hierarchical social order reinforced by the *hasina* system, have served to preserve a consistent sense of socio-cosmic order among the Merina. Further, this continuity of socio-cosmic order, sustained by the historical and sacred importance of the Tsimahafotsy ancestors and the sacred geography of Ambohimanga, has served to build and maintain the Tsimahafotsy Merina's perception of themselves at the top of the ethnic hierarchy.

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125 Most *zanadrano* I interviewed claimed to be Christian (see Sharp 1993: 9, 120, 253; Aubert 1987). But, it is clear that "although almost all Malagasy members of some Christian church...there are few for whom Christianity is anything more than a social mask" (Mannoni 1948:51). It is important to note that Christian belief and practice is, and has always been, only an added element to traditional religious beliefs and practices of a non-Christian character.

Conclusion of Part One

As discussed in Chapter One, once established on the central highlands, the Merina followed a similar historical trajectory to the Anahulu of O'ahu, Hawaii, with similar results. The Anahulu were "unified" in the eighteenth century by semi-divine *ali'i*, "good chiefs of sacred memory...who made kinsmen of the people and sponsored a prosperity no longer seen" (Sahlins and Kirch 1992: vol. 1: 2). Their social and ideological systems were based upon an ancestral taboo system that placed the *ali'i* at the top of a human hierarchy, mediating between the terrestrial and celestial realms. As mediators, the chiefs were responsible for Anahulu fertility, such as the passage of the seasons, the growth of crops and the health of the population. The chiefs accomplished this through certain rituals, aided by priests who also served as mediators from the supernatural realm. In the nineteenth century, this system was threatened by European and American colonialist mind-sets, Christianity, material culture and a newly imposed constitutional monarchy led by figure head queens, supported by the colonial powers.

The former system was not abolished, but preserved in transposed form underground. It was maintained through the priests, or prophets of "spontaneous inspiration," who functioned as personal media of the same powers that chiefs enjoyed. These new mediators maintained order in spite of the ineffective, foreign-driven queens. Anahulu cultural identity was thus preserved through self-regulation based on this system. During times when the social or ideological system was dangerously threatened, revolution would occur, such as the Great Awakening (1837-1839), which took the form of mass scenes of possession by Anahulu ancestral deities and resulted in a return to former acceptable order. Thus, with the imposition of the "world system" on the Anahulu, the climate changed politically but not ideologically. It was clear that the Anahulu were not victims of colonisation, per se. Instead, they were "authors of their own history" which resulted in an enduring continuity of their cultural identity (see Sahlins and Kirch vol. 1: 216).

Resembling the Anahulu, the Hova also became unified into a cohesive group (the Merina) in the eighteenth century, led by a semi-divine chief. This unification was a result of progressive state-building initiated from the thirteenth century, which was based upon a cosmology and state model stemming from their common southeast Asian heritage. The hierarchical Merina state was fully born in the late Kaloy Phase (late eighteenth century to early nineteenth century), with a Tsimahafotsy chief (Andrianampoinimerina) as its semi-divine leader, responsible for the Merina's "fertility" and well being through his mediating role between them and the ancestors. He and his Tsimahafotsy advisors built on and exploited social and ideological systems based upon the accepted socio-cosmic order of things that worked to organise, build and strengthen the nascent state.

During the Fiadanana Phase the Merina polity grew larger and stronger, achieving political dominance over approximately two thirds of Madagascar. Largely, this success was a result of maintaining a cohesive Merina state, united through a common world view based on tradition, which was led and co-ordinated by the Tsimahafotsy of Ambohimanga. In the first half of the nineteenth century European influence increased dramatically in Madagascar, affecting the Merina government profoundly. The Merina (like the Anahulu) also

adopted a constitutional monarchy with Tsimahafotsy queens as figureheads, Christianity as the state religion, and a European-style of government. As a result, European technology and material culture made headway throughout the country. However, while external forces of change affected things politically and economically, the Merina maintained remarkable ideological continuity. All change was mediated by the "ways of the ancestors," and anything the inherently conservative Tsimahafotsy considered threatening to the established traditional order would be countered by protest movements and revolution, often utilising the social and ideological systems under threat, just as they had for the Anahulu. Such movements almost exclusively originated in Ambohimanga, led by the Tsimahafotsy.

When the French took control of Madagascar at the end of the nineteenth century, the system of order upon which the Merina State and indeed their cultural identity was based was not only threatened, but also outwardly destroyed. The Tsimahafotsy Merina monarch was exiled and, although the Merina did remain in somewhat powerful positions in government during the terms of the French governor-generals, real authority went to the French colonial leaders. Protest movements were ineffective against the strength of French armed forces, and the new regime appeared victorious. However, I argue that while the French gained political control over the Merina, they did not overtake them ideologically. The socio-cosmic system simply moved underground where it continued to order and direct the Merina from the realm of the ancestors, through a form of spirit possession called *tromba*. Most *tromba* ceremonies took place at Ambohimanga, the sacred *tanindrazana* of the Tsimahafotsy Merina ancestors. As with the Anahulu, priests (*ombiassy* in Imerina) took on the former monarch's semi-divine role as mediators in the socio-cosmic order. This practice allowed the Tsimahafotsy Merina to remain in a powerful mediating position, even when they had largely lost political authority.

Madagascar was given its "freedom" by the French in 1960. However, the President (Tsirananana) and his government were still largely controlled by the French and retained Merina ministers. Then, in 1972, after a serious rebellion by non-Merina populations, Didier Ratsiraka was elected. The Merina lost even more political control at this time and ancestral guidance became even more important to them. As a result of a new emphasis on "freedom of religion," the self-regulating socio-cosmic system was allowed to surface, where it now works publicly to remind the Tsimahafotsy Merina of their privileged cultural heritage and unite them through the "ways of their ancestors" (*fombandrazana*) and the cultural landscape of Ambohimanga.

Thus, in the evolution of Merina history, we can see that change has been consistently additive, based upon common cosmological foundations directed from the ancestral realm and tradition – at first publicly, then privately, and now publicly again at Ambohimanga, which is indeed the Luwuq of the Merina world. The sacred capital continues to serve as the *axis mundi* of the Merina universe, connecting the Tsimahafotsy and their powerful ancestors. It is this recursive process involving a people, their history and place that has served to create and maintain the Tsimahafotsy Merina's enduring sense of cultural identity, and perceived superiority, in the face of significant and prolonged forces of external influence and political upheaval.

PART TWO: Learning the Language of Ambohimanga's Cultural Landscape – A Description of the Features, Their Forms and Functions, in Space over Time

I suggest that the Tsimahafotsy, and the Merina more broadly, were able to build and maintain such a strong and consistent concept of cultural identity because they share a common visual language, objectified in their cultural landscape. This visual language reflects the fundamental socio-cosmic order that raised and kept the Tsimahafotsy in a superior position, real or perceived, throughout history.

As outsiders, coming to the culture under study from the *etic* perspective, we must endeavour to learn the vocabulary of the visual language before we can attempt to understand or analyse it. Thus, in Part II, I aim to uncover the elements that comprise the visual language of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape. By providing an overview of the site's development, focusing systematically on its most significant features and tracing the evolution of their forms and functions through time. I have used the multiple sources and techniques inherent in "archaeological anthropology" discussed in Chapter Two as evidence for my arguments, something that has never been attempted before, but which I believe is essential for drawing the most complete picture possible of the site and its visual language.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the hill of Ambohimanga is approximately 5,250 feet high. A double band of fortifications, each with seven gates, bisects the hill about half way up from the base. The external fortifications span approximately one and one quarter miles. The area inside the fortifications is approximately thirty acres in area and quite densely populated. Approximately ten acres of the hill covered in forest. The town centre is located near the main gate on the northern side of the hill. Houses and tombs of the Tsimahafotsy population are located primarily on the western and southern sides of the hill. Several shrines and water sources are dotted throughout the site. The royal complex at the top of the hill consists of the Mahandry Rova (still existing), and the archaeological remains of two former *rovas* (Bevato and Nanjakana) below to the southwest and above to the northeast of the Mahandry Rova respectively, along with several shrines and other culturally significant features. The eastern side of the hill remains virtually untouched because of the ledges and cliffs that form its landscape.

I utilised the process of "participatory mapping," discussed in chapter two, to discover the layout of the site and determine which features of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape are most important today, and why. I asked seventy-five people (fifty Tsimahafotsy and twenty-five others) to lead me from the main gate of Ambohimanga (Ambatomitsangana), to the places they felt were important. Some journeys were more complete than others, but I offered no direction or suggestions as to the route that the walk should follow. In general, I was led from Ambatomitsangana around the external fortifications in a counter-clockwise direction, where two gates, Ambatomitsangana (our starting point) and Amboara, were singled out as particularly important, as well as a reservoir called Amparihy. Then I was brought on a tour of the internal gates where the gates of Ambavahaditsiombiomby and Ambavahadimasina were identified as most important, and sometimes two springs, called Andranomboahangy and Andranomanento, were pointed out. The tour of the internal

fortifications ended at the large rock of Ambatorangotina, where I was told of its significance. We climbed the stone stairway from Ambatorangotina to the royal complex, entering the plaza of Fidasiana, where a large flat stone in the centre of the plaza and two stone stages were generally pointed out. From Fidasiana we walked through the northern entrance of the Mahandry Rova and investigated Andrianampoinimerina's former residence, the site of the royal tombs, two in-ground pools and the queen's former holiday residence. After leaving the Mahandry Rova by the northern gate, we continued up the hill on the northern side of the royal complex, stopping at a large rock, where the idol Kelimalaza was formerly housed. The path continued to the site of Nanjakana, the third *rova* at Ambohimanga, where I was shown the remains of the house called Nanjakana and other house foundation stones. The tour generally ended on the stone ledge called Ambatomiantendro, where we observed a *fanorona* game board and a fertility shrine carved into the rock, and admired the view to Antananarivo (see Maps A and B, preceeding pages).[126]

During this process of discovery I conducted semi-structured interviews encouraging participants to share their reasons why the features were important to them. Then, with this knowledge, I went back in history and traced these features' forms and functions through time using a combination of Indonesian and Merina oral traditions and other resources. Throughout this progression through time and space I learned the forms and functions of significant features that would never have been apparent otherwise. As De Certeau pointed out, every story not only involves some kind of temporal movement, but is also a spatial practice. "Stories organise walks, making a journey as the feet perform it....They are part of a human labour that transforms an abstract homogenous space into place" (cited in Tilley 1994:32).

The types of cultural landscape features that were pointed out to me fell into four general categories:

1) Fortifications

2) Houses

3) Tombs

4) Other significant features within the fortifications (including rocks, water sources, trees, monuments, and shrines).

I used these categories to organise the following five chapters which correspond to the main phases of Merina archaeological history. Chapter Four covers the Vazimba period (eighth to thirteenth century), Early Phases: Fiekena, Antanambe, Ankatso, Angavobe and Ambohidray (thirteenth century to mid-seventeenth century), and the Early Kaloy Phase (mid seventeenth to late eighteenth century); Chapter Five covers the Late Kaloy Phase (late eighteenth to early nineteenth century); Chapter Six covers the Fiadanana Phase (early to late

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126 I have included sketch maps of the site for each phase at the beginning of Chapters Four – Eight to visually illustrate the cultural landscape's evolution. Please note that these maps are not drawn to scale. The maps can also be found in Appendix A.

nineteenth century); Chapter Seven covers the Colonial Phase (late nineteenth to mid twentieth century); and Chapter Eight covers the Modern Phase (mid twentieth century to the present).

Ambohimanga

showing features
outside the Rova complex

NORTH

Lower
Miandravahiny

Amparihy

Amboara

Upper
Miandravahiny

New Town
Centre

Ambodiaviavy

Ambavahaditsiombiomby

Ambatomitsangana (Gate)

Upper
Andakana

Ambavahadimasina

Fidasiana

Ambavahadiatandranomasina

Ambatorangotina

Old
Town Centre

Andranomboahangy

Mahazaza

Ambatomiantendro

Lower
Andakana

Andranomanento

Antsolatra

Ampitsaharana

Ambavahadikely

Andranomatsatso

Forest
Gates
Water Sources
Standing Stone
Sacred Stone

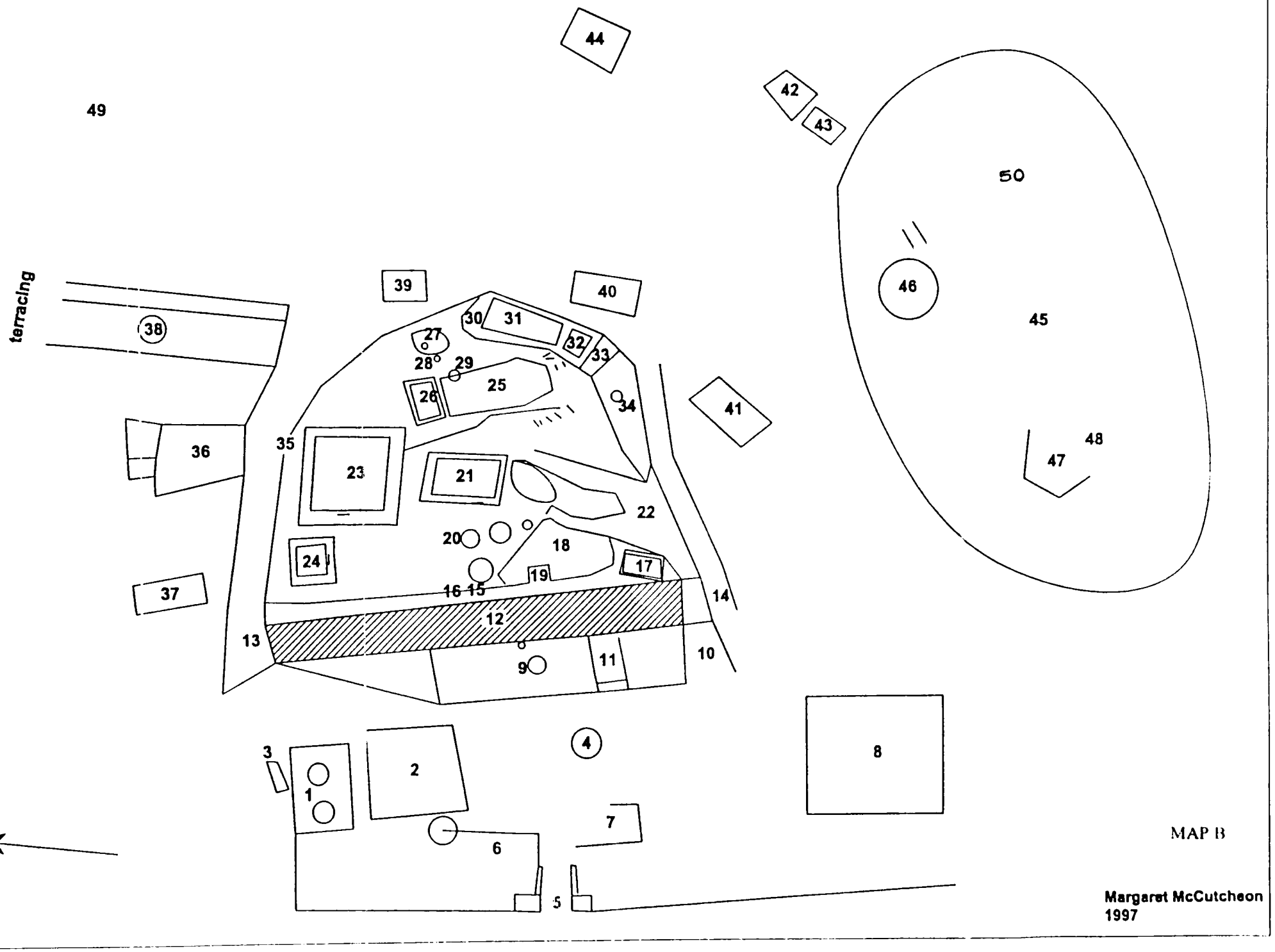
Fosses
Main Road
Foot Paths

To Alakamisy

Margaret McCutcheon
1997

MAP A

The Rova Complex of Ambohimanga, Madagascar



Key to Map B: The *Rova* Complex of Ambohimanga, Madagascar

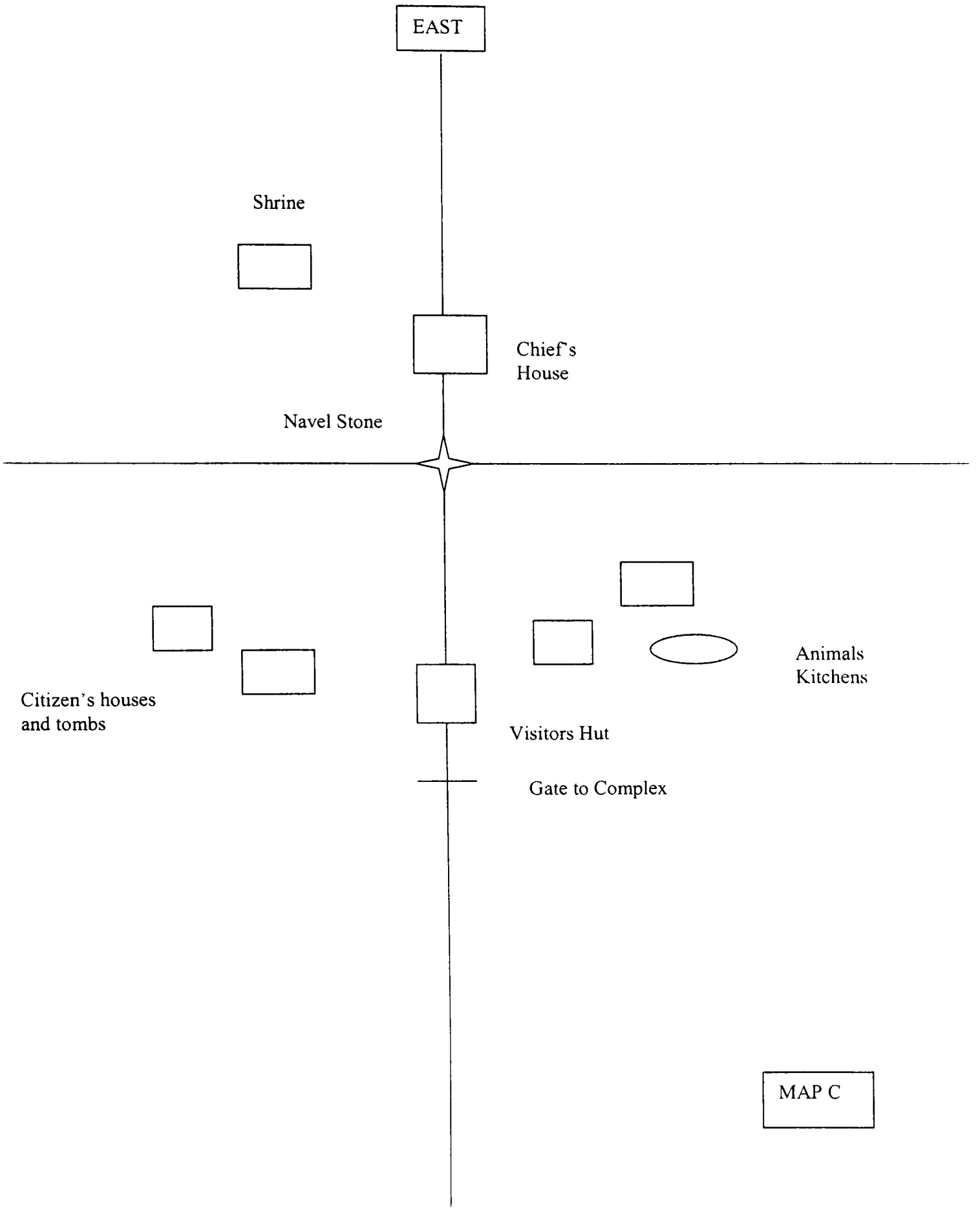
1 The Low Stage
2 Flat Cement Area
3 Andrianjazanavalona's Tomb
4 The Sacred Navel Stone at Fidasiana
5 Entry to Fidasiana
6 Building or Wall Remains
7 Building Remains (Manatsaralehibe)
8 Le Jacqueranda (Restaurant) - Formerly the site of Bevato's ox pen
9 The High Stage
10 Western Entry to Mahandry Rova
11 Stairway to High Stage
12 The Wall of Mahandry
13 Stairway to Mahandry's North Entrance
14 Stairway and Path
15 Small Iron Canon
16 Large Bronze Canon
17 Watchtower
18 Fahimasina
19 Crib for Feeding Zebu
20 Kianja (small plaza) in Mahandry
21 Mahandry
22 Pathway
23 Manjakamiadana/Filiminia
24 Tranofitaratra
25 Site of Royal Tombs
26 Ranavalona I and II's Tomb and Tranomasina
27 Sacred Sacrificial Stone (douany)
28 Hearth
29 Andrianampoinimerina's Headstone
30 Shrine (douany) at Pools
31 Ranavalona I's Pool
32 Andrianampoinimerina's Pool
33 Rice Pit Built by Madame Berthine
34 The Queen's Garden
35 Small Garden
36 Building Remains (Mananjara)
37 Guard's House
38 Place of Kelimalaza's former residence and rock
39 Building Remains (Miandrifanjakana)
40 Building Remains
41 Building Remains
42 Building Remains
43 Building Remains
44 Building Remains

Manambintana, Fohiloha, Manandraimanjaka, Kelisoa and Masoandro

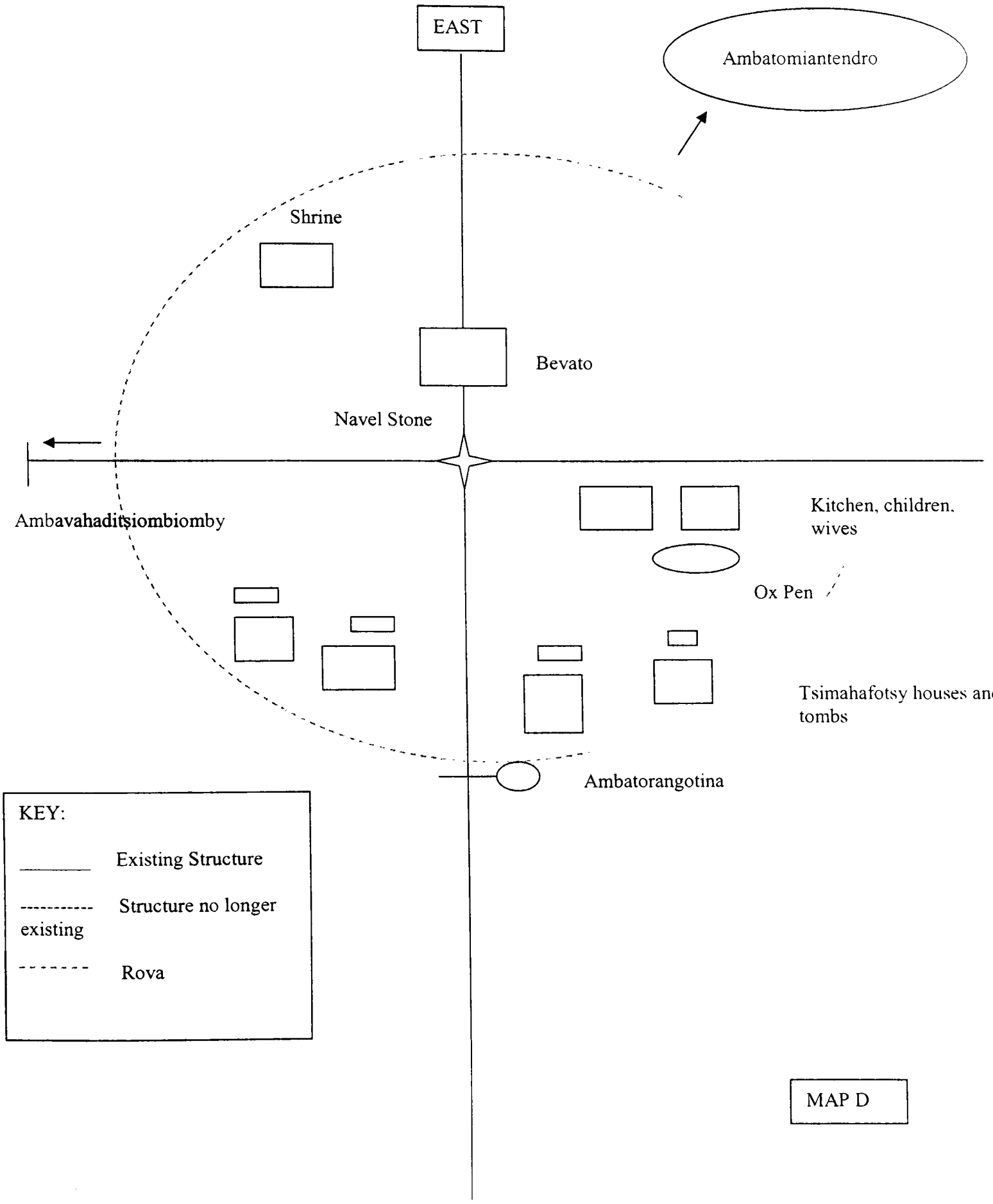
45 Ambatomiantendro
46 Remains of Late Kaloy Phase Shelter
47 Remains of Modern Phase Shelter
48 Fanorona Board
49 Building Remains and hearth (Nanjakana)
50 Ambatomiantendro

Chapter Four: The Vazimba Period (8-13C), Early Phases: Fiekena, Antanambe, Ankatso and Angavobe (13C-mid 17C), Ambohidray and Early Kaloy Phases (mid 17C-late 18C)

THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: TRADITIONAL BUGIS SETTLEMENT

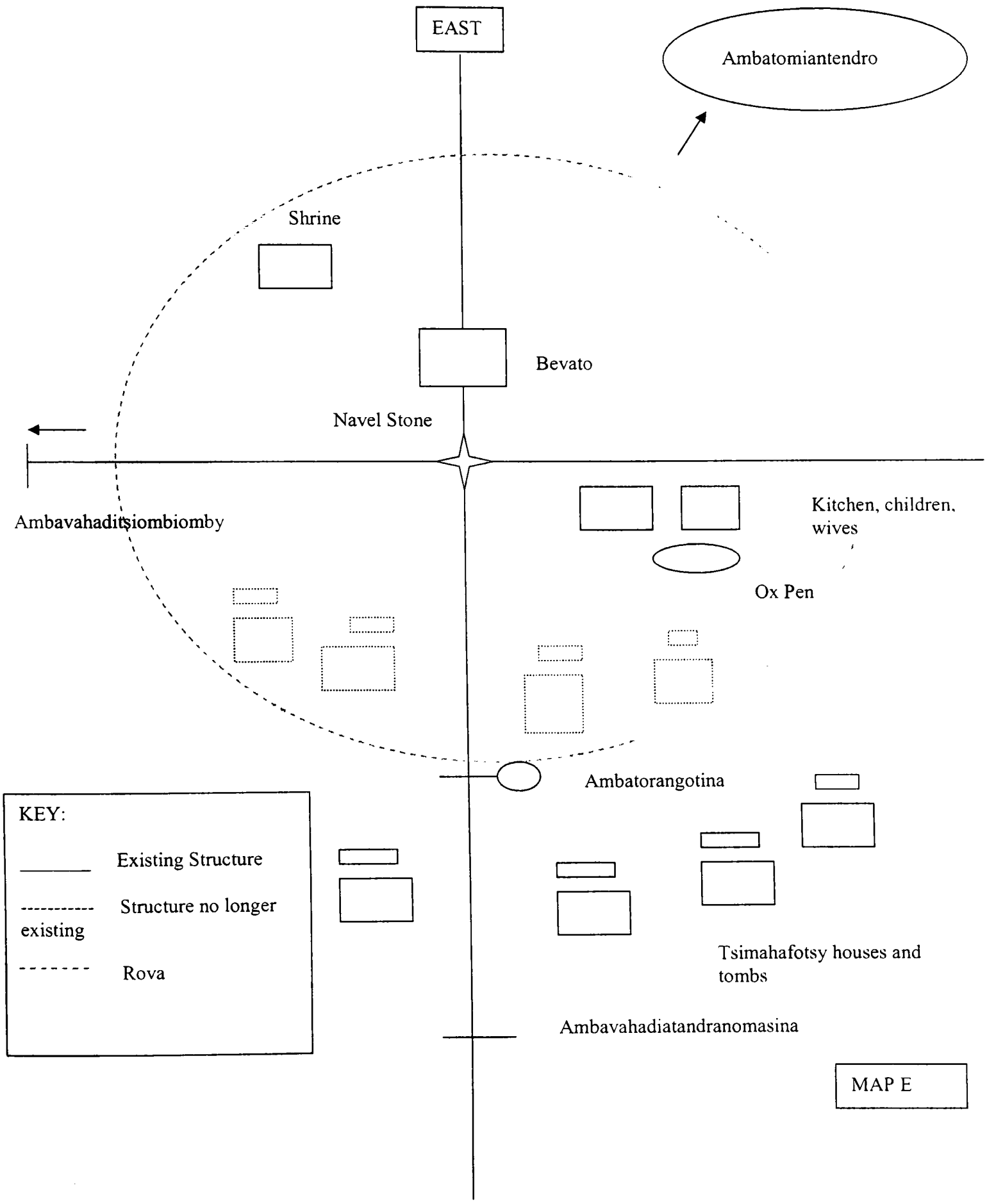


THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: ANDRIANJAKA and ANDRIAMBORONA

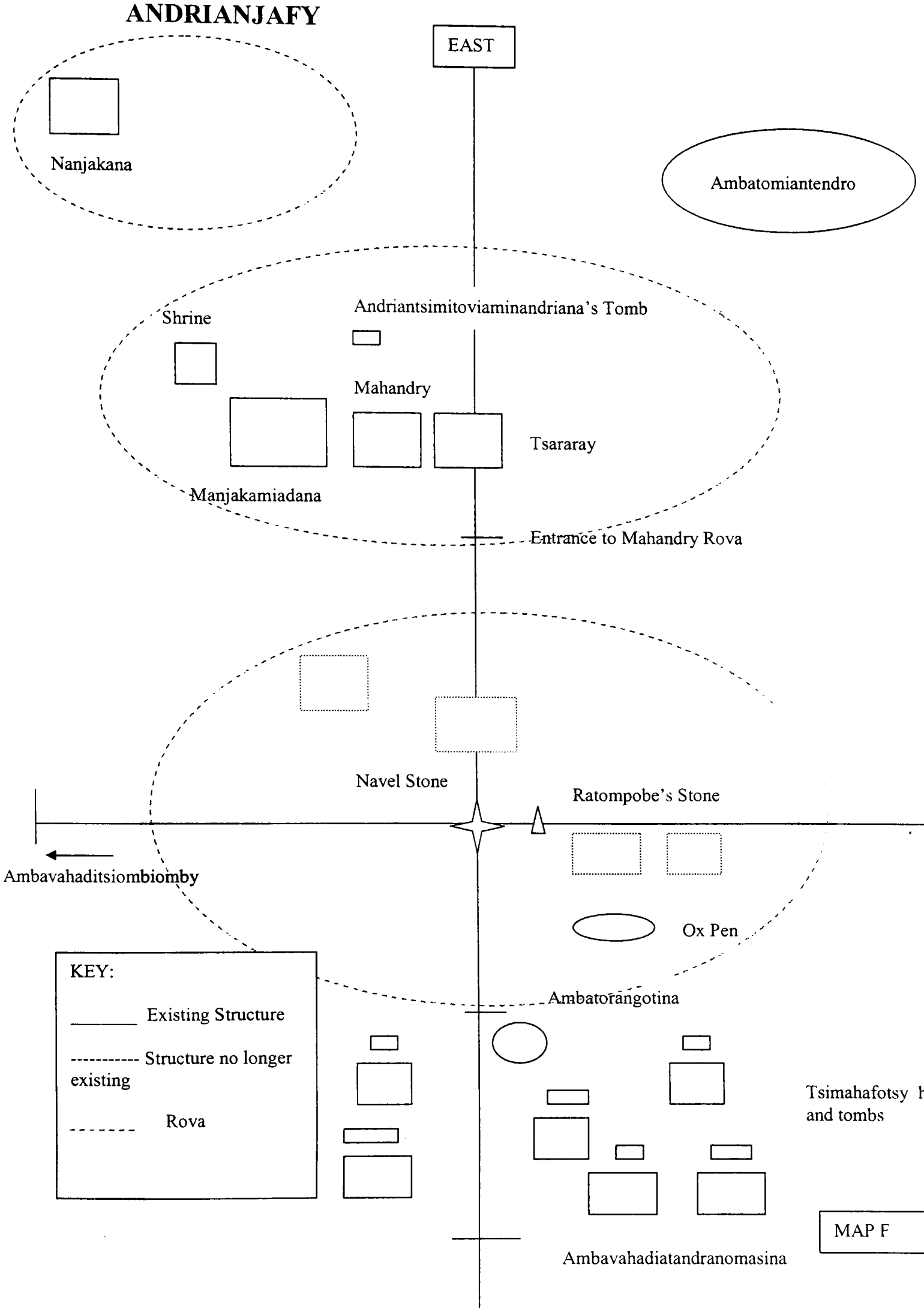


MAP D

THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: ANDRIANTSIMITOVIAMINANDRIANA



THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: ANDRIAMBELOMASINA and ANDRIANJAFY



Introduction

Although there are not any known archaeological sites, palynological evidence shows a period of increased burning and spreading of grasslands in the central highlands during the eighth century. It is quite possible that this burning corresponds with the Vazimba immigration to the high plateau as I proposed in Chapter Three. The next immigrants to the region were Indonesian (most likely Bugis) traders who ventured into the highlands to set up slave-trading posts there, around the thirteenth century. The Indonesian immigrants conquered the Vazimba and settled in pockets across Avaradrano, grouped by *deme*. Soon the groups began vying with each other for wealth and power and consequently ascended to the hilltops for protection. Archaeological evidence in Imerina reflects this history, revealing a shift of settlement location from ditched sites located at the bases of hills near agricultural fields to well-fortified sites at the tops of the hills during the Early Phases (Mille 1970; Kus and Wright 1986). By the end of the Early Phases, Ambohimanga had become one of the most powerful trading communities in the central highlands.

The Vazimba Period (8C -13C)

The Vazimba were nomadic people and therefore erected temporary settlements in the central highlands. Because they used organic materials for construction, we can only speculate as to the appearance of their temporary shelters. Most likely they were round, made of dry grass and other natural materials, perhaps resembling the shelters erected by the Baye Bushmen in Botswana today. We can speak with relative certainty, however, about the graves of the first inhabitants of the central highlands, the only significant landscape features remaining from Vazimba times.[127] The graves are difficult to spot by the untrained eye; no significant features can be attributed to them in the cultural landscape. But, through my participatory mapping exercise I quickly learned where they were located and how to avoid them. The graves were eminently feared by my informants and have been since earliest times. They are generally located outside Ambohimanga's fortifications, near the base of the hill, and consist of natural unworked rocks, covered in vegetation (*left*). These "numberless cairns found throughout Imerina, scattered over the bare downs, and which were feared by the people, were the graves of the Vazimba," Sibree cited by (Oliver 1886:33).



The Early Phases (Fiekena, Antanambe, Ankatso, and Angavobe: 13 C – mid-17C)

Although the first signs of human impact in the central highlands occurred in the eighth century (the Vazimba Period), the Fiekena Phase (thirteenth century) is the earliest archaeological phase established for Madagascar's high plateau (Rakotovololona 1993; Wright and Rakatoarisoa 1997). Evidence suggests the

127 To my knowledge the Vazimba graves have not been excavated or dated.

establishment of agricultural villages with increased environmental impact during this phase (Dewar 1997), which corresponds with the Indonesian immigration to the region.

Fortifications

As discussed in Chapter Three, when the Indonesian immigrants arrived in the central highlands, they killed, ousted, absorbed or enslaved the aboriginal inhabitants, the Vazimba, and created permanent settlements there, first establishing themselves at the base of the hills, near their rice fields. The settlements were surrounded by a ditch (or fosse) for protection, and the houses were most likely wooden rectangular structures, resembling the design found in Sulawesi's highlands (discussed below), which would have been appropriate to the cool Avaradrano climate. The Hova were able to conquer the Vazimba, build ditches, harvest rice and other crops and build wooden houses, because they brought with them technical skills, stone and iron tools (including axes, adzes and chisels), along with weapons, such as the *keris*, spears with iron tips,[128] and the knowledge of forging iron (Rochon 1791; Mille 1970:193; Ellis 1838:307). The Indonesians also imported the technique of fire-cracking stone, which they later used to build fortified gates.[129]

Soon, as a result of competition among the Hova settlers for supremacy in the slave trade, higher, more secure, sites emerged in the central highlands, leaving the lower, smaller, field occupations near the rice fields behind. Mille (1970) noted that these field occupations showed no signs of permanent structures, suggesting that the Hova moved their houses with them to their new hilltop location, a common Indonesian practice (Pelras 1996:220). This arrangement would have enabled the Hova immigrants to work their fields during the day and retreat to a secure location at night or if under attack. The first type of hilltop fortification, which Mille termed "archaic," had a polygonal fosse and terracing within. The access was a simple earthen bridge, usually about one metre wide, with weakly fortified stone entrances.[130]

In response to increased warfare throughout the Angavobe Phase (late fifteenth to mid seventeenth century), fortified hilltops evolved. Archaeological evidence reveals the existence of better-fortified sites than those of the Fiekena and Ankatso periods, and a burgeoning network of hilltop centres. This evidence reflects the period of unrest when proto-Merina rulers were vying for dominance on the hills. The larger, stronger and more

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128 The Hova immigrants possessed far more effective weaponry than the Vazimba. Vazimba weapons consisted of stone and wood thrown with the hand or a sling (*antsamotady*) made of leather and woven vegetable fibre (Mille 1970:193). The javelins said to be utilised by the Vazimba were "*d'argile et montées sur de simples roseaux*" (Callet 1974:67).

129 Stones were detached in Madagascar using the ancient Indonesian technique of heating the stone with a fire kindled with cow dung set along the outline of the piece they wished to detach. Water would be dashed upon the parts they had heated to crack it. Then the stone would then be chipped into shape using an iron tool (Sibree 1924:314; also see Mille 1968:163).

130 These settlements represent the first steps towards the development of the hierarchical settlement patterns which subsequently emerged in central Imerina.

impressive sites indicate an increase in wealth, population growth, and superior weaponry, as a result of the Hova's role in the successful slave trade, whereby slaves were traded for firearms, ammunition and Spanish dollars (Piastres).

The concept of fortifications on hilltops is continuous from the Hova's Indonesian heritage. In Sulawesi, when warfare was endemic, the villages were located on hilltops and well fortified to protect their inhabitants (Pelras 1996:219). No universal rules applied to the shape and materials of village fortifications. There are records of polygonal, rectangular and round examples made of earth, stone or dense bamboo hedges, or even simple bamboo fences, often with a deep ditch behind (Volz 1909:266). Some Toraja[131] villages, situated on the hills of Sulawesi, were fortified to such an extent that access was only possible through tunnels bored through rock (Watterson 1993). Villages were often further fortified by an outer palisade of sharpened bamboo stakes (Pelras 1996:219). As we will see from the Ambohimanga example, Hova fortifications conformed to a similar style.

Beyond the fortifications, an inner bailey, consisting of a stout masonry wall with a single entrance (sometimes approached by a stone stairway and/or protected by a guard house), provided another line of defence. This concept is called a "*wanua*" in Sulawesi and a "*rova*" on the central highlands of Madagascar. Within the bailey, buildings were raised on a series of stepped terraces with stone retaining walls, a feature common to archaic Bugis and Hova settlements alike.[132] In Sulawesi there would have been a large open space in the middle of the plaza containing a sacred stone and fig tree, several pavilions and tombs, which functioned as the centre of the community. Mille (1970) found evidence of the same arrangement in Early Phase (archaic) archaeological sites in Imerina. There were fosses, inner fortification walls, staircases leading to open plazas containing sacred stones, fig trees, terracing and tombs. This demonstrates the continuity of landscape tradition between Indonesia and the central highlands of Madagascar and allows us to speculate with some degree of confidence as to the appearance of Early Phase proto-Merina settlements.

The traditional Bugis compound was laid out according to the Indonesian conception of the sacred and the profane, as per the La Galigo epic, with the north and east as sacred and the west and south as profane.[133] The most sacred direction of all was the northeast. Thus, the shrine was situated in the north-easternmost corner of the compound, with the principal house (belonging to the chief) placed beside it, a little to the west, overlooking the main square. The entrance (and sometimes a pavilion for receiving guests) stood on the opposite side of the courtyard to the west. The place where women did their work (weaving, cooking, caring for domestic animals) was located to the southern end of the courtyard as indicated by the kitchen, rice barn and animal pens in this position. Layperson's houses in a Bugis compound were arranged around the complex to

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131 "Toraja" is a name of Bugis origin given to the different peoples of the mountainous regions of the northern part of Sulawesi's south peninsula (Pelras 1996:15).

132 See Nas, Peter (1998). The House in Indonesia:Between Globalization and Localization. Pub. Bijdragen voor de Taal, Land en Volkenkunde, vol. 154 no 2 p 335-360; Mille (1970).

133 www.indonesianheritage.com/Encl..inese_House/body_the_balinese_house.html.

the west of the ruler's residence and the guest pavilion, in a more mundane direction.[134] We can hypothesize, with a good degree of confidence, that this arrangement was followed in the central highlands of Madagascar during the Early Phases because of archaeological evidence (Mille 1970), the oral traditions (Callet 1974), and the present spatial arrangement of Ambohimanga.

Architecture

Although material evidence no longer exists, it is logical that house style and placement in Early Phase Madagascar would have also stemmed from the Hova's Indonesian heritage. Located at the centre of the community, and distinguished from the laypersons' residences by better quality materials and construction,[135] it is assumed that the chiefly residences were made of wood, as no archaeologist has ever discovered the site of an ancient Indonesian palace.[136] However, their form would have been identical to laypersons' residences, which have been documented in the La Galigo epic. Continuity in placement and form was maintained by *bissu*, who would have been consulted before any house was constructed. He or she used earth harmony systems based on the cardinal directions linked by the centre (probably derived from *feng-shui* and *vashtu*) to determine proper placement. As a result, houses in Sulawesi were traditionally positioned on a north-south axis "facing" north, and the entry was generally to the west (Pelras 1996:221).

Although no archaeological remains of Early Phase houses exist in the central highlands, we can assume that they resembled those built on Sulawesi in the thirteenth century, when the late-wave immigrants sailed for Madagascar. Nearly all old Bugis buildings in Sulawesi were destroyed during political troubles in the 1950s, when they were regarded as relics of the pre-Islamic, pagan past (Waterson 1993). But, we are fortunate to have descriptions of houses from that time period in the La Galigo epic. Further, present Bugis buildings retain the divisions in function and the cosmic symbolism that is common to all the isle-built dwellings of the archipelago, which allows us to surmise quite a lot from the vernacular architecture of other regions in Indonesia. Although it encompasses a wide variety of styles and technologies, a number of common themes and principles can be discerned which indicate a shared Austronesian heritage, both structurally and in terms of symbolic significance that surrounds the house, which we will explore in Chapter Nine.

From these sources, we can ascertain that the Bugis lived in rectangular houses, with steep roofs supported by posts, with overhanging eaves.[137] While most Bugis houses were built near the coast in Sulawesi and were adapted for tropical climes (e.g. built on stilts), houses in the hills of Sulawesi (Torajaland) were built to suit the colder mountainous climate. They were often built on the ground, with walls dwarfed by a vast roof, and few, if

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134 www.indonesianheritage.com/Encl..inese_House/body_the_balinese_house.html.

135 www.indonesianheritage.com/Encl...Nias/body_houses_and_megaliths_nias.html.

136 www.dnet.net.id/indonesianheritage/ih_book1/ih_book1.html

137 The architecture is often thought to be Malay in origin, but the early Malay houses were actually influenced by Indonesian Bugis from the south (www.hbp.usm.my/conservation/malayvernacular.htm).

any, windows. The Indonesian immigrants to Madagascar were obviously familiar with this architectural style and adopted it to suit the cool climate in the central highlands of Madagascar.

The architecture of Indonesia is characterized by its use of natural building materials and post and beam construction methods. Measurements were based on the dimensions of the householder's own body. Tools included axes, adzes and chisels, and logs were squared by splitting them. The house was supported by four corner posts, two end posts and a central post.[138] In most parts of Indonesia, the central post was singled out for special ritual attention and especially hard wood was used for these significant pillars.[139]

The wooden box frame of the Bugis-type house was assembled without nails, using sophisticated joining techniques, including mortise and tenon joints, lapped joints and notched joints (*left*).[140] The rafters of the roof were typically supported by wall plates, with additional support often provided by a ridge piece and purlins – elements that variously transmit the load to other structural members. Wall plates often consisted of wooden panels fitted to the main framework using mortise and tenon joints. As a result, the house was an ingenious combination of joints, wedges, pegs and lashing, ensuring a sturdy yet flexible structure without nails. This construction method had two main advantages for the Hova immigrants: First, by removing the wedges the buildings could be dismantled easily and reassembled at a new location if the community moved; and secondly, this flexible joined wooden building would have been better able to withstand the high winds in Madagascar's central highlands.

The houses were characterized by a steep thatched roof with a ridge beam, which allowed the vast amounts of tropical rainwater to run swiftly and safely away. Also, we know from the La Galigo epic that a characteristic decorative feature of the Bugis house was a pair of crossed roof finials symbolizing buffalo horns, which indicated the wealth and importance of the owner (Waterson 1993). The finials may have been adorned with wood or stone carvings at their tips, a Sulawesi custom carried over into the central highlands of Madagascar. Bugis-style houses had large, open interior spaces with few, if any, partitions, and a hearth. The rustic furnishings consisted of platforms for sleeping and storage, mats and baskets. As a result of the dearth of windows, the interior of the houses was often dark and smoky (Pelras 1996:221).[141] This is how Hova houses were described by the first European eyewitnesses in the seventeenth century (Struys 1684), and a Late Kaloy example still exists with Mahandry at Ambohimanga (Chapter Five).

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138 www.indonesianheritage.com/Encycl...niques/body_construction_techniques.html.

139 www.indonesianheritage.com/Encycl..antan/body_longhouses_of_kalimantan.html.

140 Drawing courtesy of Dr. Henry Wright, University of Michigan.

141 See also www.sunsite.ui.ac.id/unesco1/english/sulawesi.html

Throughout Indonesia, building was a communal activity and when a house was completed there were rituals performed and a massive feast given by the founder, with pigs and buffalo providing meat for all who laboured on the house. The rituals and feasting turned the house into a spiritual entity, ensuring that cosmic harmony, so essential to Indonesian well-being, would prevail. It is logical to assume that the proto-Merina also would have built their homes collectively, celebrating their completion with similar festivities, a tradition that continues today.

Tombs

Although there are no houses surviving in Imerina from the Early Phases, the well made Hova tombs have withstood the centuries admirably. The fact that they were so well made reflects the importance of the "cult of the ancestors" from earliest times, a notion the immigrants brought with them them from Indonesia. As discussed in Chapter Three, in both Indonesia and Madagascar the dead were transformed into ancestors, with the power to bless their descendants with health, prosperity and fertility. Great importance was hence attached to preserving ancestral remains. The living maintained a relationship of intimacy with the ancestors, and tombs were therefore normally located near the houses.[142]

Throughout the Early Phases tombs became more and more differentiated, both by their placement in the landscape and appearance, suggesting an increasingly stratified society. Mille (1970) noticed that there were one or more tombs located at the highest points within Ankatso Phase fortifications (fourteenth to late fifteenth century), with others below on the hillsides and in the valleys. It is not known exactly which tombs belonged to which sectors of society, but it can be assumed that the highest, most well-worked tombs belonged to the chief and the wealthiest, most powerful residents, the hillside tombs to the lay people and the valley tombs to the slaves and Vazimba.

Later, Angavobe sites (late fifteenth century to mid-seventeenth century), in addition to differentiation by location, demonstrated a differentiation by tomb-style (Mille 1970). Most usually the tombs consisted of a mass of dry stones, sometimes with standing flagstones, which formed an enclosure. Another type of tomb found from this time period was slightly larger, appearing as a slope under the soil. Their existence was marked by a border of small stones and often a small standing headstone. Also, a square tomb-type was developed during this time, which protruded above the soil. Small stones were used to construct its walls, and two or three large flat rocks covered the tomb. It is logical that these well-worked tombs belonged to royalty and the wealthiest residents, as they would have been the most labour intensive and expensive to build. The working of stone and erection of megaliths for the dead have a history of thousands of years in the Indonesian archipelago. It is important to note that hewing and dragging huge stone for tombs or memorials requires the organisation of a large labour force, as well as considerable resources to pay for accompanying ceremonies. The costly erection of stone tombs both ensured greater permanence of the ancestor's home, while enhancing the prestige of the

142 www.sunsite.ui.ac.id/unesco1/english/sulawesi.html

deceased's living descendants in their communities. This ethos made its way to Madagascar with the Hova immigrants.

The Hova tombs most likely had small houses built on top of them, as they did in Indonesia. Although this practice is attributed to Andrianjaka as his "invention," many Indonesian peoples (including those of Sulawesi) have a tradition of erecting houses for the dead, to provide a comfortable place for the spirit to use in its afterlife. The house is referred to in ritual verses as "house without smoke" since the afterlife is envisaged to be cold and fireless.[143] There would have been a headstone erected outside the tombs, as it was believed that spirits resided in these monoliths.[144] Further, the earth covering the Early Phase tombs would have likely been charged with power, as it was in parts of Indonesia.[145]

Inside the tomb, the body would have been wrapped in several textiles (*ikat* in Indonesia, *lamba* in Madagascar), as per Indonesian custom. This smothered the smell of decomposing flesh while the body was being mourned outside the tomb, and also served to keep the body "warm" and content while in the tomb. The tomb also contained valuable and practical items for the ancestors to use in their afterlife. The process of second burial, as discussed in Chapter Three, was another critical component of both Bugis and Hova religion, which facilitated the body's journey towards full "ancestorhood" in the upper world.

It is important to point out that in Indonesian tradition more effort is spent on tomb building than on the maintenance or building of homes, and this emphasis was carried over to Madagascar. Because the tomb was considered the primary link between the living and the dead, it was erected with great care and expense, and was often more costly and substantial than the houses of the living, thereby reflecting the privileged position of the dead in the socio-cosmic system.

Other Significant Features within the Fortifications:

The Sacred Stone and Fig Tree

One of the most sacred structures within Hova fortifications would have been the navel stone located in the central plaza, many of which can be found on Imerina's hills today. Stones of various kinds and sizes have been invested with sacredness from the earliest times in Indonesia,[146] and this tradition would have been brought to Madagascar. These stones, thought to contain spirits in the animist world, were used for sacrifice and other ritual purposes.

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143 www.indonesianheritage.com/Encycl...Of_Sumba/body_uma_mbatangu_of_sumba.html.

144 The head of the deceased had special significance in Indonesian culture and is considered the locus of supernatural power (Pelras 1996).

145 The Sumbanese regard the earth as an abode of spiritual beings (www.indonesianheritage.com/Encycl...Of_Sumba/body_uma_mbatangu_of_sumba.html).

146 See Pelras (1996:177); www.arthistory.sbc.edu/sacredplaces/stones.html

Above the stone would have been a ficus, or sacred fig tree (*ficus religiosa*). The fig tree, and its significance, was originally brought to the Indonesian archipelago by the Indians. In India it is believed that the spirits of Brahmins live in the fig trees, awaiting liberation or reincarnation. In Indonesia, the ficus was also considered the residence of gods.[147] Thus, this tree type was planted in the central plaza as a symbol of ancestral presence. It is fast growing and usually begins as an epiphyte (an air plant that grows on a host tree) but develops roots to support its height of ninety-plus feet.[148] In Madagascar the ficus tree is called Amontana and Aviavy interchangeably.[149] The Indonesian immigrants probably brought the ficus trees with them as epiphytes and planted them in the plazas of their Madagascar hilltop complexes to recreate the sacred space they knew at home.

The Ambohidray and Early Kaloy Phases (Circa 1660-1770)

Andrianjaka at Ambohimanga (Circa 1660-1680)

Archaeological evidence (Mille 1970) and oral histories (Callet 1974) suggest that Ambohimanga was inhabited for the first time around 1660 (Ambohidray Phase) by a proto-Merina ruler named Andrianjaka. Ambohimanga would have been a good choice for a settlement because it was heavily endowed with natural resources. It was naturally well protected, higher than other nearby hills, with a forest, water sources and high ledges.

Tree cover was largely absent on the high plateau by the Early Phases and the dearth of trees has puzzled researchers for many years. Dewar has proposed that feral livestock, introduced on the coasts and which penetrated the central highlands, had a major effect of the native vegetation centuries before human communities were established there (Dewar 1997:37), thus contributing to the denuded appearance of the high plateau. I have found further written evidence of feral herds of cattle in the area as seen by early explorers and traders, which supports Dewar's hypothesis (LMS(C) 1829-32:383). Whatever the reasoning, Mille (1970) determined that only four hills in the central highlands, Ambohimanga, Ambohidratrimo, Ambohidrabiby and Antananarivo (the four most sacred hills) were still wooded during the Ambohidray Phase (Mille 1970:128). Thus, the trees on Ambohimanga would have been an attractive feature for Andrianjaka. The thick underbrush and thorny trees would have provided an extra layer of protection for the fortified settlement. Many of the indigenous plants would have been coveted for their medicinal properties, as well as for house building and firewood. Also, the forest would have likely been deemed sacred, a haven for ancestral spirits, just as forests were in Indonesia.

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147 www.hindu-mythology.com/html/sacred_r.htm

148 The female tree has purple figs and a long slender leaf tip. The male tree has heart shaped leaves that are pink when young (Brown 1994). Both male and female figs can be found within the royal complex at Ambohimanga. The trees generally live to be very old. A ficus Religiosa in Sri Lanka is dated to 2,270 years (Rocky Mountain Tree Ring Research), adding to its sacred qualities.

149 www.hala.refer.mg/imra/plantu/fic.html

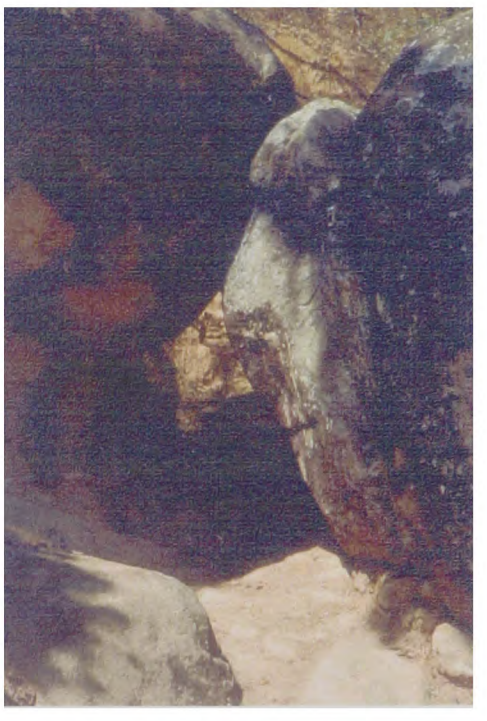
Water sources found near the top of Ambohimanga would have been another coveted natural resource. They were scarce on the hills themselves, more often found in the valleys, and were capricious, often drying up unexpectedly. Because of their unpredictable nature, these water sources were thought to be inhabited by spirits, which controlled their flow and properties. It was claimed that the waters healed the injured or cured the sick, with the result that wells or streams came to be regarded as sacred shrines. In Imerina the springs became associated with the Vazimba spirits because of their fickle, angry and often evil nature. Therefore, sacrifices were left on nearby rocks to appease them (Callet 1974:240).

Finally, Ambohimanga contained several high ledges from which one could survey the landscape below or the heavens above. The ledges would have been useful as guard posts and as sacred spots where priests could practice earth harmony and astrology. Thus, Ambohimanga would have stood out as a defensible, well-resourced and desirable hill to Andrianjaka during the Ambohidray Phase.

Fortifications

During the Ambohidray Phase, there was further growth and development of hilltop fortifications in Avaradrano. Because of an increase in warfare between the proto-Merina rulers, the number of firearms available, and because the population of the central highlands is said to have tripled in little more than a century, reflecting the increasingly lucrative slave trade (Wright and Rakotoarisoa 1997:326), hilltop settlements increased in size and the fortifications enclosed larger areas. These sites clearly dominated nearby smaller fortified villages. "Tombs and documentary evidence indicate that these settlement clusters were the loci of socially stratified political units headed by paramount chiefs who periodically fought with each other for political dominance" (ibid). Ambohimanga and the relatively weakly fortified hills and valleys around it comprised this type of cluster, with Andrianjaka, as the first ruling resident, living at the top of the dominant hill.

As per tradition, and because of the volatile relations among fortified hilltops at this time, Andrianjaka constructed defensive ditches on the summit of Ambohimanga. Vestiges of these fosses can still be seen that delimited the original settlement, called Ambohidanerana in the oral traditions (Callet 1974:384). There were two gates erected just inside the fosses as entrances to the fortification. Ambavahaditsiombiomby, the northern gate, is the only gate remaining from the Ambohidray period (*right*). According to tradition, Andrianjaka, the chief, used it as his exclusive entrance to Ambohimanga (Raharijaona 1931; Oberlé 1976). The gate was naturally formed, consisting of two granite blocks that lean against each other to create a passage. A simple earthen bridge was used to span the fosse. The gate's original closure likely consisted of wooden beams and a large wooden door, which was a characteristic design of the Early Phase's gates (Mille 1970).



It was rare to find only one entrance to fortified villages during the Ambohidray Phase. As Mille discovered, the number of access points was usually two (Mille 1970:220). Most often, the gates were found to the north and west of the settlement respectively (ibid:221).[150] Thus, I propose that Andrianjaka built a second gate to the west of the original town-centre, at Ambatorangotina, as the large rock there would have logically comprised part of the structure. Archaeological evidence shows that natural rock features were used whenever possible for forming defences (Mille 1970). The second gatepost would have taken the form of a roughly worked standing stone. The closure would have resembled that at Ambavahaditsiombiomby, consisting of beams and a wooden door. Mille's research suggests that the western gate in the hilltop villages normally functioned as a "*porte utilitaire*." Thus, the western gate at Ambatorangotina most likely served as an entrance for residents and visitors to the fortified village.

Within the fortifications, towards the top of the hill, a further enclosure (or *rova*) was built surrounding the residential area, Ambohidanerana (Callet 1974: 385). It is not mentioned what was used to construct the enclosure but it was probably a mud wall taken from the excavation of the fosse. The settlement was located on the western side of the hill in order to provide some shelter from the often severe weather systems and trade winds prevailing from the southeast. The compound would have been laid out to resemble the Indonesian model, including a plaza in the centre with a sacred navel stone and fig tree, a shrine to the northeast (remains of which can still be detected in the plaza), the chief's house to the southwest of the shrine, and east of the navel stone, and laypersons' houses and tombs to the west of the chief's house. There may have been an ox pen and kitchens located to the southwest.

Architecture

Positively determining the style of habitation during the time of Andrianjaka, the first recorded inhabitant, is impossible because of a dearth of archaeological remains. Also, the houses belonging to Andrianjaka and his family constructed at Ambohidanerana are mentioned nowhere in the oral traditions. However, we can speculate with a great deal of confidence that the houses resembled the Bugis-style dwelling. The first eyewitness account of the houses in Madagascar's central highlands dates from 1684 when Struys noticed that "their houses were little wooden tabernacles, of one storey high" (Struys 1684:17), which supports this assumption.

To review, the design of the Hova's houses would have been based on the rectangular Bugis-style (Dahl 1982:181), but built directly on the ground, the climate obviating the necessity of stilts. The dwellings would have been thatch-roofed and supported by four corner posts and a central post, oriented north-south with a door to the west and no openings to the east. It is probable that the chief's residence would have been larger, better made, from more precious materials, than the residences of the lay people.

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150 This was true for thirty-one of Mille's case-studies.

Archaeological evidence has revealed that the ruler's dwelling erected on fortified hilltops such as Ambohimanga during the Early Phases was always placed to the east of the sacred navel stone (Mille 1970:99), overlooking the central square, with layperson's houses grouped to the west. Because there were no chiefly tombs at Ambohimanga in the Ambohidray Phase, Andrianjaka did not need to be concerned with the placement of his residence in relation to them, as later rulers did. His wives, animals, and children would have been located to the south and west of the compound, just as this support system was in Indonesia.

Tombs

In the oral traditions concerning the Ambohidray Phase, it is suggested that Andrianjaka adopted a definitive way of differentiating between a noble and layperson's tomb. In addition to the placement of the tombs, at the top of the hill, or down its side, depending on rank, he declared that in his domain houses could only be erected on top of tombs containing persons of "noble" birth (Callet 1974:259). These were called *tranomanara*, or cold houses, because they contained no hearth. He further differentiated the *tranomanara* of the ruler by declaring that they should be bigger and called *tranomasina*, "holy houses", because they covered royalty (Callet 1974:800). From that point forward, *tranomanara* and *tranomasina* were used to distinguish regular nobles (*andriana*) and the ruler (*mpanjaka*) respectively, from the general population that was no longer allowed to erect a house on top of their tombs. He also specified that royal tombs were to contain only one body, which further differentiated them from communally buried non-royals. As per tradition, headstones would have continued to be erected to the east of the tombs and would have served to contain the spirit of the deceased.

Andrianjaka was not buried at Ambohimanga because he moved his kingdom to Antananarivo before his death. However, he demonstrated his dedication to the power of the ancestors by being buried there as the first in a line of seven of his successors. The line of tombs was built slightly off the north-south axis because it was believed that if tombs and houses were exactly aligned, the tomb's power might pull the living person towards death prematurely, through the western door (Ruud 1970:128).

Other significant features within the Fortifications

Andrianjaka likely established the large naturally occurring rock in the centre of Ambohimanga's plaza as its navel stone and planted a fig tree above it. [151] The sacred area would have been used for purification rituals, such as the royal bath (*fandroana*), thought to be "invented" by Andrianjaka's father Ralambo, but actually a ritual brought with the immigrants from Indonesia, as discussed in Chapter Three. It is also likely that Andrianjaka constructed a *fahimasina*, or ox pen, to the southwest of the navel stone in Ambohimanga's plaza. The *fahimasina* would have resembled the Indonesian-style ox pen used to house bulls destined to be sacrificed on the community's navel stone.

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151 In Fiadanana we can still see traces of the ancient root structure near the sacred stone. Live fig trees still exist in the plaza and elsewhere on Imerina's twelve sacred hilltops.

Another rock that was significant during Andrianjaka's reign was Ambatomiantendro, located at the summit of the hill. As the highest point in Ambohimanga, it would have logically served as an observatory of the heavens for selected Bissu. The rock would have been an excellent place to view the sun and moon rising, and the stars. Imbued with spiritual power as a result of its height, it may have served as an auspicious place for contacting the ancestral world through trance dance (*tromba*), as it does today. Also, it would have served as an effective guard post, as one has a clear view of the surrounding hills and valleys, especially of Antananarivo, to the southwest. It is quite likely that Andrianjaka surveyed Antananarivo from this summit, the hill that he would later conquer.

Andriamborona *at Ambohimanga (Circa 1680-1700)*

As discussed above, because of its height and natural resources, Ambohimanga was clearly a desirable hill. Thus, according to the oral traditions, Andriamborona, Ambohimanga's next documented ruler, moved onto the hill with his population from Imamo, after Adrianjaka had transferred his population to Antananarivo. Andriamborona lived within the *rova* already created at Ambohidanerana, which he called Ambohimirary and which is now called Fidasiana (Callet 1974:376, 378, 385). The navel stone and fig tree would have remained in *situ*, used for the same ritual purposes as during Andrianjaka's reign. Ambatomiantendro is the only cultural landscape feature mentioned in the oral traditions during the reign of Andriamborona. According to legend, Andriamasinavalona, the chief of Antananarivo, spotted a fire built by Andriamborona burning on Ambohimanga's summit. Andriamasinavalona sent his men to investigate and, after determining how rich the hill was in natural resources, decided to secure the hill for his son, Andriantsimitoviaminandriana.

Andriantsimitoviaminandriana at Ambohimanga (Circa 1700-1730)

Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, the next ruler of Ambohimanga, was responsible for declaring Andriamborona's small population from Imamo "noble," and bringing the Tsimahafotsy to the hill. He added to the cultural landscape quite significantly, and therefore made a noteworthy impact on Ambohimanga's sacred geography.

Fortifications

The incidence of warfare was increasing in Avaradrano by the Early Kaloy Phase, especially between Andriamasinavalona's four sons assigned to their respective hills. As discussed in Chapter Three, Andriantsimitoviaminandriana was assigned Ambohimanga, which he wrested from Andriamborona and needed to protect his hill from increased incidence of invasion, especially from Ambohidratrimo, as his main adversary was his brother Andriantoponimerina who ruled there (Raombana I:207). Thus, the fortifications remained important at Ambohimanga, and were enhanced and strengthened during Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's reign. Because Ambohimanga's population was increasing, and because long-ranging firearms were becoming more plentiful in the high plateau, the fortifications were elongated away from the village centre. Also, because Andriantsimitoviaminandriana wished to remove his citizens from the royal

complex and Ambohimanga's weak point was its western side, devoid of natural defences, the fosse was doubled in that direction.

At the westernmost extremity of the new external fosse a gate, Ambavahadiatandranomasina, was built as a new "*porte utilitaire*," intended to provide access for residents and visitors to the hill. Although the structure no longer exists, we can speculate as to its form. Following Mille's (1970) research on gates from the Early Kaloy Phase, the entrance would have been created by two roughly worked standing stones situated on the inside of an earthen passage. These stones would have most likely been flanked with ramparts constructed from un-worked (or roughly worked) irregularly shaped stones, put together with earth. They would have been used to shield Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's soldiers from the increased incidence of gunfire during the Early Kaloy Phase (Raombana I:40), and serve as elevated places for surveillance to be used by his expanding army.[152] The gate's closure likely consisted of beams and a wooden door, resembling that of Ambavahaditsiombiomby and Ambatorangotina, built during the Ambohidray Phase. As a result of the new layer of defences, Ambatorangotina, the formerly external western gate, would have evolved to function as an internal gate, still spanning the original fosse built by Andrianjaka, and leading to Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's residence at Fidasiana. Ambavahaditsiombiomby, the northern gate, did not change in form and remained the Chief's exclusive entrance to the *rova* complex.

During Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's reign the Ambohimirary area, at the centre of the inner enclosure, or *rova*, was designated as the Chief's exclusive domain. It was renamed Bevato, "many stones," perhaps referring the low stone wall which delimited the area. As a result, the Tsimahafotsy were required to move further down the hill between the two lines of fortification. Because of the significant shift in settlement location, a new town centre was created at Ambatorangotina, to the west and below the *rova* complex.

Architecture

Although the individual houses constructed by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana are not mentioned in the Tantara, it is likely that he inhabited a house called Bevato built to the east of the navel stone. Bevato and any other houses within the enclosure would have resembled the rectangular wooden structures erected by Andrianjaka and Andriamborona, and may have included their original residences. The Tsimahafotsy's houses would have also resembled the practical design of earlier phases, and would have likewise been a bit smaller than the monarch's dwellings and not as well made.

Tombs

As far as we know, from the oral traditions and archaeological evidence, Andriantsimitoviaminandriana did not build any tombs for his ancestors at Ambohimanga. He used Ratompobe, Anriamborona's mother, as his ancestral connection by consecrating the navel stone with her in the centre of the plaza to validate the space.

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152 Mille (1970) found evidence of ramparts on several gates in Imerina dating from the Early Kaloy Phase.

Andriantsimitoviaminandriana himself was buried at the site by his son Andriambelomasina as described below. Because Andriantsimitoviaminandriana declared all of the Imamo "noble" during his reign, all of their tombs built within the fortifications would have had houses built on top of them during the Early Kaloy Phase. The Tsimahafotsy, brought by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana to Ambohimanga, were considered middle class, or *hova*, and therefore did not have houses built on top of their tombs during the Early Phases.

Other Significant Features within the fortifications

In the centre of Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's complex was the navel stone and fig tree likely originally established by Andrianjaka. When Andriantsimitoviaminandriana "conquered" Ambohimanga and displaced Andriamborona and his followers from the compound, he is said to have ritually sanctified the stone with Ratompobe, Andriamborona's mother (Callet 1974:384), conferring additional meaning upon it. They consecrated the stone by burying a whole Piastre, and some white and red coral beads beneath it – symbolising Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's divine role as mediator and unifier of the ancestral and human worlds (specific symbolism will be discussed in Chapter Nine). The stone can still be seen in the centre of the plaza, and can be matched to a description of it in the Tantara during Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's reign: "*le haut de la pierre est arrondi et sa hauteur est d'un empan*" (Callet 1974:384).[153] This description corresponds exactly with the large slightly rounded rock in the centre of Fidasiana today (*left*). To commemorate Ratompobe, a standing stone was erected to the south of the navel stone. The stone was described as "*une belle pierre polie, taillée et enfoncée profondement*" (Callet 1974:386) in the oral traditions, but it does not exist today. As part of the consecration, a zebu (a *volavita*) was led to the stone, its head laid to the east. The animal was sacrificed near the large flat stone and its blood smeared upon Ratompobe's standing stone as a sacrifice to the ancestors.

The navel stone and adjacent standing stone had two documented functions during the Early Kaloy Phase, as a place for sacrifice to the ancestors during ritual ceremonies and at other times as a sort of stage where the heir apparent would stand to demonstrate his eligibility to rule. The Tantara reported that "*Parce qu'ils ne savaient pas écrire, les rois d'autrefois firent des pierres leur titre d'héritage, un titre durable et qui ne serait jamais détruit*" (Callet 1974:386). Thus, from the time of Andriantsimitoviaminandriana onward, the sacred stone in the centre of the plaza served as a place where the sovereigns would stand during their investiture ceremonies to receive power from the ancestral realm and communicate their legitimacy to the Tsimahafotsy. The navel stone was also used by the chief as a podium from where he delivered *kabary* to high ranking subjects invited into the royal enclosure.

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153 *Un empan* corresponds to the span of a human hand, and measures about nine inches.

Because the royal complex was now off limits to the general public, Ambatorangotina, the large flat rock that comprised part of the original western gate to Ambohimanga, now in the centre of the residential area, served as the stage from where the King's word was relayed to the Tsimahafotsy. The rock probably would have had a fig tree planted above it to shade the space and convey royal significance to the speaker.

Ambatomiantendro would have also been an important rock during Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's reign, as it was for previous rulers. From the precipice, it probably brought the King comfort to realize that he out of his three other brothers held the highest, most defensible, well-resourced hill. Ironically Andriamasinavalona's imperial plan did not result in unity, but actually in competition and animosity. Ambohimanga was quick to rise above other hills in importance, wealth and power, a success which was resented by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's brothers.

Andriambelomasina at Ambohimanga (Circa 1730-1770)

Andriambelomasina, Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's son and successor, was a powerful and wealthy ruler who added to Ambohimanga's royal complex quite significantly during his successful reign.

Fortifications

However, Andriambelomasina asserted little influence on Ambohimanga's defence system, and the fortifications surrounding Ambohimanga with their double western entry points and single northern entry point remained unchanged. According to Raombana's account, no wars ever took place in Ambohimanga during Andriambelomasina's term in office. This may be due to the popular belief that Andriambelomasina possessed the most firearms among the chiefs of his époque as a result of successful trading, thereby preventing attack.

The Bevato Rova also remained unchanged in form during Andriambelomasina's reign; however its function evolved in that it no longer served as the primary royal residential area. When Andriambelomasina took office upon his father's death, he chose to move the seat of power higher up the hillside, to the northeast, and thus created the Mahandry Rova (Callet 1974:596). To lend his exclusive domain ancestral significance, Andriambelomasina buried his father, Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, to the east of his residence.

The oral histories have reported that the "*rova*" of Mahandry, the actual enclosure, was made from long posts placed close together and secured in the ground, thus creating a fence which protected the King from both enemies and the persistent wind at the top of the hill. The structure had one gateway, most likely to the west, as this was the traditional location for the entrances to such enclosures in the Early Kaloy Phase (Mille 1970). A single entrance made practical sense, as one door could be more easily guarded than two, thus ensuring the security of the ruler. The new *rova,* with its height and walls, isolated the chief even further from the general population, conveying a message of increased exclusivity.

Architecture

Royal Architecture

Andriambelomasina constructed his royal residences within the new *rova* to the northwest of Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's tomb, in accordance with tradition. To house his children, he built two small identical houses adjacent to each other, called Mahandry and Tsararay (Callet 1974:519). To the north of his children's houses Andriambelomasina built a third (larger) house called Manjakamiadana, where he personally resided. His shrine would have been located to the northeast, the most sacred direction (Hebert 1965), and archaeological evidence of this structure can be seen today. These houses, especially the smaller ones, may have been moved from the royal complex at Bevato, although this is not documented in the oral traditions. According to the Tantara, the chief's house was surrounded by a further fortification, most likely a wooden palisade, which provided the ruler with yet another layer of protection.

Further up the hill to the northeast of the Mahandry Rova, Andriambelomasina constructed another royal residential area called the Nanjakana Rova. The first house constructed there was called Nanjakana "*lieu ou l'on eut la royauté*," said to have been built sometime before the Late Kaloy Phase by an unnamed monarch (Callet 1974:597). Archaeological evidence suggests that there was a wall built around the house, to protect it from inclement weather and enemy attack. It was there that Andriambelomasina would have housed the next heir to the throne, Andrianjafy, as the dwelling's name suggests. This wooden house survived well into the Late Kaloy Phase, when it was known by Callet's informants.

It is unclear what changes, if any, Andriambelomasina made to the form and function of the Bevato Rova, his father's enclosure. As mentioned above, he may have moved the houses from Bevato to Mahandry where they became Manjakamiadana, Mahandry and Tsararay. Any houses remaining within the Bevato Rova may have been relegated to his wives, other family members or servants, thus housing members of the extended royal family to the southwest of the royal enclosure, as per tradition.

Tsimahafotsy Architecture

The Tsimahafotsy continued to live below the Bevato Rova, to the west, near Ambatorangotina. Their homes were still located within the external fortifications, but outside the royal domain. The area would have contained an increasing number of houses during the Early Kaloy Phase to accommodate the growing population. The Tsimahafotsy continued to be ordered in space according to social rank and importance, the most powerful and wealthy citizens living closest to Ambatorangotina and the royal complex, and the least noble further away from the power centre. There was consistency in form of habitations and tombs. The houses retained the same directional orientation and Bugis-inspired form (wooden, rectangular with a central post, built on a north/south axis "facing" north, with *tandotrano* adorning the rooftops). Because of this consistency, the buildings' symbolic meaning, discussed in Chapter Nine, remained intelligible to the population.

Tombs

While houses denoted social hierarchy, tomb location was the most potent signifier of ancestral hierarchy. As mentioned above, to consecrate the new space at Mahandry (and to establish an ancestral connection there), Andriambelomasina buried his rich and powerful father within it, to the east of his residence, in a superior direction. Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's tomb design would have conformed to the rules set out for a monarch's tomb by Andrianjaka in the Ambohidray Phase. It would have had a large *tranomasina* on top, and a commemorative headstone placed to the east. Also, the royal tomb differed from a lay person's or noble's tomb, in that it would contain only one body. At the end of his life, Andriambelomasina was buried to the north of his father in the same fashion, slightly off-axis, thus beginning a line of tombs which would form a royal necropolis at Ambohimanga. This posthumous conformity to a ruling made by a former chief demonstrates the importance of following ancestral prescription.

It is quite likely that Andriambelomasina added the shrine and hearth that exist today to the east of the royal tombs at Ambohimanga. As discussed in Chapter Three, it was important to make sacrifices to one's ancestors to inspire blessing. The more important the ancestor, the larger and more important the sacrificial ritual. Andriambelomasina would have built the hearth behind the royal tombs so that when he needed to obtain soil from the tomb for *fandroana* and other rituals, he would sacrifice a zebu there, cooking meat on the hearth before offering the gift to his father via his headstone. The custom of "feeding the dead" stems from Andriambelomasina's Indonesian heritage, where meals were often prepared and left as offerings for the ancestors in exchange for their favour.[154]

Tombs of the general population continued to be constructed as per tradition, near the Tsimahafotsy's houses. There was a hierarchy of nobility and the tombs were built in descending order of importance from the royal tombs at the top of the hill downwards (Mille 1970), demonstrating the significance of *tanindrazana* in defining one's social and ancestral status during the Early Kaloy Phase.

Other Significant Features within the fortifications

Other noteworthy landscape features located within Ambohimanga's fortification during the Early Kaloy Phase included the stones, trees and water sources established during the Ambohidray Phase. The navel stone consecrated by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Ratompobe, would have retained its original significance and ancestral connection. Andriambelomasina would have stood upon it when he officially became Ambohimanga's ruler, just as his father had. Also, purification rituals such as the *fandroana* and *alakaosy* would have taken place on it. Andriambelomasina most likely used the *fahimasina* to the southwest of the plaza to house zebu destined for sacrifice on the navel stone during these ceremonies. Finally, it is likely that Andriambelomasina used the ancestrally charged stone as a place to give speeches (*kabary*) to those invited

154 www.sunsite.ui.ac.id/unesco1/english/sulawesi.html

into the royal complex. The *kabary* then may have been repeated at Ambatorangotina for the general public that lived there, as it was in Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's reign.

Andrianjafy (Circa 1770)

The next ruler of Ambohimanga, Andriambelomasina's son Andrianjafy, was largely unpopular with the Tsimahafotsy and spent most of his time at Ilafy, a neighbouring hill. It is unclear whether he was exiled there or chose to live there. In any case, he did not support the best interests of Ambohimanga, and because of his absence it is probable that he did not effect much change on the hill. In fact, he waged war on Ambohimanga when he learned that he was being ousted from power and replaced by Ramboasalama (later called Andrianampoinimerina), attempting to reclaim the hill with no more than twenty muskets, which was ineffective against such a well-fortified site (Raombana I:354).

It is also unclear whether or not Andrianjafy stood on the sacred navel stone in the Bevato Rova to take his oaths to his people – but it is fairly unlikely because he was such an unpopular chief among the Tsimahafotsy. In fact, the Tantara recollects that when Andrianjafy tried to take the throne upon his father's death, he was repelled from Ambohimanga by stones thrown from Bevato and that he left through the western gate. This is symbolically significant in that the western gate (Ambatorangotina) was used by visitors and non-royals, never by a chief, suggesting Andrianjafy's downfall.

Ambatomiantendro played a significant role during this time as Andrianjafy apparently intended to throw Ramboasalama (Andrianampoinimerina), his named successor, off the high cliff (Callet 1974:422). Ramboasalama was warned of the plot by an *ombiassy*, "*si votre oncle vous envoie chercher pour jouer au fanorona à Ambatomiantendro, n'y allez pas, de peur qu'il ne vous pousse (du jaut de ces rochers)*" (Callet 1974:425).[155] Andrianampoinimerina heeded his advisor's warning and avoided Ambatomiantendro until he had successfully eliminated his adversary.

Conclusion

Throughout the Early Phases, Ambohimanga became increasingly wealthy, and concurrently its landscape became more and more exclusive and developed. The hill was always defensible because of its natural landscape and it enjoyed abundant natural resources, which encouraged a healthy well-nourished and self-sufficient population. Further, the cultural landscape had become increasingly imbued with ancestral and sacred significance, and the Tsimahafotsy were becoming deeply connected to it.

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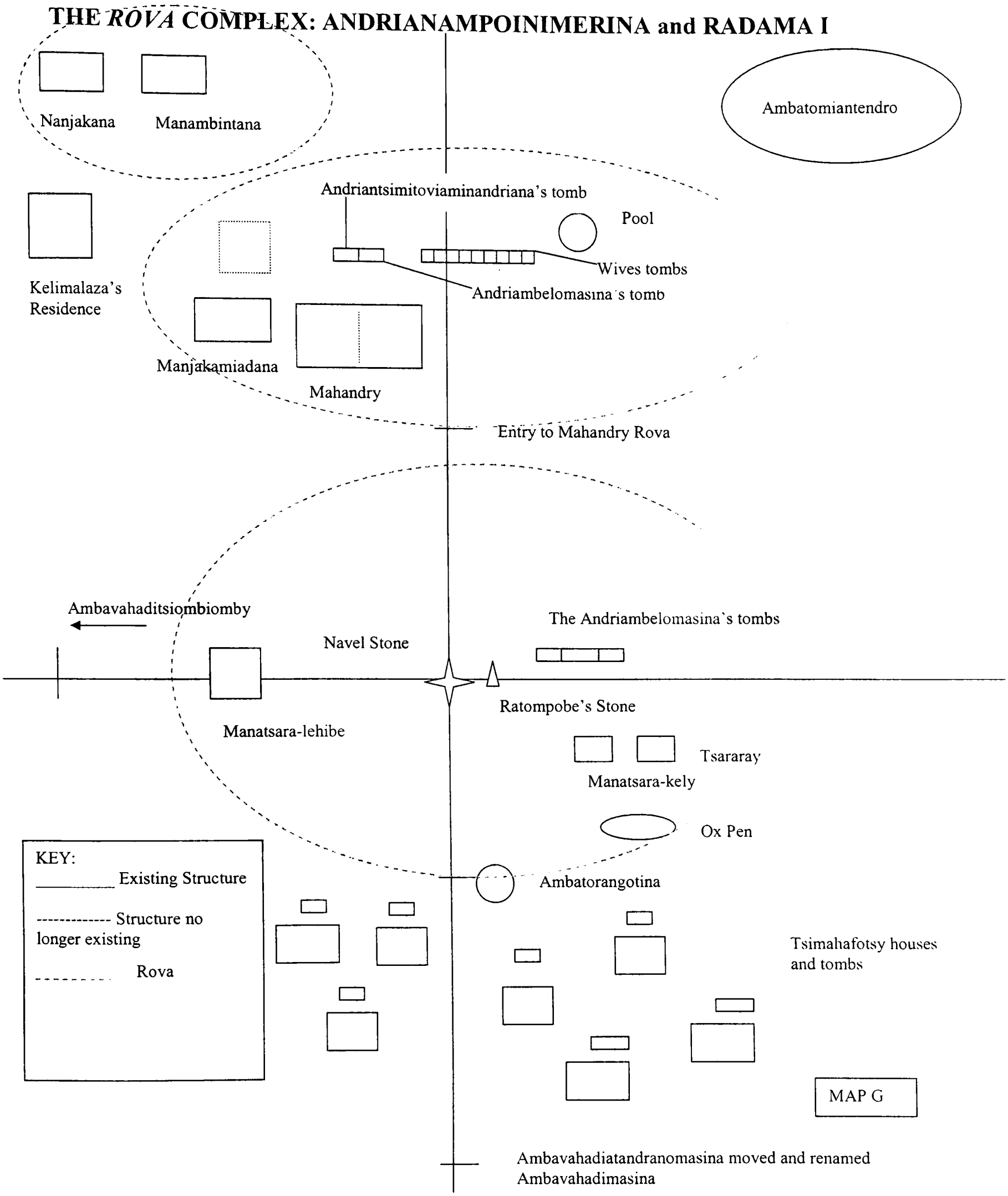
155 This indicates that the *fanorona* board that can be seen today, etched into the rock, dates to at least the end of the early Kaloy Phase. *Fanorona* is a game of strategy with Indonesian origins. Players use small pebbles, wood, potsherds, seeds or berries to move around a board, composed of diagonal lines and indentations, in an effort to avoid being blockaded. The game was used to teach battle strategy, useful during the volatile Early Phases.

The rulers used this significance to their advantage, aligning themselves more closely with the ancestors, emphasizing their semi-divine status, and roughly organizing their population below themselves according to rank. As a result, the settlement within the fortifications at Ambohimanga became progressively more demarcated as the chief rose higher on the hill and the general population was pushed further down, denoting an increasingly developed human and ancestral power hierarchy. Also, throughout the Early Phases as the population grew and became wealthier and more powerful, and the defenses and enclosures became stronger, larger and more extensive, the Tsimahafotsy became more literally and figuratively removed from the rest of the Merina population, rising above them into a prominent and powerful position.

Chapter Five: The Late Kaloy Phase (Circa 1770-1810)

THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: ANDRIANAMPOINIMERINA and RADAMA I



Introduction: Forces of change

When Andrianampoinimerina came to power he affected great additive change to Ambohimanga's cultural landscape, using it to emphasize his sociopolitical ideals and the Tsimahafotsy's superiority over other Merina groups.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Ambohimanga invited Islamized immigrants, the Antaimoro, into his growing kingdom to act as *ombiassy*, his advisors on astrology and other magical arts. They brought with them the *vintana* system, which had a profound impact on the cultural landscape of Ambohimanga and later Imerina as a whole. *Vintana* embellished the earth harmony systems already in place and determined the form and placement of features in the cultural landscape. Only the wealthiest rulers (e.g. Andrianampoinimerina) could hire the Antaimoro as advisors, thereby achieving the upper hand. The Islamized immigrants also imported advanced techniques for building in wood and stone, thus influencing cultural landscape features comprised of these materials, such as houses, tombs and fortifications. Flacourt observed, towards 1655 at Fort Dauphin, that most of the people there, claiming to originate from Mecca, were carpenters (Flacourt 1661:164). Andrianampoinimerina and wealthy Ambohimanga residents would have hired these artisans to build their houses and tombs.

European influence in Ambohimanga continued to be felt primarily through traders, who brought muskets and Piastres into the kingdom to trade with Andrianampoinimerina for slaves. As a result, Andrianampoinimerina became richer and more powerful, and he was able to conquer increasing amounts of territory in Madagascar. Andrianampoinimerina was wary of European influence in other spheres, however, and so set up the strict barriers of *fady,* regulating the impact of foreigners and their material culture on his kingdom and its landscape. The most obvious and effective barrier of *fady* were the fortifications Andrianampoinimerina had constructed around Ambohimanga.

The Fortifications

As soon as Andrianampoinimerina came to power, he set out to extend and strengthen Ambohimanga's defences in an effort to protect his kingdom from the instability that reigned in the central highlands at the time. In the beginning of his reign there were struggles among the four main hills of Avaradrano for supremacy. After Andrianampoinimerina conquered the hills and the Hova became unified into the Merina, they pushed their borders outwards, past Avaradrano. The fortifications served to protect Ambohimanga against newly made enemies, such as the Sakalava from the west coast. Also, defence methods had improved by the Late Kaloy Phase which necessitated change in Ambohimanga's fortifications, to protect against longer ranging and more available firearms.

Thus, after organising and rallying his population around him, Andrianampoinimerina embarked on a huge public works project at Ambohimanga, building a new external fosse and renovating the existing fosses at Ambohimanga (Callet 1974:575). As a result, a deeper, more complex fosse system was created that was

doubled around the hill and tripled on the western side (Raharijaona 1931:120). As a result, the original fosses built by Andrianjaka and Andriantsimitoviaminanadriana became interior defences.

Before beginning this project, an *ombiassy* was consulted to determine the fosse's placement in the landscape, in accordance with the *vintana* system, recently introduced to Ambohimanga.[156] The soil was dug by specific *demes* (or family groups) assigned to the task by Andrianampoinimerina. They used baskets made of *rinda*, *zozoro* (strong grasses) and *herana* (an aquatic plant with flat leaves) as shovels (Callet 1974:280), along with wooden and iron tools, to excavate the earth. Considering the implements used, the dimensions of the fosses were remarkable. In 1777, Mayeur noted, "*tous les villages sans exception sont fermés par un fosse de sept mètres de largeur sur neuf mètres de profondeur*" (Mayeur 1777 [1913]). The external fosse at Ambohimanga matches this description and measures approximately one and a quarter miles in circumference.

The earth excavated from digging the exterior fosses was used to build walls along its inside edges and raise the terraces within its borders. Mayeur (1777) noted that all the hilltop villages on the high plateau were defended by means of fosses and earthen walls (Grandidier 1900:391). Camo witnessed the earth wall at Ambohimanga in 1924. The wall could still be seen on the right hand side of this photograph (*left*) of Ambatomitsangana from 1926.[157] The wall no longer exists, but evidence of similar walls can still be detected at other fortified sites in Imerina (Mille 1970:206). The walls always followed the interior periphery of the external fosse, and they were generally less than one metre in height (Mayeur 1785 [1913]). Thorn bushes may have been planted on top of the wall, adding a further band of protection.[158]



Ambohimanga became increasingly self sufficient throughout the Late Kaloy Phase. In addition to the water sources naturally occurring within the fosses, Andrianampoinimerina constructed drains from Ambohimanga's fosses, which served three functions. Firstly, during the digging of the fosse, short drains facilitated the evacuation of water and excavated earth, thereby allowing a deep trench to be formed (Mille 1970:207). Secondly, during the time of relative security at the end

156 The site's natural defences, such as rocky ledges, were also considered when determining the fosses' placement.

157 Le Monde, Issue 31. March 1926. Photo number 8Fi1(168). Archives Nationales. Aix-en-Provence, France.

158 Sibree described that in some parts of the central provinces of Madagascar the village is protected by a dense and wide plantation of prickly pear, *opuntia dilenii* (Haw), or mysore thorn, *acoesalpinia sepiaria*, a shrub with bright yellow flowers and full of hook-like spines (Sibree1896:28).

of the eighteenth century the short drains were extended into longer drains (generally 1-2 kilometres, but sometimes up to 5 kilometres), placed strategically in order to channel water to the valleys for crop irrigation. This served to prolong the growing season (Callet 1974:1022-23; Wright and Rakotoarisoa 1997). Rochon (1791) noted that the valleys were generally well irrigated, whether by natural or artificial means (LMS(C) 1829-32:381). Thirdly, Andrianampoinimerina exploited the natural water sources to his population's advantage by creating a secure reservoir within the fosses called Amparihy, which was fed by the drains running from the fosses.

The Gates

In addition to expanding the fosse system, creating an irrigation system and a secure source of drinking water, Andrianampoinimerina significantly altered the layout and number of gates surrounding Ambohimanga. He constructed seven internal gates following the interior fosses established by Andrianjaka and Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, and seven external gates following the exterior fosses, which were built under his direction.[159] The gates were laid out according to the *vintana* system's principles.

The External Gates

The seven large exterior gates to Ambohimanga, two of which were double gates designed to span the doubled sections of the exterior fosses, were large impressive structures.[160] It has been suggested in the oral traditions that the exterior gates created by Andrianampoinimerina were replicas of seven gates built by Andriantsimitoviamiandriana (Raharijaona 1931:122). However, I believe Andrianampoinimerina initiated the building of the gates for several reasons. Firstly, multiple gates would have met the increased surveillance needs of the Late Kaloy Phase. The seven gates were built close enough to each other so that guards could survey from one to another, which guaranteed that the entire site was adequately guarded. Secondly, the gates were constructed in a style characteristic of the Late Kaloy Phase, see below. Thirdly, no other site showed seven gates at that time (Mille 1970). Fourthly, they were arranged according to an *ombiassy*'s interpretation of the *vintana* system, which was brought into Imerina during the Late Kaloy Phase. Moving around the fosse in a counter-clockwise direction: Ambatomitsangana was built at Alahamady (northeast), Amboara at Alahotsy (north), Miandravahiny at Adijady (northwest), Anadakana at Adimizana (west), Ampitsaharana at Asombola (southwest), Andranomatsatso at Alahasaty (south) and Antsolatra at Asorotany (southeast). Each direction had symbolic significance that dictated the gate's practical and ideological functions. Ambatomitsangana at Alahamady to the northeast was considered the most important gate of all. Andakana, at Adimizana to the west, and Amboara at Alahotsy and Miandravahiny at Adijady, both to the north, were also significant because of properties associated with *vintana*.

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159 The number seven was considered auspicious in accordance with the *vintana* system.

160 These pairs of gates were counted as one in the Tantara.



Gate One: Ambatomitsangana



Gate Two: Amboara



Gate Three: Miandravahiny (upper)



Gate Three: Miandravahiny (lower)



Gate Four: Andakana (lower)



Gate Four: Andakana (upper)



Gate Five: Ampitsaharana



Gate Six: Andranomatsatso



Gate Seven: Antsolatra



Remains of an internal gate

Like the fosses, the gates themselves were constructed by specific Ambohimanga *demes*, assigned their tasks by Andrianampoinimerina. The general Tsimahafotsy constructed the exterior Andakana, the Tsimiamboholahy (an elite group of Tsimahafotsy) constructed Ambatomitsangana, the Mandiavato constructed Amboara, the Morovatana constructed both Miandravahiny, the Ambodirany constructed Andranomatsatso, the Vazkinisisany built Amitsaharana, and the Zafimbazaha constructed Antsolatra. It is important to stress that the most significant and impressive external gate, Ambatomitsangana, was constructed by the highest ranking Tsimahafotsy *deme* below the Andriamasinavalona, who were not assigned a construction project.

During the Late Kaloy Phase there were two different styles of entrances to fortified villages in Imerina (Sibree 1896, Mille 1970). One was formed by two upright monoliths, closed by a stone disc. The other took the form of a tunnel[161] and was closed by thick wooden doors. In Ambohimanga, these two styles were combined, utilising a tunnel to channel people, with one or more wooden doors. "In many cases there was more than one set of wooden doors with a short passage between each gate and stone slats placed over the top so that the enemy could be speared from above, if the first or even the second line of defence had been broken" (Sibree 1896:31). Examples of wooden doors can be seen in the photos of Andakana (page 138) and Ambatomitsangana (page 197), respectively. Access tunnels can still be found on all the remaining exterior gates, except for the upper Andakana, which is missing its stone covering and Antsolatra, which has been almost entirely destroyed.

The interior opening of the gate was secured with a stone disc which passed slightly above the gate's lintels. In times of war, it was rolled between two upright stones so as to effectively block the entrance. It could be rolled from its sides or upper extremity, the standing stones serving to guide the disc's passage. Original discs can still be seen at Andranomatsatso, Miandravahiny and Ambatomitsangana. The discs located at Andakana and Amboara are not original. This is quite obvious by their small size in relation to the opening and the fact that the discs were not made by the method of fire-cracking, used for harvesting stone during the Late Kaloy Phase.[162]

Ramparts were constructed flanking Ambohimanga's exterior gates, to protect Andrianampoinimerina's guards against the more sophisticated firearms that dramatically increased in number during the Late Kaloy Phase with the success of the slave trade. The ramparts would have resembled those built at the time of Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, made of stones, held together with earth as mortar. But, the Late Kaloy stones were chipped into fairly regular blocks with iron tools, and the structures were larger and more solidly built. The

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161 Mille (1970) noticed that these tunnels first appeared at the end of the sixteenth century but became popular in the Late Kaloy Phase.

162 As mentioned above, fire-cracking stone was a technology brought with the Hova immigrants from Indonesia. However, the early immigrants could not work with such large stones because communal labour involving hundreds of men (*fanompoana)* would have been required to move them. This only became possible with the "unification" of Avaradrano into Imerina, when Andrianampoinimerina would have had access to and jurisdiction over a large cohesive workforce.

dimensions of the ramparts corresponded with the height of the gate's lintels, some being approximately ten feet high. This created a solid place where guards could stand to survey the landscape. Ramparts can be seen on all Ambohimanga's external gates except for Antsolatra which, as mentioned above, has largely disappeared.



Guard shelters most likely adorned the gates during the Late Kaloy Phase, as guards would have been stationed at them through all seasons. Some of these shelters may have been circular and placed to the side of the gate, on top of a rampart. The foundations of one such structure can be detected at Ampitsaharana (*left*). It is composed of blocks of granite fixed together with earth mortar, with stone steps leading up to it. This resembles another structure built at Ambatomiantendro, also to serve as a lookout, which will be discussed later in this chapter. No other remains of original shelters can be found at the site, but it is logical to suppose that in addition to the round variety, some would have resembled shelters built in the Fiadanana Phase, where a curved shield made of *terre battue* (beaten earth) was constructed to provide protection for the guards positioned on top of the gate (*below left*).[163] Behind this shield was a rectangular wooden hut, with a thatch roof, offering the guard refuge from the elements.



The strong exterior gates obviously functioned as barriers to insurgents, but they also served as barriers to *fady*. As discussed in Chapter Three, the concept of *fady* was an important element of Andrianampoinimerina's success in maintaining order, illustrating his commitment to *fombandrazana* and his position as mediator to change. Thus, the exterior gates served as barriers to several objects considered taboo to the royal ancestors, who communicated these dislikes through the royal *sampy*.[164] Many of the taboos concerned foreign objects deemed potentially harmful to the state by Andrianampoinimerina and the conservative *ombiassy*, who as well as serving as idol guardians, were "guardians of tradition."[165] Therefore, Andrianampoinimerina made the *fady* known to the public and threatened that if these rules were broken and taboo objects brought through the fortifications into Ambohimanga, he would reduce the perpetrator's wives and children to slavery (Callet 1974: 673).

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163 The gate Andakana (1898). Photograph number 20, Album 7. Géographique et Hydrographique Nationale (FTM). Antananarivo, Madagascar.

164 An idol was said to lose its sacredness and power if any of its *fady* were broken, because the ancestors would be displeased (Ruud 1970:195).

165 *Fady* substances included European products, pigs, and most Europeans themselves, except those the Andiranampoinimerina invited in specifically.

The Internal Gates

After the external gates were completed, Andrianampoinimerina established seven internal gates to Ambohimanga to correspond with them, spanning the now internal fosse system created by Andrianjaka and Andriantsimitoviaminiandriana. The internal gates were smaller and weaker than the external gates, serving as a second line of defence. Andrianampoinimerina incorporated the original external gates established by Andrianjaka and Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, which became the most important internal gates as a result of their history, and added several others. Resembling the external gates, the internal ones were also built according to the *vintana* system.

Ambavahaditsiombiomby, situated to the north of the complex, originally an external gate established by Andrianjaka, was adopted by Andrianampoinimerina as his official entryway to the *rova* complex. Ambavahadimasina, found to the west of the complex, was considered the second most important internal gate. As discussed in Chapter Four, Ambavahadimasina, meaning "sacred gate," was originally built by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana on the west side of Ambohimanga, where it was called Ambavahadiatandranomasina. It was moved and renovated by Andrianampoinimerina in order to connect with Andakana, the new external western gate described above. The original Ambavahadiatandranomasina, built by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, was not used because of the difficult terrain stretching between it and Andakana. Thus, Andrianampoinimerina moved the rough standing stones that comprised Ambavahadiatandranomasina to a new location.[166] The ancient gate was transported because it was a significant ancestral monument, and it was considered efficacious to use features that had belonged to the ancestors. This notion was exploited further in that the stones were adhered with red earth from the royal tombs at Ambohimanga. The posts and boards flanking the exterior of the gate were made of sacred wood obtained from Ambohimanga's forest. Thus, Andrianampoinimerina incorporated the gate built by his ancestor into a new one, rich with symbolic significance, which will be discussed in Chapter Nine.

Another important gate was Ambatorangotina, found to the west of the complex, which crossed the original fosse built by Andrianjaka at the summit of the hill. Andrianampoinimerina restored and embellished this gate, originally built by Andrianjaka as an external gate, and later used by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana as an internal gate to his *rova*. Likewise, Andrianampoinimerina declared: "*Je fais d'Ambatorangotina une porte d'entré et une ouverture vous permettant d'arriver jusqu'à moi*" (Callet 1974:822). During the Late Kaloy Phase, Ambatorangotina was no longer considered an internal gate, as it did not span what was now considered the internal fosse. Therefore, it was not counted as one of Andrianampoinimerina's internal gates in the oral traditions, although it remained a significant boundary between royal and non-royal space.

As far as we know, the other internal gates at Ambohimanga served solely practical functions. Moving counter-clockwise from Ambavahaditsiombiomby (discussed above), Ambodiaviavy was created to span the original

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166 This explains why there is no trace of the original gate today, or memory of its location.

fosse and create a pathway to Amparihy, the reservoir Andrianampoinimerina constructed to the west of the town.[167] Ampanidinamborona was also originally located to the north, probably between Ambodiaviavy and Ambavahadimasina, and would have likely been used during the Late Kaloy Phase to conduct those entering from Miandravahiny into Ambohimanga-proper.[168] It is now completely missing and because its precise location is unknown, I have not included it on Map A (Appendix A). Following Ampanidinamborona is Ambavahadimasina, the sacred western gate, also described above. Next is the original site of Ambavahadiatandranomasina, created by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana as his external western gate. Although the gate was transported to a new location after the external fosse was dug and incorporated into a new structure (Ambavahadimasina), it was still counted separately in the oral traditions as one of Andrianampoinimerina's seven internal gates. Ambavahadimahazaza (Mahazaza) was found to the southwest. This gate conducted people to the town centre, still located at Ambatorangotina, during the Late Kaloy Phase. Ambavahadikely was located on the southern side of the fosse structure and created a conduit to the external gate called Andranomatsatso.

Mimicking the external gates discussed above, the internal gates, located to the north (Ambavahaditsiombiomby) and west (Ambavahadimasina) of the royal complex were deemed the most important. Ancestral connection was also a factor in determining importance, and the oldest and most ancestrally significant gates were honoured accordingly.

Architecture

The Rova Complex: Mahandry, Nanjakana, and Bevato

The oral traditions have revealed that *rovas*, or royal enclosures, at Ambohimanga were always named after the oldest and most significant house inside that enclosure. Three *rovas* were said to have existed during the Late Kaloy Phase: Mahandry, named for Andrianampoinimerina's dwelling, Nanjakana, named for the house built by Andriambelomasina for his children, and Bevato, named for Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's royal abode.

Royal Architecture

The Mahandry Rova

The Mahandry Rova, established and used by Andriambelomasina in the Early Kaloy Phase, served as Andrianampoinimerina's primary residence until he moved his capital to Antananarivo at the end of the eighteenth century. To further enforce his security while he lived there, he doubled the height of the wall built

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167 Ambodiaviavy was probably the entrance used by the King's water-bearers who would not have been allowed to enter the *rova* complex via Ambavahaditsiombiomby, as it was sanctioned only for the King.

168 The oral histories related that Ampaninamborona was formed by two round stones placed across from each other and was very high (Callet 1974:577).

by Andriambelomasina around the Mahandry Rova and added another external one made with branches of a thorny bush, called Voafotsy, which was renewed every year. A high, wide hedge made of this plant would have been an effective defensive measure, as the majority of citizens wore no shoes in the Late Kaloy Phase. Andrianampoinimerina kept the western entrance as the only access to the *rova* complex because a *unique porte* was more effectively guarded. Also, Andrianampoinimerina kept a cannon within his *rova*, for defence and as a symbol of his military capability. This piece of artillery may have originally belonged to Andriamasinavalona.[169] As a result of the above defences, Andrianampoinimerina became more and more isolated from potential danger as well as from the public, cordoned off closer to his ancestors than his people.

Andrianampoinimerina renovated the space within the Mahandry Rova significantly. In addition to strengthening the surrounding wall, he replaced and added several features. The two small houses erected by Andriambelomasina for his children were replaced with one large one, Mahandry, the prototype of royal residences built during his reign. Andriambelomasina's house to the north of Mahandry was renovated and used to house his personal *ody* (Manjakatsiroa). The house for Andriamabelomasina's idols to the northeast of the space was moved to the Bevato Rova. A pool was created to the south of the rova and several tombs were added to the sacred space.

Mahandry



Andrianampoinimerina dismantled Tsararay and Mahandry, the two small houses erected in Mahandry by Andriambelomasina, and probably moved them back to the Bevato Rova, where they served to house his children and wives. In their stead, Andrianampoinimerina built a large wooden structure, the size of both "twin" houses together, called Mahandry, to serve as his residence (*left*). This building was identical in form to the earlier domestic constructions, excepting that it was larger, higher and made with more valuable materials. Raombana

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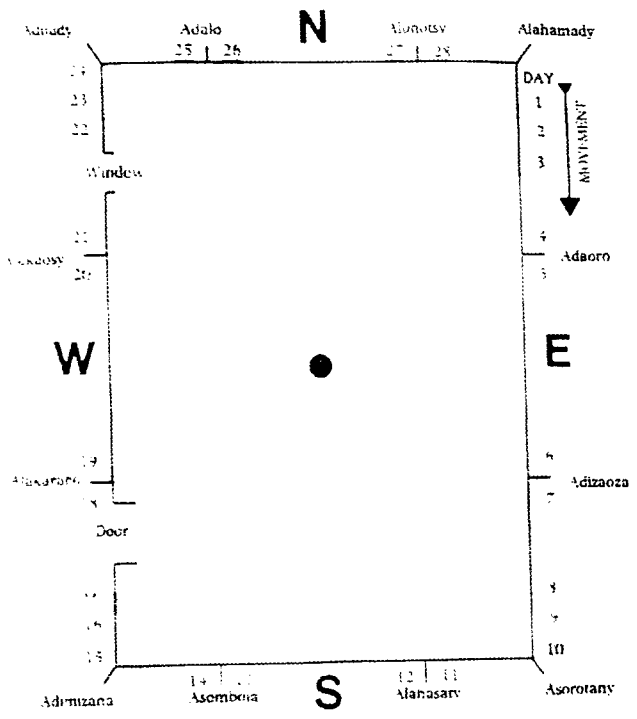
169 Raombana documented that "The King [Andriamasinavalona] purchased a small piece of artillery known as Tafondron' Andriamasinavalona" (Raombana I:276), which he used to fire at Andohalo and Ambohimitsimbina at the commencement of every fandroana. It may have been acquired by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, passed to Andriambelomasina and then to Andrianampoinimerina, but it is not mentioned in the literature concerning their reigns. Alternatively, the cannon could have been procured by Andrianampoinimerina who imported several cannons during the Late Kaloy Phase. Raombana reported that Andrianampoinimerina obtained a small iron cannon which was brought to Antananarivo by a European slave-trader. This cannon was a great deal longer and larger than the one belonging to Andriamasinavalona, and Andrianampoinimerina readily bought it from the European in exchange for slaves (Raombana I:496). Or, the cannon could have been Besafana. The Tantara has documented that Besafana was the first cannon imported during Andrianampoinimerina's reign (Callet 1974:507). It was obtained when Andrianampoinimerina wrested Majunga from Ravahiny, a Sakalava king, who gave the cannon as a sign of his submission (ibid:658). Regardless of its origins, the cannon is thought to have functioned during the Late Kaloy Phase as protection, to call the people to kabary, announce fandroana, and eventually commemorate the burial of Andrianampoinimerina.

noted that the royal houses "were changed into enormous high houses" (Raombana I:520). This was possible because of the tools and technology brought to the highlands by the Antaimoro carpenters.[170] Following the Bugis model, Mahandry was supported by three hardwood tree trunks and four corner posts. The central trunk was notably thicker than the others, and all the posts were much larger and taller than those in layperson's constructions.

Resembling the building of the gates and fosses, tasks for erecting the royal dwelling were assigned to various social groups by Andrianampoinimerina. The gathering of the material to be used for the central post was assigned to a specific high ranking Tsimahafotsy group (the Tsimiamboholahy) who had also built Ambatomitsangana as the inferior *hasina* they owed to the sovereign (Callet 1974:714,520). The task of "planting" the post was assigned to the highest ranking group of Tsimahafotsy beneath the Andriamasinavalona, the Zanadralambo (Callet 1974:714). Thus, like the fortifications, the project of constructing Mahandry reinforced social rank and privilege in Late Kaloy society.

Also, like the fortifications, Mahandry conformed to the *vintana* system, which could be applied perfectly to the Bugis-style house. As a result, the building did not change in form from the established prototype, but significance was reinforced and added to. Thus, following tradition and *vintana*, the house was placed on a north-south axis and the door was placed on the southern end of the west wall. It originally slid back and forth in grooves fixed above and below it, now it moves on hinges, which were added in the Colonial Phase. The steps located curiously to the right of the door, on the south side, can be explained by the circulation of *rohontany*. *Rohontany* is a perpetual power that is thought to revolve around a rectangular structure, such as a house, without cessation (Ruud 1974:60). The force is always moving against the sun, going southwards (clockwise) from Alahamady (northeast corner) (*left*). It is considered *fady* to walk against *rohontany*. Therefore, no one would have entered Mahandry directly from the western door. Instead, they would have walked in a clockwise curve around the eastern side of the house, arriving from the south, climbed the steps at the Adimizana (southwest) corner, and then entered through the door on the western wall.



170 The appearance of the Late Kaloy wooden house can be largely explained by the tools and technology available in the central highlands at the time. When they arrived on the central highlands, the missionary-artisans noticed that native tools consisted of a hatchet, chisels of different sizes, a rude sort of plane, a wooden hammer or mallet, a drill or borer,worked by twisting it between the palms of the hands, and a rule, or graduated measuring rod, six or eight feet long (Ellis 1838:317; see also Flacourt (1661:164)) for an earlier account of tools used in Imerina). Some of these tools would have been brought by the Antaimoro carpenters to Imerina.

There was no window in Mahandry during the Late Kaloy Phase, though one exists today.[171] In 1933 the building was described as a "windowless hut" by Chirgwin, just like the old-style Toraja houses were described (see Chapter Four). A window was first shown in a photograph of Mahandry from 1976 (Oberlé 1976: 50). I suggest that there was no window because no cooking took place on Mahandry's hearth except for ritual meals of rice (*tatao*) during the royal bath ceremony. Andrianampoinimerina's meals would have been cooked for him by his servants in a separate kitchen. Because the fire was used only for warmth and ceremonial purposes, it was probably kept small to decrease the likelihood of setting the wooden building alight. Thus, an opening for ventilation and the release of smoke was probably not required. Furthermore, fewer openings in the structure decreased the security risk for the King.

Following tradition, Mahandry had a tall steep thatched roof supported by a ridge pole and house posts. Fixed to Mahandry's gable ends were two pairs of silver birds perched atop exceptionally long finials (*tandotrano*). Each pair of birds were connected by a silver chain, a form of currency in Imerina during the Late Kaloy Phase (Callet 1974:596). The earliest European eyewitness account of this style of ornamentation in Imerina came in 1822 when Bojer observed "*De chaque côté du faite du toit sont deux poteaux croisés en forme de fouche, souvent de 60 pieds de long et aux extrémités de ces fouches son attachés de petits oiseaux en bois, et même en argent qui sont présumes représenter le bonheur et la prospérité qui prévaut dans la maison*" (Bojer and Hilsenberg (1822), cited in Valette (1954).

Both the *tandotrano* (Waterson 1991) and the ornamentation were legacies from Indonesia. Indonesian bird omenology suggests that the birds would have served as protection for the King.[172] This is supported by the Tantara, which recounted that Andrianampoinimerina was guarded from childhood by crows. We can see a symbolic connection between birds and rulers in several places in the oral traditions. For example, legend suggests that when a boar once attacked the young prince, the crows blinded it with their wings. Later, another bird showed Andrianampoinimerina which direction to use for entering a town where he would find a wife. Finally, these birds protected the King from imminent attack at Ambohimanga by warning him with their calls (see Callet 1974: 537, 707-708).

The function of space within the house was also dictated by the *vintana* system. We can recreate the space at the time of Andrianampoinimerina by relying on our understanding of *vintana,* and the earliest accounts of the building's interior, as reported during the Colonial Period. The first eyewitness account of the interior of the structure dates from 1926,[173] but earlier accounts surveying the structure from the outside (Grosclaude 1898) have provided valuable clues as to its internal organisation. These first accounts were fairly reliable because

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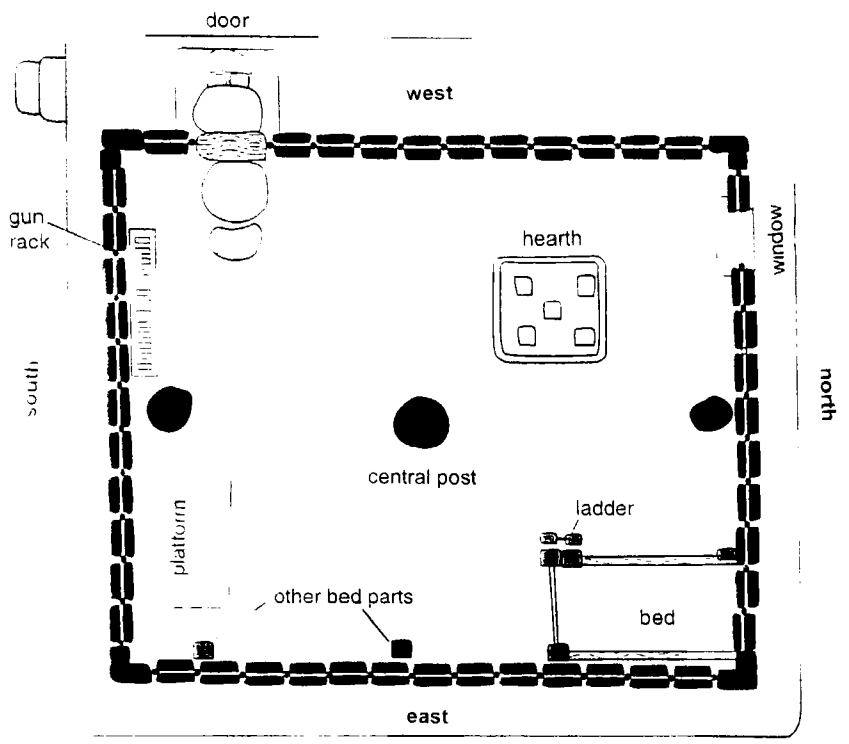
171 Likewise, photographs of Besakana, Andrianampoinimerina's residence in Antananarivo, do not show a window on the western side of the house.

172 www.indonesianheritage.com.

173 Le Monde Colonial Illustré, March 1926, "Les Cités Malgaches: Ambohimanga."

the queens were purported to have kept the house exactly as it was during Andrianampoinimerina's reign. Then, because *vazaha* were forbidden by *fady* to enter the building in the early Colonial Phase, its interior arrangement would not have changed substantially.

Andrianampoinimerina's bed was constructed high in the northeast corner (Alahamady), the most important corner of the house.[174] The bed was reached by a ladder sculpted from a single piece of wood. There was another wooden platform originally raised in the southwest corner (Asorotany), which has been conventionally identified as a bed. Legend has been created around this "bed", suggesting that it was used by Andrianampoinimerina's twelve wives, significant in that it is lower than the kings. This is likely erroneous. Firstly, the platform was not originally close to the ground, and there is evidence of its legs being cut, illustrating that it was once a higher platform similar to Andrianampoinimerina's. An early account by "Le Monde Coloniale Illustré" (1926) reported that both "beds," covered with matting,



were positioned high off the ground. Secondly, during the Late Kaloy Phase Mahandry was reserved for the King and "male," "dry" power (as will be discussed in Chapter Nine); women were relegated to the Bevato Rova and were not allowed into Mahandry (Callet 1974: 1049). Therefore, the platform in the southeast corner was most likely used for storage, as it would have been in a layperson's dwelling (Ruud 1970). It may have been reached by removable wooden dowels that could be fixed in the house's southern post, mimicking those leading to the rafters near Andrianampoinimerina's bed on the northern post, or by a ladder.

Near the central post of Mahandry a "*rude fauteuil...marque la place du souverain*" (Le Monde 1926). In 1942 Chapman described this "throne" as "a curiously carved divan, roughly constructed" (Chapman 1942:39). Across from it, near the northern post, was the "place of honour" where guests would sit on stools when having audience with the King (Anonymous 1926:230). One of these stools was observed by Chapman in 1942: "In a corner was the original little wooden stool on which he sat, and his three-legged rough wooden table" (Chapman 1942: 39). Actually, the three legged structure Chapman thought was a table served as the stool and the other lower structure, in the form of a chopping block, functioned as the King's *fanorona* board, which

174 The northeastern corner of the house (Alahamady) denotes the beginning, the origin, of the cosmological system. Because the traditional system of earth harmony was based on the sunrise (east) and the residence of the gods (north), where both the north and east were privileged positions, the northeast corner of traditional houses was imbued with sacred significance, making it the most "holy" place of the house.

can be determined by the lines etched into the wood's surface. The object was much too low to have served as a stool.

Although it appears in Mahandry today, cooking and dining apparatus (except for that used to prepare ritual meals) would most likely not have been kept in the King's residence. In 1926, a reporter for "Le Monde," the first eyewitness of Mahandry's interior, observed only some clay jars on the ground and a cup of smooth round stones, formerly used as bullets. In 1933, a "few heavy wooden utensils" placed near the hearth, were also mentioned (Chirgwin 1933:131). A conch shell "*oubliée dans un coin*" was seen in 1935 by Faurec. Conch shells were used during the Late Kaloy Phase to call the populace to *kabary* and sound alarm, just as they were used in Indonesia (Ramamonjisoa and Raheliarisoa 1993:13). These objects may have been originally placed in Mahandry. But it is more likely that, apart from perhaps the "bullets" and the conch shell, the items were not part of Mahandry's original contents.

Fixed on the northern wall, towards Alahamady, was a cupboard. In 1942, Chapman mentioned the "roughly constructed cupboard attached to the northern wall" (Chapman 1942:39). What was placed in the cupboard cannot be determined, but no doubt it was something important and perhaps sacred, as signified by its northern position. It may have contained the King's *tandrompotsy*, a white zebu horn that the King used to blow sacred water on the population as blessing, and perhaps the conch shell that was blown to signal *kabary*. A gun rack was fixed to the southern wall, near the door, which would have held the King's firearms. It is probable that the floor, bed, storage platform and perhaps the walls of Mahandry were covered with straw mats during the Late Kaloy Phase. "*Je signale que tout l'intérieur était tapisse de nates, qui retenaient la bise, si elle voulait s'inuer entre les joints*" (Jully 1898, cited in Woulkoff 1962:12).[175]

Manjakamiadana

After constructing the existing Mahandry in the place of the smaller Mahandry and Tsararay, Andrianampoinimerina renovated Manjakamiadana, which had been built by Andriambelomasina for his residence. Andrianampoinimerina most likely made the building slightly larger and higher to correspond with his grander architectural style. He would have also ensured that it corresponded with *vintana* and *rohontany*.

The house, smaller than Mahandry, remained in a northeastern position in relation to it. Andrianampoinimerina used the residence of his ancestor to house the idol Manjakatsiroa, one of the four royal idols of Imerina, carrying on the Indonesian tradition of housing one's personal talismans in a shrine to the northeast of oneself. Manjakatsiroa was reported to have been Andrianampoinimerina's favourite idol, the only one he "owned"

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175 Beneath Mahandry, Andrianampoinimerina buried much of the money he acquired from the slave trade and inferior *hasina*, or taxes. This treasury was said to have been added to yearly, and was mentioned by Raombana during Ranavalona I's reign (Raombana I:508). No documented archaeological investigations have been undertaken to locate this treasure, if it still exists.

personally.[176] It accompanied the sovereign to all his destinations. If Andrianampoinimerina was at Ambohimanga, Manjakatsiroa "lived" at Manjakamiadana, to the north, and Andrianampoinimerina at Mahandry, to the south (Callet 1974:231). The idol was a medium through which the ancestors communicated with Andrianampoinimerina, thus the talisman was kept in a superior direction to the King where it could offer advice and protection from the ancestral realm, in accordance with the flow of power from north to south (discussed in Chapter Nine). Andrianampoinimerina moved the shrine which was used by Andriambelomasina to the north of the Bevato Rova, where it served to house Fantaka, the Tsimahafotsy's *sampy* (Callet 1974:597).

Outside the Mahandry Rova, to the northeast, a building was constructed in the Late Kaloy style to shelter the idol Kelimalaza, the "sovereign" of the talismans.[177] Its residence was surrounded with a fence made of thorny branches. Outside the fence, to the west, was a sacred stone upon which animals could be sacrificed for the idol and where the idol was placed for worship and ritual. The large stone seen at the area today corresponds exactly to the description given in the Tantara: "*cette pierre sainte est haute, elle atteint le haut de la cuisse; le dessus est large, trois personnes peuvent s'y tenir*" (Callet 1974:579), allowing fairly positive identification of the site (*right*).



The idol's guardian *ombiassy* lived in the house with the talisman, and although he was technically positioned outside the human realm, he enjoyed many privileges, which placed him at the top of the hierarchy of *ombiassy*. The guardian and his family took all their meals in the house, although little cooking was done there. Resembling Mahandry, no fire was allowed in Kelimalaza's dwelling besides sacred candles[178] and incense. Raharijaona (1931) noted that a candle was constantly illuminated in the room where the idol resided. There was a hearth to the west of the central pillar, as in all residences, but it was only used to cook rice (*tatao*) for ritual meals and to heat water when the idol "requested" bathing (during the *alakaosy* purification ritual) (Callet 1974:230). The white zebu horn, *tandrompotsy*, was kept alongside the idol itself, in the northeast corner of its house. It was filled with sacred water from Amparihy and other substances and used

176 As discussed in Chapter Three, Andrianampoinimerina believed that Manajakatsiroa was responsible for making him the unique sovereign of the country (Callet 1974:231-2), so it is understandable that Andrianampoinimerina did not wish to be separated from the talisman.

177 This house still existed when the Tantara were collected by Callet in the mid-nineteenth century (Callet 1974:579).

178 The first candles in Imerina were called *fanaorivo* and consisted of fat in a container with a wick.

on various ritual occasions to blow water on the King or laypeople as blessing.[179] Sacrifices to the idol were left in the area of the hearth, as well as on its sacred stone in front of the dwelling.

In front of the house and sacred stone was a terraced area where citizens convened for the talisman's blessing during the Late Kaloy Phase. Kelimalaza was thought to guard the harvest, the health of the people and protect the kingdom against external enemies (Kus 1979:253). The idol also protected soldiers during war. Before their departure, Andrianampoinimerina would gather his army on the terraces in front of Kelimalaza, where the idol guardian would bless them by sprinkling the soldiers with sacred water mixed with earth taken from the ancestral tombs, contained in the white zebu horn (*tandrompotsy*). In return, the soldiers would offer a silver Piastre and a zebu as inferior *hasina* to the idol. The fat from the zebu's hump was used to anoint the sacred stone, to the west of its house, see (Vig 1969:72; Berg 1986:2).[180] Perhaps the blood libations, Piastres, or material for making the amulets were placed in the curious hole chipped out of the rock at its base (Callet 1974:579).

The Nanjakana Rova

Further up the hill to the northeast, Andrianampoinimerina added to the *rova* at Nanjakana. He renovated the original structure, Nanjakana, and added another called Manambintana. He most likely expanded Nanjakana's original *rova* to enclose both buildings. All the buildings at Nanjakana would have been built on a north-south axis, conforming to *vintana*, and the Late Kaloy prototype described above.

Thus, Andrianampoinimerina altered his ancestor's work by making Nanjakana larger and higher, in accordance with his new style prescription for royal residences. Its former placement can be affirmed because of the hearth that still exists in *situ.* Also, to the north of this house was a rock upon which Andrianampoinimerina was said to have reflected on political decisions (Callet 1974:597). The rock is clearly discernible in the landscape today. During the Late Kaloy Phase, the house was designated for Andrianampoinimerina's son, Radama. "*Il désigna Radama comme maître de Nanjakana*" (Callet 1974:597), thus conserving its original function as a residence for the monarch's grown children destined to the throne, a purpose designated by Andriambelomasina when it housed Andrianjafy.

Manambintana was built to the south of Nanjakana (Callet 1974:597). Its function is not revealed in the literature although, like Nanjakana, it was probably designated to house Andrianampoinimerina's older children no longer requiring maternal care in Bevato, but who were not heirs to the throne, indicated by its more mundane direction in relation to Nanjakana. The building would have resembled the other royal houses built during Andrianampoinimerina's reign.

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179 Griffith, Journal (18 Jan-19Jul entry of 19 June, LMS-J, box 1) gave the earliest description of this horn and water blessing. Griffith and Baker (2 Dec 1831: LMS-IL, box 4) and (Ellis 1838:464-65) noted its use for military success; (Callet 1974:307) and (Vig 1969:159) referred to its use in various benedictions.

180 See Callet (1974:182-199) for a full description of Kelimalaza.

The Bevato Rova

Although Andrianampoinimerina resided in the Mahandry Rova, and his older children lived at Nanjakana, the Bevato Rova remained important during his reign in that it was designated for his wives, the Tsimahafotsy's idol Fantaka, his young children requiring maternal care and royal zebu, just as it was during Andriambelomasina's reign. The oral histories recount that during the time of Andrianampoinimerina there were three houses located within the Bevato Rova at Fidasiana. Although their exact placement has not been made clear in the literature, all would have been oriented north-south, in accordance with custom. These houses were Manatsara-kely, Tsararay, and Manatsara-lehibe.

It is unclear whether or not Bevato remained in the centre of the plaza to the east of the sacred stone during the Late Kaloy Phase and, if so, what it was used for. In any case, we know from the Tantara that two small houses were built to the south of Bevato, in accordance with the tradition that women and animals were always placed to the southwest of a former or current monarch's residence, in a supporting position. One of these houses, Manatsara-kely ("*kely*" meaning "little"), was officially designated as the residence of Andrianampoinimerina's twelve wives, although, according to the oral histories, only one of Andrianampoinimerina's wives resided at Ambohimanga at a time (Callet 1974:598).[181] The other house, Tsararay, was designated for Andrianampoinimerina's young children, still requiring maternal care.

It is quite possible that Mantsara-kely and Tsararay were originally the "twin" houses constructed next to each other in the Mahandry Rova by Andriambelomasina, where they were called Mahandry and Tsararay. Firstly, it was uncharacteristic to build small houses in the Late Kaloy Phase, remembering that Andrianampoinimerina had revolutionised architecture by constructing much larger and higher houses for himself and those closely connected with him. Secondly, it would have been unusual for Andrianampoinimerina to destroy his ancestor's constructions when he wished to renovate the Mahandry Rova. In the interest of preserving ancestral continuity, moving buildings was the accepted practice when modernising a space. Thirdly, the name Tsararay was conserved in both locales.

The idol Fantaka was also kept in a house built to the north of Bevato, which was moved to that location by Andrianampoinimerina when he renovated the Mahandry Rova. The house was surrounded by a wooden palisade (Callet 1974:201), and was renovated to fit with the Late Kaloy royal residences: "*une maison faite de madriers, haute, grande et belle, fut son logement à Ambohimanga*" (Callet 1974:201). This corresponds with the description of a house erected at Fidasiana called Manatsara-lehibe ("*lehibe*" meaning "big") (Callet 1974:597), which suggests that Fantaka's residence and Manatsara-lehibe were the same building.[182] In

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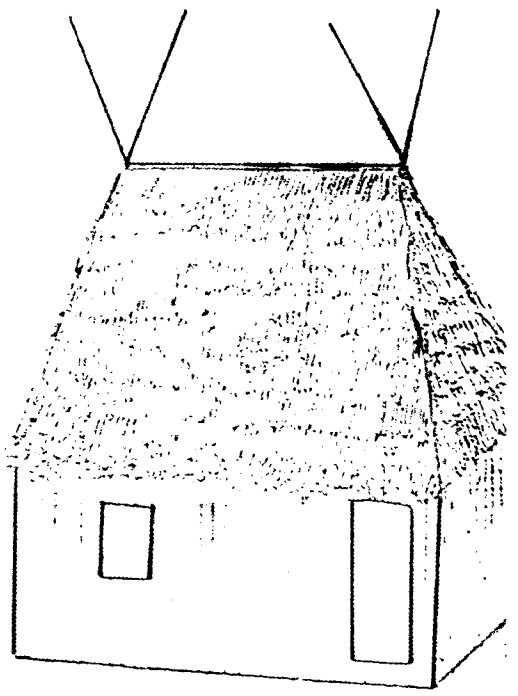
181 The rest of Andrianampoinimerina's wives were assigned to rovas on the other eleven sacred hills. If all the wives were together at Ambohimanga at any one time, those who did not wish to stay with the others in the Bevato Rova would reside in town with the Tsimahafotsy (Callet 1974:599).

182 The house was moved three times. It was first constructed at Antananarivo by a former king (unnamed in the oral traditions). Andrianampoinimerina replaced it with another house called Masoandro (later moved by Ranavalona II to Ambohimanga) and

accordance with custom, a sacred stone was located to the west of the house upon which animal sacrifices were offered to the idol.[183] As with the other royal idols, Fantaka was given a second residence at Antananarivo, after Andrianampoinimerina moved the capital there in the late eighteenth century, "*mais c'est à Ambohimanga seulement qu'on l'exalte*" (Callet 1974:230).

Tsimahafotsy Architecture



The commercial and residential centre of Ambohimanga continued to be located at Ambatorangotina during the Late Kaloy Phase, where there was a flourishing slave market. Andrianampoinimerina changed the appearance of the town of Ambohimanga significantly, by meticulously ordering it. To this end, he decreed the placement, style and size of all houses built by the Tsimahafotsy. *Demes* were assigned certain demarcated areas of Ambohimanga in which to live in and the number of houses they were permitted to build, according to their social rank. The highest ranking demes were placed nearest to Ambatoragotina and the royal complex (Callet 1974:586).

The form of the Late Kaloy layperson's residence was similar to the royal ones described above, but smaller, less well-made, with lower *trandotrano (above)*.[184] To better understand the appearance of the Tsimahafotsy's homes during the Late Kaloy Phase we can compare Ambohimanga with Antananarivo, its twin city. The oldest description that we have of commoner's houses in Antananarivo dates from 1816 (Chardenoux 1816). It can be assumed that the houses described resembled those in the Late Kaloy Phase, ending six years earlier (see Bojer and Hilsenberg (1822); Ellis (1838), for good accounts of early architecture).

Constructed in the Late Kaloy style, these wooden houses were identically framed with four corner posts and three central posts, or "*andry*" which supported the roof. The wall was created with vertical planks which were fitted together using a tab and groove system, with the edge of one board fitting into the groove of the next (Decary 1958:8; Ellis 1838). Then, the boards were lashed together with stems of the Anivona Palm or other fibrous roots or bark (Grandidier 1908-1928:569). Thus, the frame of the house was firmly bound together,

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transferred the building to Ambohimanga, rebuilding it to the north of the Mahandry Rova. Later, he transferred it to the north of the Bevato (Callet 1974:598).

183 Once the zebu was slain, its right half was attributed to Fantaka and the left was put aside to be consumed by the people gathered. The Tantara describes a sacrifice to the idol by Andrianampoinimerina: "*quant a l'extremité de la bosse, on la mêle pour la burler a de l'encens apporte par Andrianampoinimerina*" (Callet 1974:201).

184 Drawing from Decary (1958).

although the building did not contain any nails (Ellis 1838),[185] just as houses were constructed from earliest times.

The house was arranged in space according to the *vintana* system. The entrance was found on the southern end of the west wall. The door was constructed from a single piece of wood, which could be opened or closed by sliding the plank backwards and forwards in a groove fixed at the top and bottom (Ellis 1838). The entrance was elevated about two feet above the ground and accessed by two stone steps, one on the interior and one on the exterior. A window, nearly as large as the door, was generally situated on the northern end of the west wall, about three feet off the ground. Like the door, it was made of one wooden panel, with an identical method of closure.

In the Late Kaloy residence, the roof was usually double the height of the walls (Decary 1958:8). The pitch was therefore very steep, at about fifty-sixty degrees. The roof was formed in this manner to enable rain to run off without soaking through the thatch, a building technique inherited from Indonesia. At the gable ends were the long crossed finials, called *tandotrano.* Just as in royal residences, their length was proportional to the wealth and rank of the proprietor. The greater the rank of the owner, the longer the poles, but they were always shorter than those of the King's residence, which were about sixty feet in length. These poles were ornamented by rudely carved ornaments at the extremity, usually in the form of birds or hands, unlike the fine silver birds and chains on Mahandry.[186] Surrounding each house was a band of paving stones. These stones kept the house in *situ* and supported the walls, as there was no foundation. Also, the houses were generally enclosed by a low mud wall, or wooden palisade (Ellis 1838:94). Because Andrianampoinimerina insisted that all houses in Ambohimanga were to be built of wood, and construction was labour intensive, he decreed that house building would be a communal activity (Callet 1974:794). Thus, the Indonesian tradition continued, whereby houses were built communally and their completion celebrated by a large feast.

As discussed, Andrianampoinimerina restricted imported articles in the markets, and therefore house furnishings remained traditional throughout the Late Kaloy Phase. The chief article of furniture in all the houses was the bedstead, supported by four long posts, and fixed to the middle of the house's eastern wall, not in the northeast corner as in the King's residence. The bed was fastened together with wooden dowels, or tied with tough plant fibres. Alternatively, for the less wealthy Tsimahafotsy, coarse and strong matting, spread on the earthen floor served as the bed.[187] Baskets were used as receptacles for cooking utensils, tools and personal

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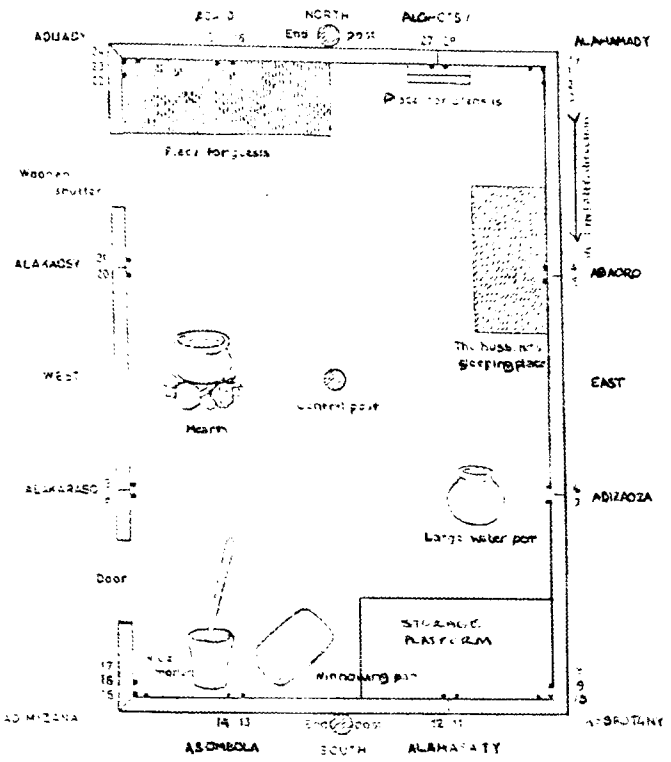
185 Shortly before the arrival of the missionaries the Merina began making nails, but they were not widely used. Mr. Jones, one of the first missionaries on the island, remarked: "They make nails, but they were round, and not square" (Ellis 1838:311).

186Journal Officiel, 7 August 1896, "*Étude des systemes de construction employés autrefois dans l'Imerina*," issue 21:187.

187 Struys (1684) noted: "They have no table, stools, benches, table cloths, napkins. beds and cushions, instead they eat on a mat on the floor" (Struys 1684:18). Flacourt (1661) reported that there were no table cloths, plates, tables, or seats; the earth and a mat served as all of the above. In 1777, Chevalier de la Serre noticed that "*ces nattes leur servire aussi de lits*" (Journal du voyage fait a Madagascar 1777, British Museum).

articles. There was also a water jug, a winnowing pan, a mortar and a storage platform, like the one described in Mahandry.



The arrangement of these items was identical within every house and followed the *vintana* system (*left*).[188] The sacred corner in the house was to the northeast (Alahamady). There, the family's idols and heirlooms were kept. The bed was placed on the eastern wall, at Adaoro, symbolically different from the Andrianampoinimerina's residence where the bed was placed in the northeast corner. The hearth was situated to the west and north of the central post, and the most honourable place in the house was between Adoalo and Aloahotsy on the northern wall. The water jug, winnowing pan, mortar and storage platform were located to the south at Adiaoza, Asombola and Asorotany. Any animals kept in the house were relegated to a place underneath this platform. The door was always located between Adimizana and Alakarabo, on the southern end of the west wall.

As well as being arranged to reflect the lunar calendar introduced with the *vintana* system, the house also served as a solar clock, a legacy of the luni-solar *saka* calendar brought with the Indonesian immigrants to Madagascar. The sun, moving over the house, would have touched on various parts throughout the day to denote the time and chores to be done at that time, deemed essential for a healthy industrious state (Callet 1974: 95).[189]

Tombs

As discussed above, Andrianampoinimerina assigned *tanindrazana* (ancestral land) to certain *demes*, where their houses and tombs were located. Behind each house, on its eastern side, was the family tomb. Royalty, nobles and lay people all built their tombs in this location for two reasons. Firstly, it was close to the residence and therefore the family could remain intimate with the ancestors, as prescribed by their Indonesian heritage. Secondly, because the east has been associated with the ancestors, renewal and blessing since earliest times.

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188 Drawing from Ruud (1960: Fig. 1).

189 Journal Officiel, 3 July 1896, "*Étude des systèmes de construction employés autrefois dans l'Imerina*," issue 16:148, by A. Jully. Also, see Griffith (1920: 37).



On the west side of the tomb the *vatovavy* or "female stone" was placed, marking the door of the tomb. On the east side of the tomb was the *vatolahy* ("male stone," or "head stone"). Sacrifices to the ancestors were left at these "male stones." For example, Andrianampoinimerina used the hearth built by his ancestors at the royal tombs in Mahandry (*left*) to worship Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Andriambelomasina, who were buried there. He would sacrifice cooked meat at the headstone in exchange for bits of the earth covering their tombs, which he used for ritual purposes. Also, soldiers going off to war were given amulets made with sacred earth taken from the royal tombs at Ambohimanga, which supposedly made them invulnerable to bullets, testifying to the power of the sacred substance.

When Andrianampoinimerina died in Antananarivo his body was transported to Ambohimanga and he was buried to the north of Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Andriambelomasina, to the east of the royal residences, slightly off the north-south axis, because of the perceived power-draw on the living. His burial was an elaborate affair. First, his body lay in state at Besakana, his residence in Antananarivo for one week wrapped in several *lambas* while it putrefied and Andrianampoinimerina was publicly mourned. Then, the body was returned to Ambohimanga where it was placed in Mahandry while the tomb was constructed. We have several descriptions of the construction of royal tombs during the Late Kaloy Phase, from the Tantara and from archaeological evidence of Andrianampoinimerina's tomb at Ambohimanga when it was excavated in 1897.

After the tomb's hole was dug, its bottom and sides were paved with stone. On top of this, a layer of Amboara wood from Ambohimanga's sacred forest was placed. Then, a layer of carbon was added, to absorb moisture, in which the King's treasure was buried. As documented in the Tantara, the sovereign brought many valuable objects with him in death, including red *lambas*, sabres, spears, firearms, silver helmets and time pieces (Callet 1974:260-1).

Andrianampoinimerina's silver casket (in the shape of a canoe, a survival of Sulawesi heritage)[190] was placed on top of the carbon, with the King's head positioned to the east (Callet 1974:248). The casket was said to have been made from a great quantity of the uncut silver Piastres given to Andrianampoinimerina as inferior *hasina* over his lifetime. In contrast, previous sovereigns were buried in caskets made simply from Amboara wood (Callet 1974:1058). Andrianampoinimerina's body was placed inside the box, wrapped in *lambas*, just as previous royal corpses had been. However, the *lambas* numbered sixty, many more than former sovereigns or lay people. Ten *lambas* each were brought from the six divisions of Imerina. Then, the casket was shut and the tomb was covered with a large flat stone. The Zanatsitakatra *deme* placed earth on the top of the tomb, which would from that point be considered sacred, infused with Andrianampoinimerina's spirit. Next, the *tranomasina*,

190 www.onetel.net.uk/~jbarrie_voyages/ the_great_voyage.htm; Sibeth 1991:68.

resembling a traditional residence and larger than a *tranomanara*, was erected by the Andriamasinavalona (the highest ranking Tsimahafotsy *deme*), who were allowed to employ stone cutters, masons and carpenters as needed for this task (Callet 1974:260). Finally, in accordance with custom, the head of Andrianampoinimerina's tomb, to the east, was marked by a "male stone."

During the Late Kaloy Phase there were reported to have been twelve tombs in the Mahandry Rova, arranged in a line. There were three large tombs to the north which contained Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, Andriambelomasina and Andrianampoinimerina, each covered by *tranomasina*, and nine smaller tombs to the south which were said to have belonged to mothers and wives of the sovereigns (Callet 1974:597), probably buried during Andrianampoinimerina's reign. The smaller tombs were topped with the smaller *tranomanara* because they did not cover royalty. The Tantara has documented, specifically, that Andrianampoinimerina built a *tranomanara* for Rangorivahiny, the wife of Andriambelomasina, on the south side of the Rova, south of Mahandry. But, he instructed that once the house had deteriorated, it was not to be rebuilt (Callet 1974:1019). From this example, we can assume that over time the *tranomanara* in Mahandry were allowed to fall into disrepair and eventually disappear and, as a result, the remains beneath them were forgotten.

Below the royal tombs at Mahandry, Andrianampoinimerina allowed the Andriamasinavalona who died during his reign to be buried (Callet 1974:303). The Andriamasinavalona were the highest ranking Tsimahafotsy *deme*, responsible for putting Andrianampoinimerina in power. They acted as his advisors, conservators of the polity, as judges, as officiators over ritual events, and were considered the closest in social rank to the monarch. Among their privileges, they possessed *menakely* (fiefdoms) and collected *hasina* from the ranks beneath them; they enjoyed the right to build *tranomanara* on top of their tombs; and the right to be buried at the feet of the monarch, at Fidasiana (Callet 1974:305). As judges, the Andriamasinavalona were also given the responsibility of administering the *tangena* trial when appropriate (Callet 1974:834). The King appointed a specific individual, Andrianjazanavalona, as the "*premier opérateur*" of the *tangena* ordeal at Ambohimanga (Callet 1974:833-4). He was the only Andriamasinavalona mentioned by name in the oral traditions as having the right to be buried at Fidasiana (Callet 1974:306).

Below Fidasiana were the Tsimahafotsy layperson's tombs, located in their *tanindrazana*, or ancestral land. The Tsimahafotsy were privileged in that they were allowed to build their tombs within Ambohimanga's external fortifications (Callet 1974:511:593). Location was more specifically determined by *deme* (Callet 1974:800), as Andrianampoinimerina assigned *tanindrazana* to reflect social status. Higher-ranking *demes* could construct tombs closer to the *rova*; lower ranking *demes* were to build their tombs further away and lower on the hill, some outside of the first band of fortifications (ibid.). The practice of *famadihana* described in Chapter Three ensured that descent groups were united within their tombs. Layperson's tombs, like royal tombs, conformed to *vintana*'s spatial-temporal prescriptions, and *ombiassy* were hired to determine when tomb building should be commenced, and where. As discussed, it was important for the site to have the correct

directional relationship with the house and village or else it would become a negative drawing force on the living population.

Tsimahafotsy tombs grew in size during the Late Kaloy Phase because of the growing wealth of the population at Ambohimanga. Families were encouraged to build the vastest tombs with largest stones they could afford. The process of tomb-building for the general population was similar to royal tomb-building in many ways. After procuring large stones by fire-cracking, they would be dragged to the chosen location by hundreds of men. A large square hole was dug and the huge stone slabs were laid down for the sides and bottom. The door always faced west, and an enormous slab of stone covered the top. However, unlike the royal tombs, the layperson's tomb was always communal. Generally, six wide stone shelves were fixed around the sides to hold the bodies of the *deme*, three on the north side and three on the south side. Also, *tranomanara*, not *tranomasina*, were placed on top of the tombs to indicate the Tsimahafotsy's noble, but not royal, status.



During the Late Kaloy Phase, "male stones" began to evolve into tall standing stones, erected at family tombs when bodies were lost outside Ambohimanga (*right*). The stones were thought to attract the spirit of the lost soul back to the family *tanindrazana*, therefore the larger stones would have had a more powerful draw. This is an example of the flexibility of landscape features adapting to changing historical circumstances.

Other Significant Features within the Fortifications

The Navel Stone, Fig Tree and Ox Pen

In the centre of Fidasiana was the sacred navel stone, serving the same purposes in the Late Kaloy Phase as it did during the Early Phases. Standing over the navel stone was a fig tree, which had probably been there since Andrianjaka established himself on the hill in the Ambohidray Phase. Although it was a vestige of Indonesian culture, the tree type is mentioned for the first time in the oral traditions in the Late Kaloy Phase, when it was specified as "royal," and only allowed to be planted near dwellings of royalty (Callet 1974:574). As Ellis confirmed later, few trees adorned the capital (Antananarivo), "An Aviavy, or wild fig, had almost the exclusive honour of admission within the precincts of the metropolis" (Ellis 1838:109; also see Hannebicque 1987:52), suggesting that the tree consistently held symbolic significance.

The sacred stone in the centre of Fidasiana, consecrated by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Andriamborona's mother, remained crucially important during the Late Kaloy Phase, serving multiple purposes as a place for "coronation," a place for displaying the royal idols (especially during *alakaosy*), a venue for the royal bath (*fandroana*) and as a place for giving *kabary*. It was also used for a new purpose, a place where "oaths of allegiance" to Andrianampoinimerina and his nascent state were held. Entrance to the area to

participate in these rituals or to hear the King's *kabary* was strictly controlled and a privilege offered only to the highest ranking Tsimahafotsy and the royal wives (Callet 1974).

When Andrianampoinimerina became King he followed the protocol established by his ancestors. Upon his arrival at Fidasiana, entering through Ambavahaditsiombiomby, he climbed upon the stone used by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Andriambelomasina at their "coronations" and was thereby invested with the power to rule. He wore a red *lamba* and a crown decorated with red coral beads inlaid with white coral (Callet 1974:432), reminiscent of the objects buried under the stone by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Ratompobe. Andrianampoinimerina was said to have carried a red umbrella.[191] All of these objects had symbolic significance, inherited from Indonesia, denoting the King as a powerful mediator and unique sovereign (a concept which will be explored in Chapter Nine). The Tsimahafotsy chiefs responsible for placing him in power offered Andrianampoinimerina inferior *hasina* in the form of a zebu and a silver Piastre, to show fidelity to their new King (Callet 1974:432). In exchange, the Andriamasinavalona were given special privileges, rank, power and blessing.

The sacred stone was also used as a place to display the national idols, comprising the national pantheon established by Andrianampoinimerina (Callet 1974:578). When being presented to the people of the region during Alakaosy, the national idols (such as Kelimalaza, Fantaka, and Manjakatsiroa) would "visit" a series of locations. First, the idol was brought to the stone found to the west of its house (all national idol residences had sacred stones in this location) (Belrose-Huyghues 1983:178; Callet 1974:600). Next, the idol would be taken to the sacred stone in the middle of the plaza at Fidasiana, "*la plaine sacrée ou se prononcent les discours*," where it was bathed, presented to the people gathered, and offerings were given to it (Callet 1974:578).

It is documented that during the Late Kaloy Phase the sacred stone was also used during the *fandroana* as a stage where the ceremony was performed. It is logical to assume that the ceremony took place there with prior rulers, but it is not documented in the oral traditions until Andrianampoinimerina's reign. During these celebrations, as described in Chapter Four, zebu would have been brought from their ox kraal in the southwest of the plaza to the stone in the centre, slaughtered next to the stone and blood libations were poured upon it, as an offering to the ancestors.

An "oath of allegiance" called *lefonomby* took place on the sacred stone at Fidasiana during the Late Kaloy Phase. As discussed in Chapter Three, Andrianampoinimerina ensured the loyalty of his growing population by requiring "oaths of allegiance" to be taken by those close to him as well as new subjects (Callet 1974:387-388,821). During the *lefonomby* ceremony, a zebu calf would be stabbed, then the parts of the animal were

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191 Phillip Thomas's research revealed that these umbrellas were a harbinger of the French Revolution, introduced by European and Creole traders on Madagascar's coast in the late eighteenth century in exchange for slaves, cloth, muskets, etc. (Callet 1974:363). However, while this is probably true, it is important to note that umbrellas were a popular signifier of royalty in Indonesia prior to the late eighteenth century and therefore umbrellas were most likely part of the Merina's cultural vocabulary.

inverted so that the head was placed where the tail had been and vice versa. The head was detached and the contents of the stomach were scattered with abandon, visually demonstrating the ideal of unity and the danger of discord and dissent to those gathered (Callet 1974:387-388).

Also, the rock served as a stage from where Andrianampoinimerina would give *kabary* to the Andriamasinavalona, his wives and others, privileged to be invited into the enclosure. During the Late Kaloy Phase, each of the sacred hills of Imerina had a plaza (*kianja*) with a sacred stone and fig tree in the centre of it (Callet 1974:171), probably established before Andrianampoinimerina by proto-Merina chiefs who lived there, following Indonesian tradition. From the hill's navel stone, Andrianampoinimerina's chosen representative (one of his wives) would deliver *kabary*, worship the idols "living" on that hill, perform rituals such as *fandroana* and sacrifice to the ancestors as required, taking their lead from Andrianampoinimerina and the Andriamasinavalona at Ambohimanga (Callet 1974:715, 812).

Ambatoragotina

Ambatorangotina was located at the eastern side of the town of Ambohimanga, and consisted of a large rock and a gate. The gate led from the town of Ambohimanga to the royal complex. The rock was the domain of the Andriamasinavalona and was used for several purposes. At the time of Andrianampoinimerina, the rock at Ambatorangotina was shaded by a sacred fig tree, resembling the arrangement in the Bevato Rova. In addition to the fig tree, there was a building at Ambatorangotina that served as a courthouse for the Andriamasinavalona judges, which would have mirrored the Late Kaloy dwellings discussed above. If allegiance to the King came under question, or if a law decreed by the King was broken, the case would be decided at Ambatorangotina, in a small building there, by the Andriamasinavalona. If the case could not be decided, trials by water, fire or poison (*tangena*)[192] took place at Ambatorangotina, on poultry or sometimes humans. The Andriamasinavalona judges would observe the trial and interpret the outcome as a message from the ancestors.

It is likely that Andrianampoinimerina used Ambatorangotina as a sort of public navel stone, where the Tsimahafotsy residents could participate in ritual and hear the King's proclamations without entering the royal complex. On top of the rock, sheltered by the fig tree (just as in Fidasiana), royal edicts and decrees were pronounced by the Andriamasinavalona after they had heard them directly from Andrianampoinimerina. From Ambatorangotina the messages were dispersed throughout Imerina, via Andrianampoinimerina's wives stationed on the twelve sacred hills.

An "oath of allegiance" called *misotrovokaka*, also intended for new subjects of Andrianampoinimerina's empire, was performed at Ambatorangotina during the Late Kaloy Phase (Callet 1974: 579). The oath of

192 The Tangena poison is made from the Tangena nut - family: Apocynaceae; genre: Cerbera, species: Venenifera (www.hala.refer.mg).

misotrovokaka served as a visual statement of obedience to the King and his laws. In fact, the name "Ambatorangotina" means "scratching stone." It is popularly known as the place where subjects would metaphorically "scratch" at the stone for clemency from the King (Callet 1974:578). As described in the Tantara, water for the ceremony was taken from springs found below Ambohimanga (those feeding Amparihy) and was portaged overland in a canoe to Ambatorangotina, where it was mixed with earth collected from the royal tombs in the Mahandry Rova before being sprinkled on the participants as a contractual blessing.

Ambohimanga's commercial centre remained at Ambatorangotina during the Late Kaloy Phase (Callet 1974:879, 854). The Tantara recounted that the market served as a centre for trade in firearms and slaves. "Europeans visited Ambohimanga for the purpose of buying slaves from him and his people, and thus he obtained enormous sums of money which he employed to bribe head men and procure good and new muskets, that with them he may achieve the conquests of Avaradrano" (Raombana I:48, 55). On his visit to Ambohimanga in 1788 LaSalle noted a huge commerce in slaves there. The slave market flourished at Ambatorangotina, presided over by the Andriamasinavalona, even after Andrianampoinimerina moved his capital to Antananarivo.

The Forest

Ambohimanga's forest served as a coveted and sacred resource during the Late Kaloy Phase (Callet 1974:575). By the Late Kaloy Phase any trees remaining on the high plateau had been cut down, as noted by Mayeur in 1777 (Grandidier 1900:391). De LaSalle (1788) also noted that the country was generally torrid.[193] However, Ambohimanga largely retained its hilltop verdure, which Rochon observed in 1791 (LMS(C) 1829-32:380). This was largely because Andrianampoinimerina issued strict laws (*fady*) to protect it, proclaiming that the forest "belonged" to the ancestors.



Andrianampoinimerina is said to have supplemented the forest with medicinal plants collected from Madagascar's east coast, so that Ambohimanga's forest could serve as a veritable pharmacy for his growing population. The forest also functioned to protect Ambohimanga from invasion. The Sakalava were the most persistent invaders of Imerina. During one attack concurrent with the reign of Andrianampoinimerina, some Sakalava were said to have been repelled and injured by the thorns of the Amiana trees prevalent in the forest. As a result of this incident, Andrianampoinimerina established a shrine in the forest called Ambatonsakalava (Callet 1974:580) (*right*).

193 Froberville Papers, British Museum's Department of Manuscripts.

Andrianampoinimerina used the forest to make sacred objects such as the gate posts of Ambavahadimasina and the posts of his residence, Mahandry. Shrines established in the forest, such as Ambatonsakalava, were a reminder of its sacred nature and would have deterred unauthorized use of forest products. Also, if one was found taking plant matter from the forest without permission, s/he would have been fined heavily, sold into slavery, or sometimes put to death (Callet 1974:576).

Water Sources

Certain springs within Ambohimanga's fortifications also held sacred significance during Andrianampoinimerina's reign. Two springs at the base of the external fortifications were considered especially auspicious because they naturally merged together. Therefore, at the point of junction, to the west of the village, Andrianampoinimerina built the reservoir called Amparihy (*left*). The now internal fosses, located higher than the water point, had drains and a canal which led to the reservoir, to supplement the two springs (Callet 1974:584). It is significant that red and white coral beads and a silver ring were thrown into Amparihy by Andrianampoinimerina to consecrate the reservoir, the same objects that were buried beneath the navel stone at the Bevato Rova and which were worn by Andrianampoinimerina at his coronation. The reservoir was used to accommodate the growing population's water needs, and provide a secure water-source in case of siege, much like a well built inside castle walls in Europe.[194] It was also used as a sacred water source for *fandroana*, *alakaosy,* general blessing by the monarch or *ombiassy*, and for inaugurating royal public works such as the building of Ambohimanga's fortifications.



In addition to Amparihy, Andrianampoinimerina had Andranomboahangy, another small reservoir, constructed to the west of the town centre at the summit of the hill. He sanctioned it so that "*les faibles*:" pregnant women, the sick and young children, who were unable to descend to Amparihy, would have a ready supply of water (Tacchi 1892: 492). Also, Andranomanento, a small spring located below Andranomboahangy, was established for medicinal purposes. Offerings were regularly left to the Vazimba spirits on stones near these springs (Callet 1974:245).

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194 A function of the drain in Ambohimanga's interior fosses was to channel water to the protected reservoir. A popular method of besieging a fortified village during the Late Kaloy Phase, was reducing it to surrender from thirst (Mille 1970:200, 203). By holding residents hostage inside their fortifications, they were often forced to surrender, as water sources on Imerina's hilltops were rare. Thus, the proximity of drinking water was an essential defensive strategy employed by Andrianampoinimerina at Ambohimanga.

Water from Amparihy was used to fill a sacred pool built by Andrianampoinimerina in the rocky earth to the southeast of the tomb area within the Mahandry Rova (Callet 1974:598). The pool was later renovated by Ranavalona I with a cement covering. By careful observation I can conclude that the original pool was a rock pool, made by fire cracking the granite and chipping at the stone with iron tools. Women from a specific high-ranking Tsimahafotsy *deme* were given the privilege of filling the pool with water from Amparihy, transporting it through the internal gate called Ambodiaviavy into the *rova* complex though its western entrances. The pool's use is not specified in the oral histories, but it is logical to assume that it was used for the King's bath water during the *fandroana* ritual, as well as during other ritual events involving a water blessing. It most likely was not used for every-day water needs, as the pool contained sacred fish and water plants (Callet 1974:598).

Ambatomiantendro

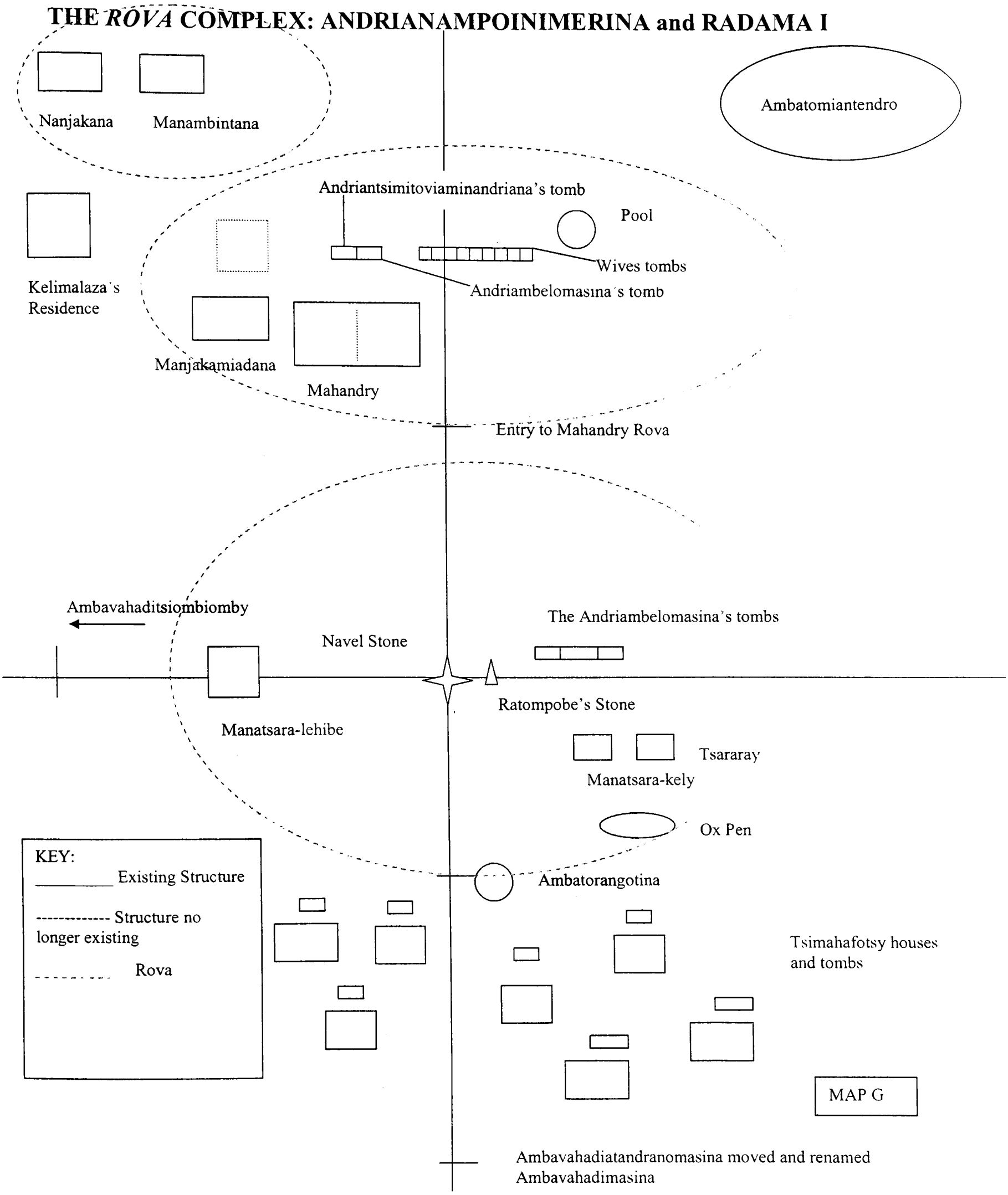
Ambatomiantendro, the naturally occurring rocky outcrop crowning the hill of Ambohimanga, was an important spot during the Late Kaloy Phase. The *fanorona* board etched into the rock during the Early Phases remained a significant feature (Montgomery 1886:148). During the Late Kaloy Phase it was virtually a requirement for a nobleman of the kingdom to know how to play *fanorona*, so as to learn and perfect battle strategy. It is popularly believed that Andrianampoinimerina played *fanorona* at Ambatomiantendro regularly with his councillors, the Andriamasinavalona. Perhaps this aided him in planning his strategy for overtaking Antananarivo, a battle that he watched from Ambatomiantendro for over three months (Callet 1974:508). He may have followed this battle from the watchtower on Ambatomiantendro, remains of which can still be seen. The structure had a round stone base, resembling the watchtower built on Ampitsaharana, one of Ambohimanga's exterior gates. With its bird's-eye view of the expansive valleys and surrounding hills, it is easy to imagine that from Ambatomiantendro Andrianampoinimerina formulated his imperial ambition: "Imerina has been gathered into one, but behold the sea is the border of my rice fields" (Brown 1995:110).

Conclusion

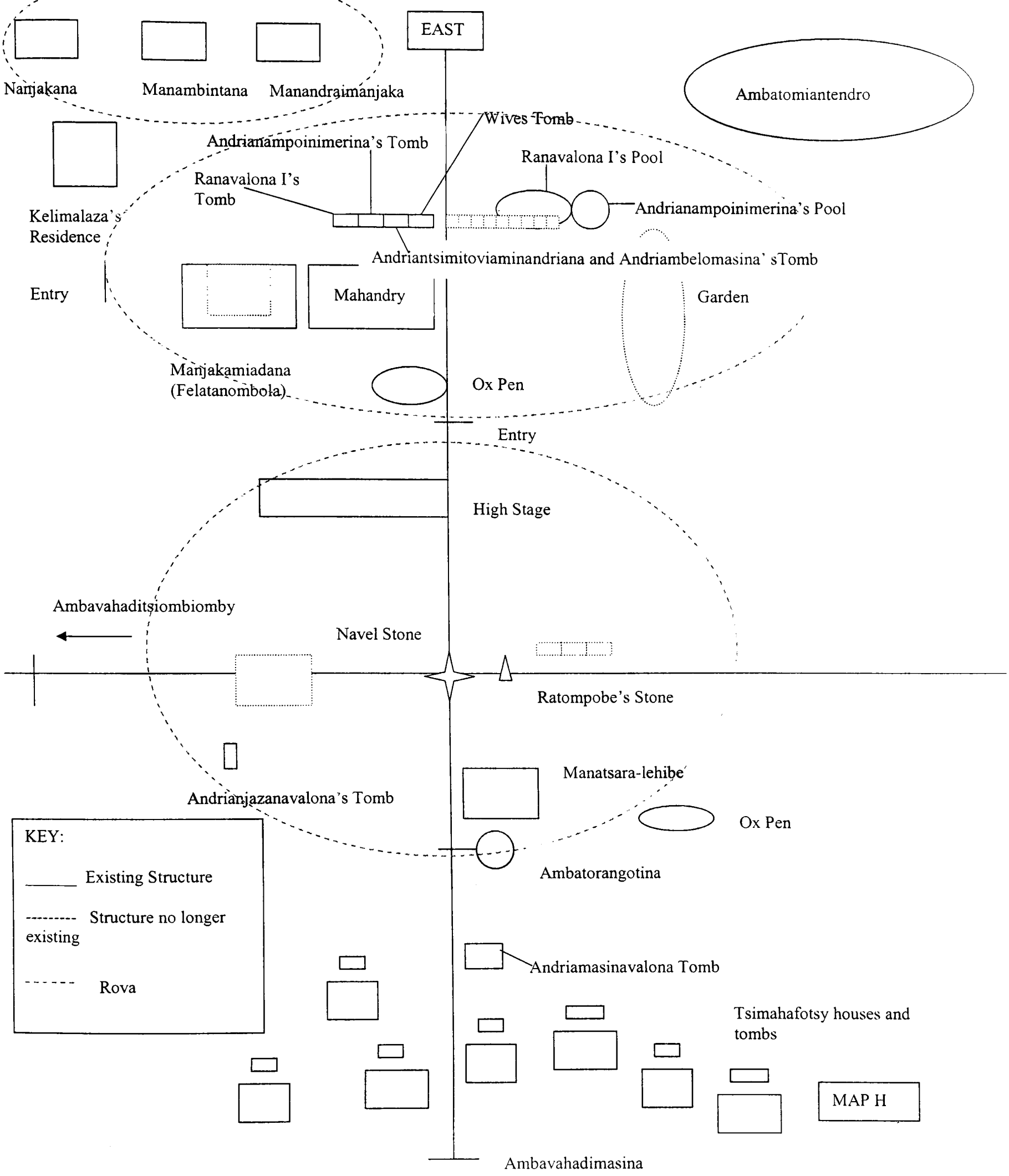
Despite the significant changes that took place in the cultural landscape during the Late Kaloy Phase, we can see from the above examples that there was a great deal of continuity carried over from the Early Phases. Change was primarily additive; fortifications and houses were raised and expanded, but retained their traditional form and directional significance. Andrianampoinimerina cleverly incorporated foreign resources to enhance tradition while ensuring that the message written into the landscape remained intelligible to the still unlettered (though visually literate) population. Thus, the cultural landscape of Ambohimanga grew to reflect the Tsimahafotsy's dominant political, social and economic position in the central highlands, reinforcing their success and serving as their sacred sanctuary and *axis mundi* to the upper world, as will be discussed in Chapter Nine.

Chapter Six: The Fiadanana Phase (1810-1897)

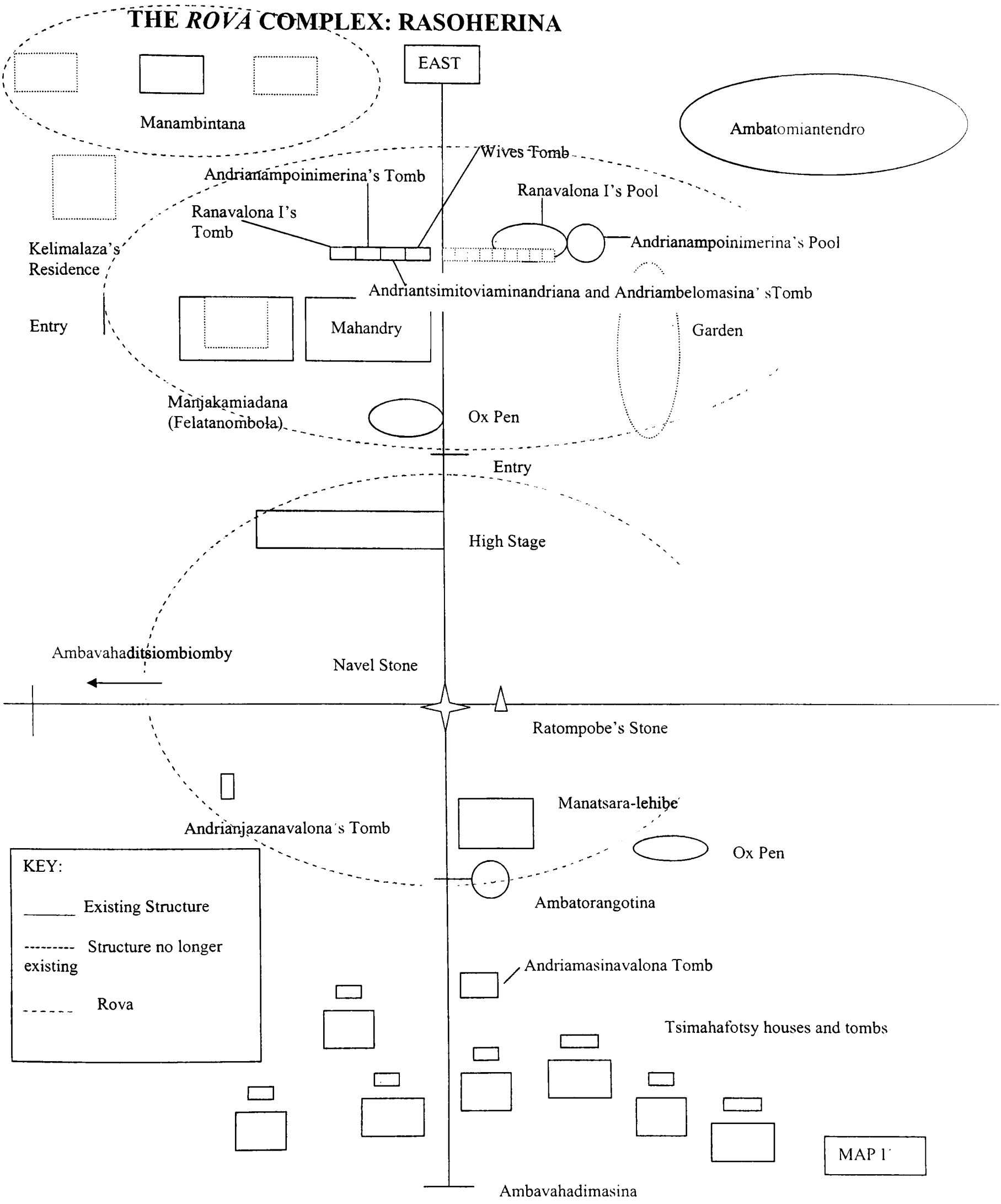
THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: ANDRIANAMPOINIMERINA and RADAMA I



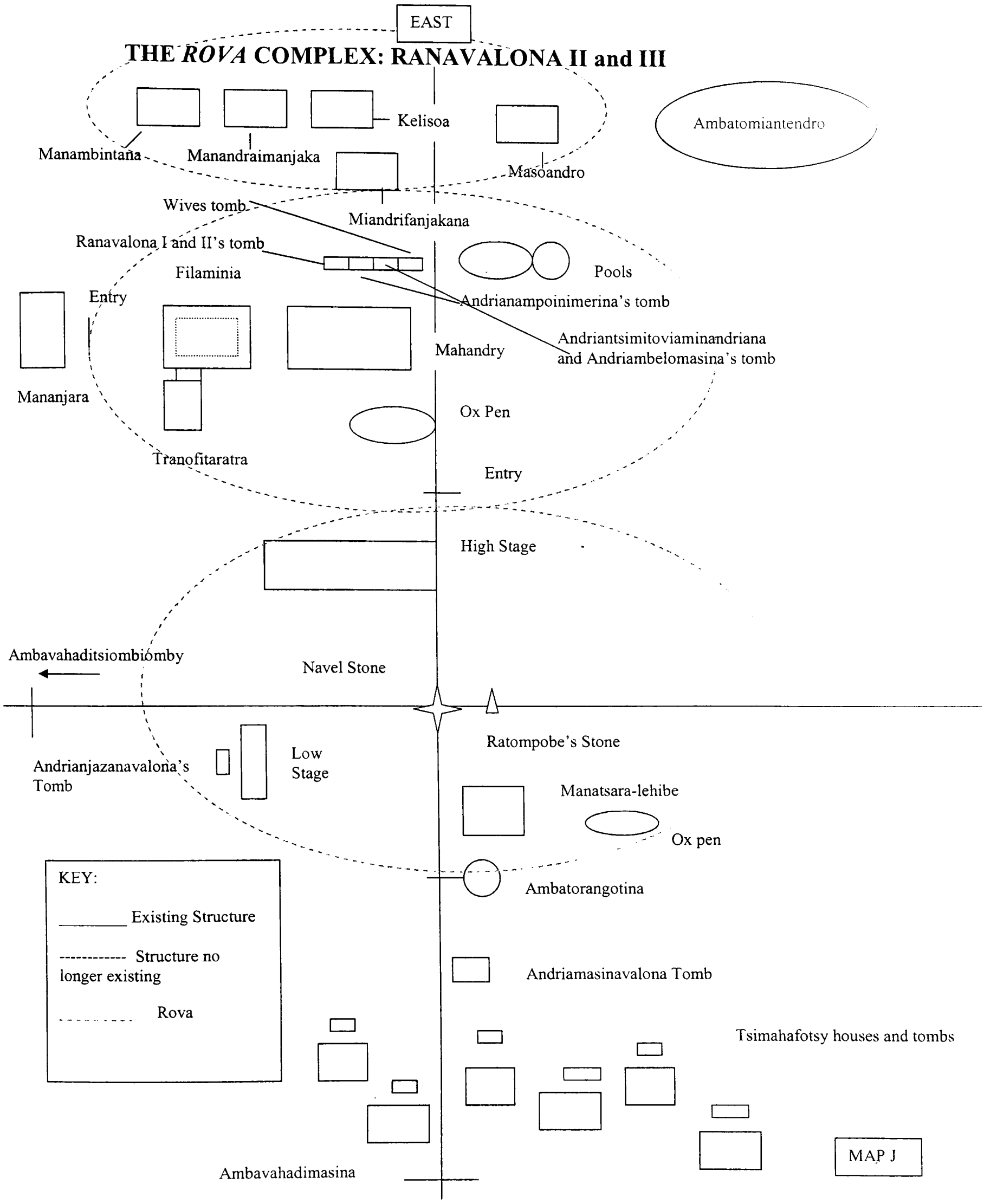
THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: RANAVALONA I and RADAMA II



THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: RASOHERINA



THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: RANAVALONA II and III



Introduction: Forces of Change

During the Fiadanana period, external forces of influence stemmed mainly from Europe (Britain, France, and the French colony of Mauritius). As a result, Ambohimanga's cultural landscape was affected to varying degrees, depending upon the ruler and their policy toward the Europeans, their technology and material culture. Despite a significant amount of change, however, there was a great deal of continuity just beneath the surface, depending upon each ruler's commitment to tradition. Even when the ruler seemed to stray from *fombandrazana*, s/he was held in check by the conservative Tsimahafotsy, who staged rebellions from Ambohimanga if their position in the socio-cosmic system or their cultural landscape was threatened.

Radama I (1810-1826)

Although the oral traditions report that Radama I lived at Ambohimanga in the Mahandry Rova for a year after he had become King (Callet 1974: 1034) and visited the hill occasionally for ritual sacrifice, his court was firmly centred at Antananarivo. Consequently, he did not have much immediate impact on the *rova* complex at Ambohimanga. Nevertheless, he affected the hill's landscape in that during his reign new technology, such as the saw, nails, paint, hinges, nails and masonry, became available from the Europeans and were undoubtedly used in building projects there. Because of its cost, technological and stylistic innovation was available only to wealthy Merina. Thus, since Ambohimanga was a royal town for higher ranking Tsimahafotsy *demes*, its cultural landscape likely incorporated many of these innovations. Also, Radama invited several French architects to the central highlands from Mauritius who introduced new building design sensibilities. Yet, although materials and workmanship changed extensively, continuity of architectural form was strictly maintained at Ambohimanga and cultural landscape features maintained their practical and ideological functions as they had during the Late Kaloy Phase.

The Fortifications

Hilltop fortifications continued to be utilised during the early Fiadanana Phase. But, because Ambohimanga had risen to a position of such power, and Imerina had become a cohesive state, the fortifications no longer played such an important defensive role. By 1828, the Reverends Tyerman and Bennet observed that the palisades (*rovas*) of the fortified villages were no longer in use, signalling a certain degree of security (Tyerman and Bennet 1828 in Vérin 1966). Although Ambohimanga's gates lost their primary protective role against invading armies, they largely retained their functions set forth by ancestral tradition. For example, the monarch always entered and exited Ambohimanga via Ambatomitsangana and Ambavahaditsiombiomby. Also, the gates continued to act as barriers to established *fady* deemed harmful to the ancestors (i.e. the kingdom), which included most Europeans unless expressly invited into the town by the King. In addition to serving as a band of protection, the fosses continued to assist with the irrigation of Ambohimanga's fields and to supplement the reservoir Amparihy.

Architecture

As a result of welcoming Europeans into Madagascar and into his government, Radama I ushered in great architectural change during his reign. For example, he hired a French builder, Louis Gros, to construct a Mauritian-style palace called Tranovola at Antananarivo (later moved to Ambohimanga), which inspired an architectural and technological revolution in Imerina. "Houses had been affected by Andrianampoinimerina but more so by the European artisans who have been residing at Imerina. Good and substantial houses of European constructions are now made there of timbers, for Malagasy have been placed under European carpenters for to learn their business" (Raombana I:43).

The Europeans introduced tools used by workmen in Europe, which were adopted by the native carpenters (Ellis 1838:318). For example, the use of the saw was unknown in Madagascar until Louis Gros introduced it in 1821 (ibid:321). Following this, Cameron and a fellow missionary Jones claim responsibility for teaching the Merina to use the saw to make wooden planks in 1826 (Cameron 1874:21). Previously, the Merina used a technique brought with them from Indonesia for obtaining boards: "the usual method was to obtain only two planks from a single tree, however large the tree might be. They split the tree in half with their hatchets and chisels, or wedges, and then chopped away the outside until it was sufficiently reduced" (Ellis 1838:317). In addition to improving Merina methods of procuring wood boards, the Europeans taught them how to make wood-glue and to use it in joining the boards together (ibid:319).

Also, iron elements, such as square nails, brackets and hinges, became available during the Fiadanana Phase. "Until the arrival of the missionary-artisans, the iron articles manufactured in Madagascar were exceedingly few. They consisted chiefly of spears and javelins, knives, hatchets, and spades, chisels and hammers, a rude sort of plane-iron, and files, pots, spoons and lamps" (Oliver 1886:90). Shortly before the arrival of the missionaries nails began to be manufactured; "but of the methods of making hinges, screws, and nails, excepting those of a simple round form, they were ignorant" (ibid:91). Jones believed that he was the first to teach the Merina how to make a square nail (Ellis 1838:311). By 1838, Ellis reported that "many of the native smiths are now able to make hinges, screws and a variety of the most valuable articles of iron" (Ellis 1838:313). These elements were added to Fiadanana Phase buildings to reinforce their construction by wealthy Merina, such as the Tsimahafotsy.

Finally, stone working also improved with European iron tools and technology. As a result, stone foundations were added to houses that previously were placed directly on the earth with only flat paving stones surrounding them to hold the buildings in place. "Foundation stones were hewn smooth and level with small pointed hammers and stacked with an earth 'cement,' as it was thought that "the country around Tananarivoo (sic.) produces no lime-stone" (LMS(R) 1824:122). Raising the buildings on platforms protected them from being flooded during the rainy season.

While lay person's houses in Ambohimanga may have adopted sawed boards, iron reinforcements and raised stone foundations, the added elements did not change the fundamental form of the buildings. Also, houses continued to be erected according to the *vintana* system, with correct directional orientation. It is interesting to note that the buildings located within Ambohimanga's *rovas* at the top of the hill in Ambohimanga did not incorporate modern technology during Radama's reign, and remained strictly as built by his ancestors. They were kept as shrines, testimony to history, and Radama made regular pilgrimages to them from Antananarivo.

Royal Architecture

During his pilgrimages to Ambohimanga, Radama specifically visited Manatsara-kely and Tsararay (Callet 1974:1065) at the Bevato Rova, the houses in which he and his mother may have lived when he was a small child. It is assumed that these buildings, their appearance and placement, remained unchanged from the Late Kaloy Phase. Radama also visited Nanjakana (Callet 1974:1065) in the Nanjakana Rova, where he lived as an older child. The house was initially built by Andriambelomasina for Andrianjafy and later renovated by Andrianampoinimerina for Radama.

Radama I spent most of his time during visits to Ambohimanga in the Mahandry Rova. The tomb area and shrine was especially important to the King, as he used it to pray to his father and other ancestors. Whilst there, he would have likely slept in his father's house, Mahandry, with its enormous central post. As far as we know, the Mahandry Rova remained physically unchanged during Radama's reign. Radama's influence was only felt in Mahandry when his palace, Tranovola, was moved there by Ranavalona II.

Tsimahafotsy Architecture

Below the royal complex the cultural landscape of the general population would have evolved to incorporate the new technology available, combined with European design sensibilities. Specifically, the height of the roof was diminished because of the new roofing materials available, yet *tandotrano* remained on gable ends, reflecting the wealth and social position of the proprietor by their length. Ellis remarked that "the European method of building with roofs of a lower pitch, and with sloping ends, has been generally adopted in the houses lately built, and promises to supersede the plan of building with steep gable-ends" (Ellis 1838:95). Shingles made of water-resistant Amboara wood replaced the thatch in many cases. Also, the gables were transformed, using short wooden planks laid horizontally or in a herringbone pattern, instead of thatch (Decary 1958), and a window would often be inserted in the gables. This change in design was made possible by the use of the saw, wood-glue and nails. In addition, houses were placed on stone terraces instead of being held in place only by paving stones. We will see in Chapter Nine that these changes were actually surface changes and didn't alter the house's symbolic language. Despite a change in form, the houses continued to be built on a north-south axis, with a central post and *tandotrano* on the gable ends, to symbolise the wealth and power of the proprietor.

Tombs

Tombs remained the most important features of the early Fiadanana cultural landscape. Like the houses, tombs outside of Ambohimanga's *rovas* were embellished by missionary artisans, while the royal tombs of Ambohimanga which contained the bodies of the Tsimahafotsy ancestors remained unchanged. According to the oral traditions, there were no new tombs added to the royal necropolis at Mahandry during Radama's reign. Therefore, there would have been twelve tombs located there (Andrianampoinimerina's tomb was positioned furthest to the north, Andriambelomasina was to the south of Andrianampoinimerina, Andriantsimitoviaminandriana to the south of Andriambelomasina, and nine tombs belonging to the "wives and mothers" of the sovereigns were positioned to the south of Andriantsimitoviaminandriana). The tombs of the three kings would have retained their large *tranomasina*, which were regularly maintained. The tombs of the nine "wives and mothers," which were covered with smaller *tranomanara* and not maintained as per Andrianampoinimerina's prescription, may have begun to deteriorate by the early Fiadanana Phase.

Radama I visited these important monuments regularly to make sacrifices to his father and other ancestors. He utilised the hearth shrine built behind the tombs to prepare his sacrifice, which he would have left at his father's headstone. General Hastie witnessed and documented one of these events. On 11 January 1818 he was invited to accompany Radama the next day to Ambohimanga (Hastie 1817:151). When the party arrived at the royal tombs in Mahandry, there were two young zebu waiting to be slaughtered. The King addressed the tomb of his father, and then one of the zebu was laid down on the ground, on a rock to the east of it, and its throat cut with a knife. A piece of the hump was detached, which Radama then roasted for three hours on an open hearth before offering the right half to his ancestors and the left half to his guests...*J'ai pris un médiocre repas*, Hastie remarked (ibid.:152).

Robert Lyall (13 November 1829) [195] confirmed that the earth inside the royal tombs continued to be sacred and powerful during the early Fiadanana Phase. It was specified that only the sovereign was allowed to take the substance on certain occasions, for the oaths of allegiance, *fandroana* or when he wished to invoke the blessings of his ancestors. During Radama's reign, Lyall recounted that a noble with aspirations to be King sent two men to Ambohimanga to illicitly obtain some of the earth from the tomb of Andrianampoinimerina. He had planned to use the sacred earth to make an oath of fidelity with his allies and usurp authority. Radama was informed of the incident and the noble was put to death. The earth was also utilised during the Ramenjana revolt. When it could not be obtained directly from the royal tombs, the earth was obtained from the gate of Andriamasinavalona. This set a trend whereby the powerful sacred earth covering the royal tombs at Ambohimanga would be used to empower Tsimahafotsy traditionalists.

Although the royal tombs at Ambohimanga did not change during Radama's reign, non-royal tombs did, essentially becoming larger, higher and better constructed. William Ellis described the Fiadanana-style tomb

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195 British Museum archives, "Journal of R. Lyall's mission to King Radama I," 1827.

as a square raised platform having its sides formed by stones fixed in the ground, with sometimes a succession of smaller platforms one upon the other, giving a sort of pyramidal effect (*left*). Stones for the tombs continued to be detached by fire-cracking methods (see Sibree 1896:30), and transporting them remained a significant event, necessitating unity of action. Raombana observed that some of the tombs in Imerina were constructed of stones "in the most handsome manner, and the making of them cost them a great deal of money, and numerous cattle are given to those people who drag the stones, and sometimes the dragging of the four principle stones which forms the under part of the grave, will require the force of several thousand men" (Raombana I:81). Thus, tomb building remained a costly, communal activity. Although non-royal tombs became larger and more skilfully made, they remained true to tradition in that they were constructed to be as permanent as possible, *tranomanara* adorned the tombs of nobles and *famadihana* was practised, when the family could afford to host the event. Also, as with the Merina houses, the largest and most well made tombs signified those of the highest ranking Merina, which were placed closest to the *rova* complex.



Other Significant Features within the Fortifications

Other features that were significant during the Late Kaloy Phase remained so during the Radama I's reign, such as Amparihy, the navel stone at Fidasiana, Ambatorangotina, the sacred forest and Ambatomiantendro.

A secure, clean source of drinking water continued to be a vital resource for the citizens of Ambohimanga. Although a fortified reservoir was no longer necessary during the relative peace of Radama I's reign,[196] run-off flowed into Amparihy from the internal fosses and it continued to supply Ambohimanga's drinking water. The reservoir was also used for ritual purposes, and was used to fill the pool built by Andrianampoinimerina within the Mahandry Rova. This water, in combination with sacred earth from the royal tombs, was a key ingredient for the royal bath ritual (*fandroana*), *alakaosy* and other blessing ceremonies. Other water sources located within the fosses of Ambohimanga, such as Andranomboahangy and Andranomanento, were not mentioned in the literature of the early Fiadanana Phase, though they were most likely used for the purposes set for them during the time of Andrianampoinimerina, and were respected accordingly.

In addition to the water sources, another factor that contributed to the health and success of the Tsimahafotsy during Radama's reign, was the sacred forest. The forest that had attracted settlers to Ambohimanga in the first place was preserved because of the *fady* established to protect it, marked by the exterior gates. Thus, Ambohimanga retained most of its trees during the Fiadanana Phase while the rest of Imerina had become

196 Wars were fought elsewhere on the island, not in Imerina.

virtually denuded. When on 2 September 1825 Coppalle visited Ambohimanga (Amboudy-mangue); he made note of the forest juxtaposed against the otherwise barren landscape (Coppalle 1825-1826). This forest served to provide emergency sources of wood, medicinal plants and an additional layer of protection for the Tsimahafotsy.

The Navel Stone and Fig Tree

After Andrianampoinimerina moved his court to Antananarivo, the stone on which future monarchs would stand for their state "coronation" changed from the navel stone at the Bevato Rova to Andoholo, a plaza in Antananarivo (Callet 1974:360). Although monarchs were no longer officially ordained at Ambohimanga, they always visited the hill a short time after their investiture, following tradition by climbing onto the sacred stone in the centre of the Bevato Rova and receiving the real power to rule from the royal ancestors.

The stone also continued to be used to display and purify the national idols (*alakaosy*) during the early Fiadanana Phase. Once during his reign Radama bowed to European influence and announced that he no longer relied on the idols. Shortly after the statement, Radama was "convinced" by *ombiassy* from Ambohimanga of the idol's efficaciousness and he proclaimed: "Now I believe," whilst standing on top of the Principal gate to Ambohimanga. Also, although from the time of Radama I *fandroana* was held at Antananarivo, the monarch would always perform the ceremony at Ambohimanga first. As a key part of the event, sacrifices to the ancestors would have continued to take place on Bevato's navel stone (Piolet 1895:76). It was only at Ambohimanga that the upper world could be properly contacted via the monarch (as will be discussed in Chapter Nine).

Ambatorangotina

The area of Ambatorangotina, at the base of the stone staircase from the Bevato Rova, changed slightly in form during Radama I's reign. The tribunal once placed on top of the great rock to shelter the Andriamasinavalona judges was ordered to be destroyed by Radama I. "Formerly the judges met to hear causes, deliberate, and administer justice in a house. However, Radama I was passing by the house in which the judges were assembled, when the latter omitted to pay his majesty *hasina*. Radama resolved that 'those who could see, and would not, should be made to see,' and ordered the house taken down and directed that, in future, all cases should be tried in broad day-light, that the administration of justice might be open, and no one find excuse for not paying due respect to his majesty" (Raombana I: 72).

Although the area's appearance changed slightly with the removal of the house, all of Ambatorangotina's functions remained constant from the Late Kaloy Phase. In addition to serving as a tribunal to try local cases, Ambatorangotina continued to serve as a "*porte utilitaire*" to the *rova* complex. Also, *kabary* continued to be issued at Ambatorangotina to the Tsimahafotsy by the Andriamasinavalona. Although the seat of government moved to Antananarivo at the end of the eighteenth century, Ambohimanga remained an important

communication centre. All proclamations issued at Antananarivo were repeated to the Tsimahafotsy at Ambohimanga shortly thereafter, before being spread throughout Imerina via the twelve sacred hills, just as they had been during Andrianampoinimerina's reign.

Ambatomiantendro

Ambatomiantendro also remained important during Radama's reign. It was used by the King as a place for relaxation and contemplating his empire. The watchtower, originally constructed for Andrianampoinimerina in the Late Kaloy Phase, was surely used by Radama I, who lived close to it as a grown boy in Nanjakana. It is interesting that despite Radama's acceptance of Europeans and their ideas and technology, the landscape at Ambohimanga changed little under Radama I. Looking down from Ambatomiantendro, the landscape would have appeared almost exactly the same as during his father's reign, as innovation was minimal during his term in office. To the west of Ambatomiantendro the royal complex and town of Ambohimanga also remained relatively unchanged in form and function. In fact, the sacred significance of the hill increased, as Radama I used it almost exclusively as a shrine.

Ranavalona I (1828-1861)

Radama's successor, Ranavalona I, spent a great deal of time at Ambohimanga. Although staunchly conservative, she changed the cultural landscape of the *rova* complex most dramatically of any Fiadanana ruler. The Queen instigated vast building projects using the techniques brought by the Europeans during the reign of Radama I, in addition to those initiated by Laborde and Cameron, the two artisans allowed to remain in Madagascar the longest during her reign. Namely, she incorporated stone foundations, lime-based cement, which was used as mortar and for building purposes, metal fixtures, and shingled roofs into the landscape. In the *rova* complex, she expanded and renovated the Mahandry area significantly, and dismantled the rova at Bevato, turning the space into an open plaza called Fidasiana, to be used for ritual events. She moved houses and tombs and added several new buildings to the complex, which she had transferred from Antananarivo. Despite significant change, Ranavalona vigorously upheld tradition and did not allow any alterations that would fundamentally alter the form, placement or function of features as designated by her ancestors.

The Fortifications and Royal Compound

During Ranavalona I's reign the external gates continued to serve their original purposes – with Ambatomitsangana (the monarch's gate) and Andakana (the people's gate) remaining the most important. The fortifications and gates also continued to serve as barriers to *fady*. Ranavalona I re-emphasised and formalised the *fady* set out by her ancestors, adding Europeans to the list. As discussed in Chapter Three, this *fady* against Europeans has been attributed incorrectly to Andrianampoinimerina and his royal talismans (Callet 1974:390). The law prohibiting foreigners was actually established by Ranavalona I, and later attributed to Andrianampoinimerina and his ancestors, in order to give it increased credibility. In fact, both Andrianampoinimerina and Radama I had hosted foreign visitors at Ambohimanga, although they were

selective about which Europeans were invited into the sacred capital. It should be remembered that Jaques de LaSalle visited Andrianampoinimerina at Ambohimanga and General Hastie accompanied Radama to the town. In any case, Ranavalona I was the first to formally prohibit all foreigners (*vazaha*) from entering within Ambohimanga's fosses (Raombana IIIc:357). Further, she re-emphasised the *fady* set out by Andrianampoinimerina against using any building material but wood within the fortifications. The internal gates of Ambohimanga also remained important during Ranavalona I's reign. Ambavahaditsiombiomby was reserved as the monarch's exclusive gate and Ambatorangotina was used for non-royal entry into the *rova* complex. The domain at the top of the hill was clearly the most important area of Ambohimanga, comprised of three *rovas* as it had been since Andriambelomasina's time. Ranavalona I thus achieved a compromise between ancestral prescription and convenience, creating a pleasing and spacious living space for herself within the compound, without straying too far from tradition.

The Bevato Rova changed quite a lot in form during Ranavalona I's reign. The Queen expanded the plaza to the west, to create "*une vaste cour*" to accommodate the large groups who would be invited to attend national ritual ceremonies and royal *kabary* there, and named the space "Fidasiana," meaning "gathering place." The area was probably reached by a stone staircase since earliest times, as per Indonesian examples (Sibeth 1991), but a more "modern" wide stone path with steps was built by Ranavalona I to conduct those who were invited to her vast ritual events more comfortably from the town centre at Ambatorangotina, to Fidasiana (*above*).[197] Artisans would have used European techniques and tools to chip the stone into blocks.



Creating the open plaza necessitated some changes to the Bevato Rova and essentially caused its demise. First, when Ranavalona I built her high stage behind the sacred stone, she would have moved Manatsara-lehibe, the house that sheltered the idol Fantaka during the Late Kaloy Phase, from the north of the plaza to the west, where it could stand overlooking the town. At the same time, the Queen made several cautious renovations to this building. Although it required significant repair, she did not alter her ancestor's dwelling. Instead, she doubled its walls to preserve the original structure (Callet 1974:597) and please the Tsimahafotsy. Raharijaona (1931) has suggested that Manatsara-lehibe was the only building Ranavalona I left in Fidasiana after her renovations to the area. The fact that no houses other than Manatsara-lehibe are mentioned in the literature during the late Fiadanana and Colonial Phases lends Raharijaona's claim credibility. Manatsara-kely and Tsararay probably would have deteriorated by Ranavalona I's reign. Also, during the Fiadanana Phase,

197 "La Place d'Ambatorangotina" (1898). Photograph number 30Fi88 (798). Archives Nationales. Aix-en-Provence, France.

the stone wall originally enclosing the houses would have been removed to facilitate the plaza's expansion. Remnants of the wall can still be seen today.[198] Ranavalona I also moved the Andriamasinavalonas' tombs out of the Bevato Rova to Ambatorangotina, as discussed below.



The Mahandry Rova experienced significant change during the Fiadanana Phase, as it served as the Queen's residence in Ambohimanga.[199] First, the enclosure itself was more heavily fortified by a wall approximately two metres thick, made from roughly worked stones assembled with a mortar of lime, water and sand (*left*).[200] In 1828 Cameron discovered lime in the province of Imerina and taught the people to prepare mortar from it (Cameron 1874).[201] This would have been used in place of the red clay earth used previously to fix stones together. A cement plaster covering was made using over a million egg whites combined with lime as a binding agent (Hawkins 1914:127). Ranavalona conserved the western entryway to the Mahandry Rova, but added a northern gateway that would have directed her from Ambavahaditsiombiomby to her royal abode. She renovated the original western entrance (*right*) and constructed the northern entrance (*left*)[202] from stone blocks fixed together with cement. The northern entry had a wooden guard shelter built on top of it, which is now missing. The western gateway was protected by a stone and cement "watch tower" that the Queen added to the southwest corner of the *rova*, reached by a flight of stone steps. It also had a wooden shelter on top, which has been conserved. As part of her large scale renovation project, Ranavalona I had a wide stone staircase built on the north side of the Mahandry Rova, leading to the northern gateway from Fidasiana. Another smaller stairway that led to Ambatomiantendro, was built on the south side of the *rova*.





198 Some of Bevato's *rova* may have been used to build Mahandry's enclosure.

199 It is important to note that the Prime Minister did not stay in the rova with Ranavalona I, but in a house on the stone steps near Ambatorangotina, thus indicating his lower status in relation to the Queen.

200 "Mur d'enciente à Ambohimanga" (1898). Photograph number 30Fi88 (13). Archives Nationales. Aix-en-Provence, France.

201 This substance resembled Portland cement, made from limestone and clay, patented in Britain in 1824. Alone, the substance was used as grout. Alternately, it was mixed with a filler material such as sand to create mortar.

As further protection, Ranavalona I had two cannons mounted on top of the wall's western side overlooking Fidasiana, making the wall particularly wide in that section to accommodate them. In addition to the small iron cannon belonging to Andrianampoinimerina (see Chapter Five), a large brass cannon commissioned from Jean Laborde was brought to Ambohimanga during Ranavalona I's reign (*left*).[203] The cannons would have been placed on wooden supports so that they could be fired effectively. During Ranavalona I's funeral ceremony the two cannons were used repeatedly to commemorate the Queen (Callet 1974:601). In fact, the vast amounts of gunpowder used during the funeral caught fire and resulted in the destruction of Nanjakana (see below).



Architecture

Royal Architecture

Mahandry

Ranavalona I renovated Mahandry using technological innovations introduced to Madagascar during Radama I's reign, adding to, but not in any way destroying, Andrianampoinimerina's work (*left*).[204] First, she had Mahandry's walls repaired. "The lower part has been repaired, that is the part of the wall under ground getting spoiled or rotten. The house was pulled down, the rotten part sawed away, and the house built up again (Raombana I:273). When Ranavalona rebuilt the house she restored it on a foundation of hewn stones with lime-based cement as mortar.[205] The Queen replaced the rotted planks that would have been fashioned with an axe with sawed ones, which accounts for the wall's uniformity in parts.[206] In addition, she added square iron nails to reinforce the walls, brackets to support its corners, and hinges to the door. She replaced the original thatched roof with a lower one, shingled with Amboara

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202 "Principle Porte de Entrée du Palais" (1898). Photograph number 8Fi001 (167). Archives Nationales. Aix-en-Provence, France.

203 The cannon can be identified as Jean Laborde's design by its characteristically heavy ridges (J. Hardyman, unpublished papers).

204 Drawing courtesy of Dr. Henry Wright, University of Michigan.

205 Masonry was also used for the walls and walkways in the courtyard, around the houses of the sovereign (Sibree 1924:92).

206 In 1840 Ranavalona I also had Mahitsielafanjaka, a royal house in Antananarivo, renovated with sawed planks (Callet 1974:315-21).

wood (Callet 1974:601). It is not known if the silver birds and chains still adorned the building's *tandotrano*, but it is likely that they were removed by Andrianampoinimerina to embellish his abode in Antananarivo when he moved the government there in the early nineteenth century.

Manjakamiadana

When Ranavalona I was at Ambohimanga, she stayed in a house called Manjakamiadana to the north of Mahandry. She replaced the original Manjakamiadana, the house formerly "belonging" to Andrianampoinimerina's favourite idol Manjakatsiroa with a larger house from Antananarivo, also called Manjakamiadana or Felatanombola, originally built by Andrianampoinimerina in traditional Late Kaloy style. The house was unique in that it had a silver ornament in the shape of a hand placed at the end of each of its *tandotrano* (Callet 1974:599).[207] Felatanombola was transferred to Ambohimanga by Ranavalona I to make room for her new palace, Manjakamiadana, built in the Antananarivo Rova in 1839. At Ambohimanga she erected the building to the north of Mahandry, conserving the name Manjakamiadana. In turn, it is likely that she moved the original Manjakamiadana, erected by Andriambelomasina and used as an idol's residence by Andrianampoinimerina, to the Nanjakana Rova. She built a retaining wall behind Manjakamiadana to create a walkway so as not to disturb the potent forces of *rohontany* circulating around the house. The building was likely renovated with a wood-shingled roof and stone foundations when it arrived in Ambohimanga, as these were considered "acceptable" renovations that would not disturb *fombandrazana.*

The Nanjakana Rova

During Ranavalona I's reign the Nanjakana Rova would have consisted of Nanjakana, Manambintana and the original Manjakamiadana, called Manandraimanjaka when it was moved to Nanjakana from Mahandry (Callet 1974: 597). The entire area was destroyed by fire during her funeral ceremonies when gunpowder, which was being carried in a *lamba* through the Nanjakana Rova to the cannons mounted on Mahandry's wall, combusted. It was reported that the fire raged for three hours and destroyed a large number of houses (Oberlé 1976:53, Faurec 1935:53), certainly including those at the summit of the hill. The buildings in Mahandry would have been spared because of the thick fireproof wall surrounding them. Those in the Bevato Rova may have also escaped destruction because of their protected location in front of Mahandry.

Tsimahafotsy Architecture

The town of Ambohimanga below the royal compound exapanded, with the addition of houses to accommodate the Queen's extensive army that was based there near the external fortification (Callet 1974:587). The Queen ensured no excessive changes in architectural form, however, by issuing strict decrees regulating house construction in Ambohimanga. All houses were to resemble those specified by Andrianampoinimerina in the Late Kaloy Phase. They were to be constructed in wood, and ornamented with

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207 For the Merina, open hands symbolise *masina*, or holiness, open to receiving a blessing from the upper world. The zanadrano bless themselves by raising their open hands towards their body in a scooping motion while saying the word "*masina*" at the end of invocations to their ancestors (personal observation).

tandotrano in accordance with the proprietor's social status. Their dimensions were to be five metres long and high, and four metres wide (Raombana vol. II). Ellis confirmed that during Ranavalona I's reign the houses were constructed solidly in wood, in the Late Kaloy-style (Ellis 1838: 94). The newer style introduced during Radama I's reign, featuring houses built on a stone platform, screened by a veranda, with boarded floors, were few, and still only available to royalty. However, Ranavalona I did not specify that iron fixtures, stone foundations, solid gable ends or lower shingled roofs were prohibited. Therefore, it is likely that these features introduced during Radama I's reign continued to be added to structures during Ranavalona I's conservative reign. Thus, housing for the Tsimahafotsy would have remained largely the same as when Andrianampoinimerina was King at Ambohimanga. "Traditional" rectangular wooden style houses with central posts continued to be built, with the possible addition of iron fixtures, stone foundations fixed together with cement mortar, solid gables and lower roofs with wooden shingles.

Tombs

Both royal and Tsimahafotsy tombs at Ambohimanga changed in form during Ranavalona I's reign, but retained their functional significance. The royal tombs at Ambohimanga remained the most sacred features in the *rova* complex landscape during Ranavalona I's reign just as they had been previously. However,



Ranavalona I did effect significant change in that she condensed the twelve tombs (three large and nine small) into four large tombs, in order to make space to build a garden to the south of the tomb area.[208] She did this by condensing the nine bodies of the wives and mothers of the sovereigns into Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's tomb, and moving his body into Andriambelomasina's tomb. Once the corpses were moved, Ranavalona fixed the large covering stones to the side walls of the tombs with the lime mortar characteristic of her reign. "Mortars has also been put around the stones which surround the *tranomasina*" (Raombana IIIb:100). Then, Ranavalona replaced the thatch roofs of the three *tranomasina* with Amboara wood shingles (*above*).[209] It is significant that Andrianampoinimerina retained his single tomb, while Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Andriambelomasina were combined in a single sepulchre.

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208 Ranavalona I's garden was a narrow space with two small footpaths cut into the grass. A thick-set banana tree grew in the centre. At its base, red roses and geraniums were said to have been planted (Faurec 1935:52). As mentioned above, in constructing this garden it is likely that Ranavalona I's workmen came upon the remains of the "mothers and wives" of the sovereigns buried there as ordered by Andrianampoinimerina. The nine smaller tombs, originally placed to the south of the royal sepulchres, were likely forgotten by the time of Ranavalona I, as Andrianampoinimerina had declared that their *tranomanara*, when deteriorated, were not to be replaced (Callet 1974:386), and therefore there would have been no marking left.

209 "Les Tombeaux Royaux" (1898). Photograph number 23, Album 7. Géographique et Hydrographique Nationale (FTM). Antananarivo, Madagascar.

Andrianampoinimerina was probably considered by Ranavalona to be the first real King of Ambohimanga and therefore could be buried alone, whereas Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Andriambelomasina may have been considered proto-Merina chiefs, and as a result could share a tomb.

Ranavalona I performed sacrificial ceremonies at the tombs using the hearth shrine to the east of them, just as Radama I had, but much more often. Two significant occasions are documented when she effected change to Ambohimanga's cultural landscape. One such instance occurred when she replaced the thatch on the four *tranomasina* there with wooden tiles. Another sacrificial ceremony took place when Ranavalona I rearranged the bodies in the royal tombs (Raombana IIIb:103). Like her predecessor, Ranavalona I would sacrifice zebu at the sacred stone, grill the hump on the hearth and anoint Andrianampoinimerina's headstone at the east side of his *tranomasina* with its fat. She also used the fat to make "candles" (*fanaovaniro*), which she lit inside the *tranomasina*, as tribute to her great ancestor. The sacred earth covering the royal remains continued to be used for the *sotrovoakaka* oath of allegiance as well as for *fandroana*.

Because it would have been inconvenient to move zebu from the *fahimasina* established at Bevato to the Mahandry area for sacrifice at the royal tombs, Ranavalona I had another ox pen built within the Mahandry Rova, to the southwest of the royal space, adjoining Mahandry's western wall (*right*). It took the form of a deep cement-lined pit of irregular oval shape, with a crib for feeding the animals. Unlike the *fahimasina* in Bevato, approached by a ramp, this one was accessed by a sunken path and doorway (Callet 1974:598).[210]





When Ranavalona I died she was buried at Ambohimanga, in a single tomb to the north of Andrianampoinimerina. Resembling Andrianampoinimerina, she was placed in an enormous silver casket made for her with the inferior *hasina* (uncut Piastres) she had received during her years as Queen (Malzac 1912:324). Her *tranomasina* differed in form from the others, representing stylistic innovation incorporated in the early to mid-Fiadanana Phase (*left*). The structure was clearly influenced by the tomb built in 1828 by Louis Gros for Radama I in Antananarivo, in that it was constructed from sawed boards, glued together in a herringbone pattern. The *tranomasina* had a sloping roof

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210 The animals entered the Mahandry Rova through the western door which, with the addition of a northern door, had become a "*porte utilitaire*."

covered with wooden tiles and supported by wooden pillars. Ranavalona's tomb demonstrated the paradox of her reign, syncretising innovation and tradition.

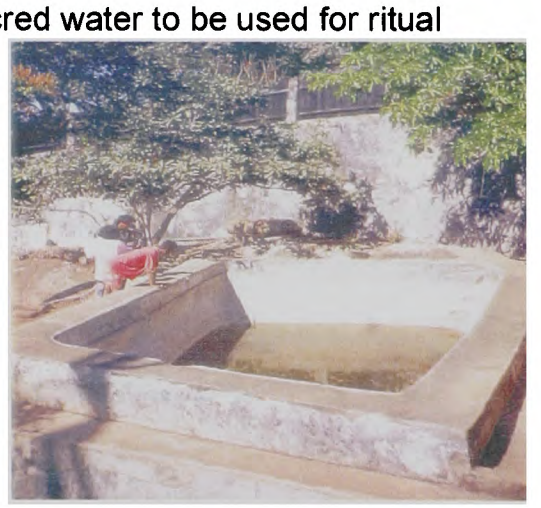
Below the royal tombs were those of the Andriamasinavalona assigned to the Bevato Rova (now Fidasiana) by Andrianampoinimerina. Ranavalona I effected an unprecedented change when she transferred these tombs from the plaza to a communal tomb at Ambatorangotina, in order to open up the space. She left the tomb of Andrianjazanavalona at Fidasiana, however, moving it out of the way to the extreme north of the complex. Ranavalona determined that since Andrianjazanavalona was the nephew of Andriambelomasina, (and enjoyed special privileges as the judge of *tangena*, a voice of the ancestors) he therefore deserved to be kept close to his forbears (Callet 1974:578). This would explain the tomb under the soil with a stone border and male stone, located behind the low stage today. This tomb remained in this position throughout the Fiadanana Phase, although its *tranomanara* was not maintained and therefore has disappeared. The Tsimahafotsy's tombs remained below the Andriamasinavalona tombs at Ambatorangotina, in the *tanindrazana* assigned to them by Andrianampoinimerina.

Other Significant Features within the Fortifications

Other features in Ambohimanga's cultural landscape that remained important during Ranavalona I's reign include the sacred water sources, trees and ancestrally significant stones.

Amparihy

Amparihy remained the primary source of drinking water, as well as sacred water to be used for ritual purposes. Water from the two springs feeding Amparihy continued to be used to fill Andrianampoinimerina's pool in the Mahandry Rova to the southeast of the tombs. Ranavalona I altered the area of the pools by renovating the pool constructed for Andrianampoinimerina and building another larger pool, with steps, adjacent to it (*right*). She used stones fixed together with a sand, lime and water cement and covered with a lime and egg-white cement grout. When the earth was excavated, Ranavalona I used it to create a rock garden that has subsequently been turned into a shrine (*left*). The Queen most likely used the larger pool for bathing during the royal bath ceremony, as Andrianampoinimerina's pool would have been difficult to access. Social rank continued to be emphasised by the specific *deme* of Tsimahafotsy women assigned to the task of filling the pools. Those whose job it was to fetch the water from Amparihy were not permitted to enter within Mahandry's wall because of their diminished social rank. Thus, the water jugs





were handed from one *deme* to another, in a relay system, until they reached the high ranking Tsimahafotsy women who had the privilege of filling the pools (Callet 1974:598).

The Navel Stone and High Stage

The sacred stone at Fidasiana retained great significance during Ranavalona I's reign, consistent with its former function. Like her predecessors, Ranavalona I was "coronated" on the sacred stone in 1828. Also, the Queen is reported to have used the navel stone established in Fidasiana during *fandroana* and to display the national idols when she was in Ambohimanga. She also would have used the *fahimasina* in Bevato to keep the zebu destined for sacrifice at this stone during the ceremonies (Raharijaona 1931:128; Roherisoanjato 1993:13). However, she no longer used the stone as a place to deliver *kabary*. For this purpose, Ranavalona I had a high stage erected in the Fidasiana area to the east of the sacred stone (Callet 1974:391). It was built on top of a large granite ledge, with stones and earth added to the area to create a flat platform (*left*).[211] An earth balustrade was built around the edge and a fig tree was planted on top of the platform. Thus, it resembled the structural arrangement of the former "stage" below it, and at Ambatorangotina. This higher, more visible, platform closer to royal ancestor's tombs lent Ranavalona I's words instant credibility and sacred importance.



Ambatorangotina



The form of the other "stage" at Ambohimanga (Ambatorangotina) was slightly altered by Ranavalona I in that a stone border around the sacred fig tree and a balustrade of earth were added (*left*).[212] Although it still functioned as a place for *kabary* given by the Andriamasinavalona as per tradition, and as a tribunal presided over by the Andriamasinavalona, the area lost its function as a centre of the slave and arms trade. The slave market that flourished at Ambatorangotina during the Late Kaloy Phase

211 " Danse Malgache " (1898). Photograph number Fe95/7 (5) 78. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
212 "Ambohimanga" (1898). Photograph number 30Fi88 (15). Architves Nationales. Aix-en-Provence, France.

was moved by Ranavalona I to another site to the southwest of the town outside the fortifications, where it was called Alakamisy (meaning "Thursday market") (Sibree 1924:73). The Queen moved the market because she had declared Ambohimanga *fady* to all foreigners (*vazaha*), including domestic traders and slave-traders from overseas (Callet 1974:578). Also, at that time, Ranavalona decreed that the majority of general trade at Ambohimanga (foodstuff, textiles, etc.) was to take place outside the external gates, probably at the western gate of Ambavahadimasina.



Although it lost its function as a market place, Ambatorangotina took on a new function during the Fiadanana Phase, as *tanindrazana* for the Andriamasinavalona. As mentioned above, the tombs of the former judges of Imerina (the social rank closest to the Monarch), originally given the privilege to be buried in individual tombs at Fidasiana, at the "feet" of the royal ancestors buried in Mahandry, were moved to Ambatorangotina by Ranavalona I (Callet 1974:578) and combined into a group tomb there. They still occupied the closest tomb to the royal remains, however, even though they were positioned much further away than previously. The tomb built for them at Ambatorangotina was large and well made, covered with cement grout, with a well-built *tranomanara* placed on top to signify the Andriamasinavalona's noble status (*above*).

Ambatomiantendro

Ambatomiantendro, the large stone ledge located to the southeast of the complex, was no doubt used by Ranavalona I to survey the landscape and contemplate her powerful empire. The watchtower, with its wooden kiosk, would have likely burned during her funeral ceremony, leaving only the circular stone foundation that remains today. Whether or not it was rebuilt by her successors is not documented. Looking down from the rock, Ranavalona I would have seen evidence of her successful and growing empire. Houses and tombs, built in the Late Kaloy style, would have increased in number. Behind her in the *rova* complex, although innovation in materials and design was selectively incorporated and features added, the area remained true to tradition and increased in sacred significance.

Radama II (1861-1863)

Radama II did not spend much time at Ambohimanga, and therefore the cultural landscape changed little during his reign, except for the introduction of new building materials and techniques. When Queen Ranavalona I died in 1861, Radama II welcomed the missionaries and artisans back into Madagascar. "Immediately after the news of her death reached England, Ellis left for Madagascar, and arrived at the capital the next year" (LMS(C) 1876-8:231-2). Following Ellis, Pool and Sibree arrived, also from England, and Cameron returned to the island from Cape Town (ibid.). This influx of Europeans ushered in a second "architectural revolution" in Imerina, the first occurring with Radama I, as previously discussed.

The Fortifications and Royal Compound

The fosses and gates remained surrounding Ambohimanga just as they had during Ranavalona I's reign, but their function as barriers to *fady* was threatened. The *fady* established against Europeans during his mother's reign was broken when Radama II gave Reverend Ellis permission to enter the fortified town via Ambatomitsangana, as reported by "The Missionary Magazine and Chronicle," 1 April 1863. Ellis was not at all welcome by the Tsimahafotsy. When he was resisted at the Ambatomitsangana gates by guards, he used his influence with Radama to have the guards reduced in rank. Mr. Pakenum, Ellis's consul, warned that because of Ellis's behaviour the conservative, anti-Christian, Tsimahafotsy would soon sponsor a revolution (Gow 1979:194). This became a reality with the Ramenjana revolt, which began from Ambohimanga in 1863.

The Tsimahafotsy used sacred earth obtained from the royal tombs of Mahandry and sacred water from Amparihy to perform *fandroana* and other blessing rituals during the uprising. If access to the royal domain was impossible, earth would be taken from the western gate, Andriamasinavalona, which Andrianampoinimerina had built with the sacred substance. The revolt was successful and, as a result, Ambohimanga was again off limits to those not specifically invited by the Tsimahafotsy to venture within its walls. Thus, the fortifications played a significant role during Radama II's reign, functioning practically and ideologically to maintain tradition.

Architecture

While the houses at the top of the hill within the *rova* complex were not changed during Radama II's short reign, the hill's landscape outside the fortifications was affected by the re-introduction of sun-dried brick by the Europeans (Mille 1970:248,254).[213] Until the Merina were taught by the missionary-artisans, bricks do not appear to have been used in Imerina, either dried in the sun or baked in a kiln. It was reported that Cameron and Pool first taught the Merina to make and build with sun-dried bricks (Cousins 1908:18). Mantaux (1969) has documented the method used: First, earth was mixed with water to a fine consistency, and pressed into a frame to make blocks approximately forty to sixty centimetres high and thirty to fifty centimetres wide. When the bricks had been shaped, they were baked in the hot sun, and when hard and dry, they were used for building thick walls. They were bound together with mud, dark red earth was plastered over them, and the walls were then rubbed with pieces of the stem of a banana tree until they



213 Although sundried or kiln-dried bricks were used for building outside Ambohimanga, building with earth inside the hill's fosses remained *fady* until Ranavalona II's reign.

developed a glossy finish. The roofs of the houses were thatched with the long coarse grass that grows on Imerina's hills, or occasionally shingled with Amboara wood (Rutley 1939).

Sun-dried bricks put together in this manner were used to construct a facsimile of the Late Kaloy style house (*above*). The development of solid mud or brick gables permitted building without central, corner or end posts (Decary 1958:12), which was beneficial, as wood was becoming ever scarcer in Imerina. However, where possible, the central post was often conserved due to its ritual importance and cultural tradition.

Tombs

As mentioned above, the royal tombs took on incredible importance during Radama II's reign in that the earth covering them was seen to contain ancestral power and was used by the Tsimahafotsy (either from the tombs themselves or from Andriamasinavalona) to reinstate order and tradition in lieu of an ineffective monarch. The royal tombs did not change in form in any way during Radama II's reign, however. Sun-dried brick was not used for tomb building either inside or outside the fortifications because the material was not considered sufficiently "permanent." Also, spirits were thought to reside in stone, not brick. Therefore, stone tombs continued to be built in the Tsimahafotsy's *tanindrazana*, as per tradition

Other Significant Features within the Fortifications

The literature does not mention Radama II's coronation at Ambohimanga, although it likely did take place on the navel stone there. The Andriamasinavalona took on an authoritative role during this ineffective King's reign, and Ambatorangotina would have been used to relay messages and rally the population together in protest. Looking down from Ambatomiantendro, the greater landscape would have changed significantly in that sun-dried brick houses and churches dotted the hills and valleys. Yet Ambohimanga, within the fortifications, remained true to tradition. Its cultural landscape served as a sacred shrine that was used by the Tsimahafotsy, their Andriamasinavalona leaders, and *ombiassy*, to thwart excessive change.

Rasoherina (1863-1868)

Rasoherina was a traditionalist Queen who spent a great deal of time at Ambohimanga, preferring the hill to Antananarivo. She affected the cultural landscape of the *rova* complex by renovating several buildings there after they were burned during Ranavalona I's funeral fire, while strictly adhering to *fombandrazana*, the "ways of the ancestors."

The Fortifications and Royal Compound

During Rasoherina's reign there are no documented changes made to Ambohimanga's fortifications except that Rasoherina formally reinstated Ranavalona I's *fady* prohibiting Europeans from entering within them, through a treaty between the government of England and the Queen signed in 1865. The specific reason given for the restrictions at Ambohimanga was that it was a royal town, sacrosanct to the Queen as the burial place

of her ancestors and home of Fantaka, one of her national talismans (Oliver 1886:244-5). Rasoherina also formally banned Christian worship within the walls of Ambohimanga (LMS(C) 1869-1870). Thus, the fortifications once again served their isolationist intention as set forth under Ranavalona I's reign.

Architecture

At the top of the hill, the *rovas* of Nanjakana, Mahandry and Fidasiana also retained their exclusivity and former functions. Fidasiana remained a gathering place for *kabary* and rituals, as established by Ranavalona I. Rasoherina lived in Ranavalona I's residence, Manjakamiadana, within the Mahandry Rova. She travelled with her idols and would have kept them in the house with her, just as Ranavalona I had. Outside Mahandry, only the rock remained where Kelimalaza's house had stood, as it had been destroyed by the fire that took place during Ranavalona I's funeral. The Nanjakana Rova changed its appearance the most of all the *rovas* in that Rasoherina rebuilt Manambintana in a "new style," as a result of European influence. The house was used for Rasoherina's siblings, potential heirs to the throne, a function it had served since Andriambelomasina's reign.



Non-royal houses inside Ambohimanga's fortifications also remained true to tradition, although the missionary-artisans introduced significant stylistic changes to the highlands during Rasoherina's reign. Around 1868, Reverend Pool erected a wooden house for Reverend Pearse in Antananarivo, an LMS missionary colleague, which quickly became a prototype for houses built from then on for wealthier Merina such as the Tsimahafotsy. "It may be so remarked that this convenient six-roomed house proved so suitable to Malagasy, as well as European requirements, that it was copied in hundreds, if not thousands, of other houses" (Moss 1913:42; see also Mullens 1875). It became an architectural genre "and scores of new houses like it may now be seen, not only in Antananarivo, but dotting the more distant parts of Imerina...." (Mullens 1875:111). In Ambohimanga the Pearse-style house was built on a north-south axis, out of wood with a western entrance, as per ancestral prescription. Outside Ambohimanga's walls, where building in materials other than wood were not prohibited, the house (especially within *tamboho*)[214] was often constructed using sun-dried and kiln-dried brick, which significantly altered the appearance of Imerina's cultural landscape (*above*). At the same time, kiln-dried roof tiles were developed, which occasionally replaced the thatch or Amboara wood shingles (Oliver 1886:88).

Tombs

There are no records of Rasoherina praying or sacrificing at the tombs of her royal ancestors at Ambohimanga, although, because of her strict adherence to *fombandrazana*, she almost certainly did perform

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214 *Tamboho* are high walled enclosures, constructed using bands of earth mixed with grasses and water. Over time the bands cracked, giving the appearance of sun-dried bricks.

ceremonies there. Also, the monarch would have undoubtedly used sacred earth from the tombs for her royal bath (*fandroana*) and *alakaosy* at Ambohimanga. At the end of her life, Rasoherina requested to be buried at Ambohimanga with her ancestors, but was not allowed. She was too weak to resist the Prime Minister and her advisers and thus returned to Antananarivo, where she died and was buried.

Other Significant Features within the Fortifications

As a traditional Queen, the cultural landscape features at Ambohimanga, which were significant to her predecessors, were significant to her as well. For example, like the kings and queens before her, Rasoherina was "coronated" on the navel stone in Fidasiana after the state ceremony in Antananarivo. She used the stone for sacrifice during *fandroana* and as a place to honour the "national" idols still important to her and bathe them during *alakaosy*. She also used the high stage established by Ranavalona I to make proclamations (*kabary*) at Ambohimanga, while Ambatorangotina continued to be used by the Andriamasinavalona to relay the Queen's message to those not invited into the royal complex.

Ambatomiantendro also remained a commanding feature of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape. Although Europeans were banned from Ambohimanga until the late nineteenth century, the LMS missionaries recorded sightings of the Queen on the ledge with her red parasol when approaching the hill from Antananarivo (LMS(C) 1869-1870). It is not unlikely that Rasoherina contemplated the vast empire built by her ancestors from the ledge, noting the changing landscape that was incorporating two storey Pearse-style houses made of sun dried and kiln dried brick. But, behind her in the royal complex and town, buildings were added with sensitivity to tradition. As a result of Rasoherina's presence, Ambohimanga was reinforced as the sacred Merina capital.

Ranavalona II (1868-1883)

Although a proclaimed Christian and outwardly European in her ways, Ranavalona II spent much time at Ambohimanga. She affected the cultural landscape inside the fortifications significantly by lifting the long-standing ban on building materials other than wood, although many style prescriptions and rules regarding location were strictly adhered to. Ranavalona II changed the traditional law regarding building materials as a result of a fire in 1870 that destroyed hundreds of homes in Ambohimanga. After the incident, the Queen declared that houses inside the gates of Ambohimanga could be constructed from sun-dried and kiln-dried brick, and roofs were to be made of non-combustible materials such as clay tiles or zinc (LMS(C) 1869-1870). Zinc roofing material was even used on the Queen's residence inside the *rova* complex, although the balance of the structure and all others within the sacred space were constructed exclusively of wood. Decorative features were added to buildings during this time, such as intricate balustrades and stone pillars. Also, Ranavalona II had several buildings moved within the *rova* complex, and added several from Antananarivo, which altered the layout of the space.

The Fortifications and Royal Compound



Ambohimanga's fortifications and gates remained in *situ* during Ranavalona II's reign, although they were no longer necessary for defence purposes (Ellis 1838:110), since the Merina were firmly in control of approximately two-thirds of Madagascar at that time. However, they did continue to function as a barrier to *fady*, which had been added to over the years. Although Ranavalona II was largely westernised, she respected the *fady* of her ancestors. Cousins wrote in his report on 24 November 1869 for the Chronicle of the LMS that "even now foreigners cannot gain admission, and the gates are under military guard night and day" (LMS(C) 1869-1870). At the top of the hill the royal complex remained exclusive to the Queen and she modernised it while respecting the wishes of her ancestors. In fact, she made Mahandry even more impenetrable by adding wooden palisades to the top of the *rova's* wall, creating an even higher, stronger and more exclusive royal space (*left*). Bevato was used for Ranavalona II's family, her supporters, in lieu of royal wives.

Architecture

Royal Architecture

Filaminia



Within the Mahandry Rova, Mahandry itself, with its sacred central post, was still considered the most important house, functioning as a shrine to Andrianampoinimerina. As a result, it remained untouched. However, Ranavalona II altered the rest of the area significantly in that she dismantled Manjakamiadana, Ranavalona I's residence to the north of Mahandry, and moved it to Nanjakana, where it was renamed Manandraimanjaka, the traditional name for the former dwelling of a deceased sovereign (Callet 1974:597). In its place, she erected a much grander house called Filaminia (*above*). I suggest that Filaminia is the original Tranovola, the first palace built for Radama I in Antananarivo between 1818-1820 and renovated in 1825 for his Sakalava bride Rasalimo. It was moved to the southern end of the *rova* complex in Antananarivo in 1845 to make room for the larger Tranovola built by Ranavalona I for her son Radama II. Then, it was moved to Ambohimanga in 1870-1 to make room for Ranavalona II's palace church, which was built in the southern yard of Antananarivo's *rova* complex.

The Original Tranovola

Louis Gros, a central figure in the group artisans sent to Madagascar from Mauritius in the early nineteenth century, was commissioned to construct Tranovola for Radama I at Antananarivo (Cameron 1874). Tranovola was the first house built in Madagascar that did not conform to traditional Late Kaloy proportions and design. The house was said to be modelled in "Mauritian style". It differed from a Late Kaloy-style royal residence in that it had two stories and three rooms. Jeffreys (1822) observed that "the houses here have but one room and one storey, the only exception I have seen are that of the King and Mr. Jones's houses in the court-yard" (Jeffreys 1822:223)[215] Also, the palace had three doors, to the north, east and south, instead of only one on the southwest wall (Raombana II:1101). Ellis (1838) determined that the dimensions of the building were twenty by twenty-four feet. This corresponds exactly to Filaminia in Mahandry today, which is also tall, with two storeys, three rooms and three doors on the ground floor, and measures twenty by twenty-four feet. Another feature which set the original Tranovola apart from Late Kaloy structures was that it "was surrounded by a wood balcony, primitively constructed, and reached by a ladder, for lack of better stairs" (Bojer and Hilsenberg,[216] in Valette 1965). The new style marked a further departure from the traditional royal residences constructed by Andrianampoinimerina and the former kings in that it had no central post, its boards were cut with a saw and glued together in a herringbone pattern characteristic of Gros' work, and the roof was shingled with wood instead of thatch.

The exterior decoration of the building also departed from tradition in that it was painted in an array of colours, yellow, green, blue, red, and black, as observed by Bojer and Hilsenberg (1823). In addition, the north and south gables, roof and facade were ornamented with diverse silver trinkets. At the middle of the facade was a large mirror with a smaller mirror over it, surrounded with silver decorations. Bojer and Hilsenberg reported that Tranovola's interior was decorated in an "acceptable fashion" and covered with wallpaper. "*Des lustres, des drapéries, rieaux en soie, en brocard et en tissus les plus précieux; des superbes garnies de glaces; voilà ce qui me rendit muet d'étonnement*" (Bojer and Hilsenberg 1823), cited in (Ayache, 1994). Many of these articles were brought to the King as gifts from European visitors, while others were manufactured in Imerina at the King's request.

By 1825 Tranovola was embellished and modified for Radama I's Sakalava bride Rasalimo, who arrived in Ambohimanga in January 1823 (Ayache 1994 supp. 10). To please his new wife, Radama hired an artist, Andre Coppalle, in 1825 to paint Tranovola's interior with murals of the royal couple. The paintings were executed on wood panels and paper. Also, in 1825 a veranda/gallery was added to Tranovola to replace the simple balcony mentioned above (Coppalle in Mantaux 1969; Tyerman and Bennet 1828 in Vérin 1966:23),

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215 In 1838 Ellis noted that the other buildings built at Antananarivo in European style were Marivolanitra, the residence for Radama I's daughter Raketaka, the house for his band of musicians and Mr. Jones' house which eventually became that of Rasalimo (called Bevato) (Ellis 1838:101).

216 Bojer and Hilsenberg were Austrian merchants who visited Antananarivo in 1822-3.

and a staircase was added to the exterior. "*L'escalier était une nouveaute encore plus considerable*[217]*...constitué de marches basses, place lateralement dans une double paroi du mur et soutenu par un enchevêtrement compliqué de poutres horizontales et verticales*" (cited in Belrose-Huyghues 1975:194; see also Bennet 1828).[218] Correspondingly, today's Filaminia has an exterior staircase on its southern side that matches this description exactly.

Following tradition, each Merina monarch was expected to construct at least one new palace in the Antananarivo Rova, in his or her image. This policy was complicated by the fact that the houses of the deceased sovereigns could not be destroyed by their successors, in accordance with custom. Thus, the former royal residences were moved, either elsewhere in the *rova* complex or to another royal village, normally Ambohimanga.

Therefore, in order for Ranavalona I to have a large palace built for her son Radama II in 1845 the original Tranovola built by Radama I was moved to the south end of Antananarivo's *rova* complex. "On the 11th I visited Rahaniraka, who told me that the Silver Palace (Tranovola) was built on the site of a former Silver Palace, built by Radama I, which was removed to the South end of the row of tombs of the Kings; and the present Silver Palaces and the Great Palace were both built by the Queen" (Anson 1920:213). Except for its larger size and interior gallery, the new Tranovola, constructed by Jean Laborde, resembled the original in form (Ellis 1859:380; Anson 1920:213). Coppalle's paintings from the original Tranovola were peeled off the walls and rehung in the new palace, along with the wooden panels (Dr. Fontoynont, cited in Ayache 1994: XII). This accounts for the absence of the paintings in Filaminia today. However, the spaces where the wooden panels were fixed can still be determined on the building's walls.

Moving Tranovola to Ambohimanga

In the beginning of July, 1869, Pool notified Queen Ranavalona II that the three wooden houses which occupied the place chosen for the royal chapel in the southern yard of Antananarivo's *rova* complex would have to be moved (Pool to Mullens, 3 June 1869).[219] According to the Tantara "*Il y avait Fohiloha, Manandraimanjaka, Tranomananasy (qui avait l'aspect d'un ananas), dont certaines furent démolies et transferées à Ambohimanga pour la construction en pierre devant servir de temple*" (Callet 1974:602). Fohiloha was re-erected in the Nanjakana Rova, and Manandraimanjaka, which would have been the original Tranovola, was renamed as tradition dictated for the former palaces of deceased sovereigns, and re-erected in the Mahandry Rova. This is confirmed further by a letter from Sibree to Mullens (21 November 1870) in which Sibree reported that "two of the oldest houses, which have recently been taken from the palace yard

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217 The first recorded staircase was that of Soanierana, a palace built for Radama I by Louis Gros in 1824-1828.

218 Bennet Papers, LMS-IL, box 3

219 LMS-IL, box 8

Antananarivo, are now being erected at Ambohimanga."[220] These were Manandraimanjaka (Tranovola) and Tranomananasy, which I suggest was Tranofitaratra (the kiosk connected to Filaminia which exists today.

When Tranovola arrived in Ambohimanga, there were several renovations made to the building. First, it was positioned in such a way that it would fit into the space demarcated by Ranavalona I for the palace she had built there and yet have enough room for the monarch to walk around the back, with *rohontany*. Second, the house was placed so that the door formerly to the south in Antananarivo was now to the west, positioned according to tradition. In addition to changes made to ensure conformity to *fombandrazana*, the building was modernised. The roof's wooden shingles were replaced with zinc panels, in accordance with Ranavalona II's campaign for fireproof roofing materials. Third, the veranda was changed in that it was rebuilt on only three sides, north, west and south, as no one would use the eastern side, facing the direction of the tombs. The veranda had Asian-style detailing which was painted green, red and white, and the new balustrade lining the veranda was made of turned wood (Decary 1958). Ranavalona had tall thin stone columns which were painted white, added to support the veranda (Faurec 1935:49). The external staircase was conserved on the southern side, as described above.

Filaminia's Interior

During the Fiadanana Phase, Filaminia's ground floor served as the Queen's reception room (Raharijaona 1931:128; Oberlé 1976). Her private apartments, her bedroom and dressing room, were on the second floor, preserving the layout Radama I had chosen. It is interesting that the eastern windows and door on the ground floor were blocked by boards and shutters with a high hutch placed over the door, in keeping with the tradition that no opening should face the direction of the royal tombs. Upstairs the windows that faced east were covered with lace curtains. According to my informants, this was less of a concern because the openings were above the tombs and therefore not subject to a direct power draw from the tombs.

It is possible to determine the interior decor of Filaminia through a combination of eyewitness reports gathered during the Colonial Phase and furnishings remaining in the house today. Like Radama I, the queens, especially Ranavalona II, received gifts from abroad. These objects were said to have reflected Madagascar's diplomatic relations at the time.[221] It is difficult to ascertain the true origins of the material culture inside Filaminia, as no written records were kept, but it is clear that most of the furnishings were Victorian, reflecting

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220 LMS-IL, box 9

221 Specifically, on the ground floor, silk wallpaper, believed to be Japanese, covered the once-painted walls. Also, seven lamps, which most likely hung on the veranda, were given by the Japanese sovereigns (Andriamirado n.d:104). They are now missing. The crystal chandelier on the ground floor was thought to be Italian. The Guide Bleu (1955) mentioned French paintings in the palace: "le Pont-au-change a Paris" (by Maurisce Leloir Goupil, 1750), "Tete de Parisienne," and "Retour de la Charge" (by an un-named artist, 1806) (Ambriere 1955). These no longer exist. Carpets, which are also missing, were said by some to have been given by the sovereigns of Morocco (Andriamirado n.d.). Others suggest that they had Turkish origins (Chapman 1942). The Queen of Spain was reported to have given the leather wall covering running around the base of the room (Anonymous 1994). On the upper floor, the Queen's black walnut bedroom set was said to have been gifted by Queen Victoria (Stratton 1965:217).

Ranavalona II's strong relationship with England. The objects were presented to Ranavalona II by Queen Victoria who, upon hearing that she had become a Christian, took interest in the Merina monarch (Chapman 1942:39).

Tranofitaratra

On the upper floor of Filaminia a light wooden bridge connected the building with tranofitaratra, a small square solarium with etched glass windows and a zinc roof (*left*). Like Filaminia, I propose that the building was one of the three houses moved by Ranavalona II from Antananarivo to Ambohimanga in 1871, mentioned by Pool[222] and Callet (1974:591). I suggest that Tranomananasy (lit. "that which resembles a pineapple") was Tranofitaratra, as the solarium was the only building in Antananarivo's south yard with a zinc roof, and it matches the description and dimensions outlined below.



The Original Kiosk at Antananarivo and Its Move to Ambohimanga

There is a history of glass kiosks built within Antananarivo's *rova* (see Henri Mager 1896, cited in Razafy-Andriamihaingo 1989:121). The one that was moved to Ambohimanga was most likely that erected by Marks, an Englishman, in 1854. "I took Mr. Marks up to the palace on the southern yard of Manjakamiadana for to set up there a glass-house twelve feet square which he had made a present to her Majesty," Raombana wrote, 10 January 1854 (IIIa:144). Later, on 15 January 1854, Raombana reported that "M. Marks ordered a brown dull to be cut and made to fit the outroof of the glass pavilion, which was then painted green" (IIIa:162).[223] Then, on 19 January 1854, Raombana reported that "the glass pavilion or house was removed to a raised platform by the small garden in the north palace." Oliver, in his map of the *rova* complex, illustrated the small kiosk in the northern courtyard in 1862. The kiosk would have been moved again to make room for Rasoherina's tomb in 1868, most likely back to the southern courtyard.

Finally, I suggest that the twelve-foot square kiosk was moved in 1870-1 to Ambohimanga when making room for the palace church in the southern yard. In Ambohimanga it was raised one storey in order to allow a view of the landscape over the high wall of Mahandry and was attached to the first floor of Filaminia by a wooden walkway. In 1924 Manhes fittingly compared the kiosk to a lantern (Manhes 1924:18). The etched glass windows were covered with silk rose-coloured blinds, and the glass kiosk served as a dining room. Its base was further divided into two floors, the upper storey reached by a trap door and ladder. This space may have functioned as a guestroom or a storage area.

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222 Letter from Pool to Mullens 1, July 1869, LMS-IL, box 8

223 The zinc roof has since been painted red.

Although Filaminia and Tranofitaratra seem like a great departure from tradition, they would not have been considered an affront to the ancestors because *fady* and custom were respected: the buildings were primarily wooden, built on a north-south axis, placed according to the *vintana* system and power of *rohontany*, with the openings to the eastern side towards the tombs covered appropriately.

Mananjara

Ranavalona II was also responsible for significant change outside the Mahandry Rova. For example, she placed a house called Mananjara en route to Nanjakana, just outside Mahandry's northern gate, "*au nord de Mahandry, en bas à l'ouest de Nanjakana, en dehors du rova*" (Callet 1974:598). This house was originally built by Andrianampoinimerina in Antananarivo, to the east of the plaza there (Callet 1974:600). It was transported to Ambohimanga by Queen Ranavalona II when she wished to build her palace church in the southern yard at Antananarivo. It would have originally been built in the traditional Late Kaloy style with a centre post and high thatched roof, and was most likely renovated in the Fiadanana Phase with wooden shingles and a stone foundation, after its move to Ambohimanga. The building's function is not mentioned in the literature. Perhaps it was used for guests, as the north is the traditional direction of respected visitors (see Miandravahiny, the visitor's gate located on the north side of the fortifications, Map A).

Nanjakana's Houses

The Nanjakana Rova was expanded significantly by Ranavalona II. She added five houses to the area: Miandrifanjakana, Fohilioa, Kelisoa, and Masoandro, which she moved from Antananarivo and Manandraimanjaka, which she moved from the Mahandry Rova. Manambintana, re-erected at Nanjakana by Rasoherina after Ranavalona I's funeral fire, would have remained in *situ* as the most northern house.

Miandrifanjakana was located to the east of the Mahandry Rova. It was originally built at Antananarivo by Andrianampoinimerina, to the north of Besakana (Callet 1974:599). Ranavalona I would have moved this traditionally styled Late Kaloy residence to the south yard at Antananarivo when she constructed her palace, Manjakamiadana. Like Mananjara and the others mentioned above, Ranavalona II brought the building to Ambohimanga when she needed to make room for the palace church.

Fohilioa was another addition to Nanjakana. It was originally constructed at Antananarivo to the south of Masoandro and later transported to Nanjakana by Ranavalona II to make room for the palace church. It was one of the houses specifically mentioned which were moved for this purpose: Fohiloa, Manandraimanjaka (Tranovola), and Tranomamananasy (Tranofitaratra) (Callet 1974:602).

Manandraimanjaka was first constructed by Andrianampoinimerina at Antananarivo, where it was called Manjakamiadana or Felatanombola. It was constructed in the north of the *rova* complex at Antananarivo. Its roof was ornamented with silver hands on the four tips of its *tandotrano*. As discussed above, when Ranavalona I wished to have her palace built in the courtyard at Antananarivo in 1839, she had the structure moved to the Mahandry Rova where it served as her Ambohimanga residence. Ranavalona II subsequently

moved the house to the Nanjakana Rova, when she reconstructed Tranovola (Filaminia) in its place at Mahandry.

Kelisoa was first built at Antananarivo to house Radama I's concubines during the early Fiadanana Phase (Callet 1974:600). Later, it was removed to the south yard of the *rova* at Antananarivo and then to Nanjakana at Ambohimanga by Ranavalona II. It was another one of the houses transported from the south yard of the *rova* at Antananarivo to Ambohimanga's Nanjakana Rova by Ranavalona II to make room for the palace church.

Masoandro, "the sun," was also originally built at Antananarivo. Raombana recounted that it was first constructed by Andriamasinavalona and later renovated by Andrianampoinimerina into the Late Kaloy style.[224] After Radama I was buried, Ranavalona I lived at Masoandro in the Antananarivo in the south yard of the *rova* complex. In fact, it was there where Radama II was born (Callet 1974:1136). The house was transferred to Ambohimanga to make room for Ranavalona II's palace church. "*Elle à enlèvé et transféré a Ambohimanga le Masoandro construit par Andrianampoinimerina*" (Callet 1974:602). Pool remarked: "Among the removals of old palaces necessitated by the erection of the Chapel-Royal was one of importance called "the Sun" (Pool cited in Oliver 1886:529).

The houses mentioned above were built in the original Late Kaloy style, making them easier to move than newer structures since they were fastened together with wedges, pegs, and lashings instead of nails and glue. Once erected at Ambohimanga they were modernised by wooden or zinc roofs and stone foundations, which can still be detected in Nanjakana today. While it is impossible to conclusively match the foundations with specific buildings, it is possible to hypothesize with confidence as a result of descriptive evidence in the Tantara (Map J).

Tsimahafotsy Architecture

As mentioned above, Ranavalona II also changed the appearance of houses within the town of Ambohimanga in that she lifted the ban on building with materials other than wood within Ambohimanga's fortifications. Because thatch-roofed houses were deemed a fire hazard, Ranavalona II decreed a law on 17 June 1868 that all new edifices of Antananarivo must be constructed with non-combustible materials. This ruling did not initially apply to Ambohimanga. In 1870 Sibree observed: "As in all the other sacred towns, the buildings are all of timber; the old law or custom forbidding brick or stone structures has not here been repealed as at Antananarivo; but there are a much larger number of clay houses clustered round the base of the hill."[225] Later that year, during one of the monarch's visits to Ambohimanga, a house near Ambatorangotina burned and

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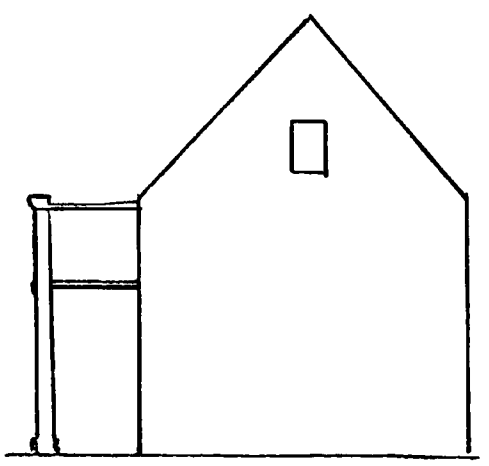
224 "Thus the houses of King Andriamasinavalona at Antananarivo which go by the names of Mahitsy, Besakana and Masoandro were changed into enormous high houses" (Raombana I:520).

225 Sibree to Mullens, 21 November 1870, box 9

provoked a fire that consumed one hundred and three wooden houses. Following this incident, the Queen assembled the residents of Ambohimanga at Fidasiana and charged the Prime Minister to read a royal decree commanding the population to construct houses in non-flammable materials from that day forward.



Many new houses were built at that time, to replace the houses that were destroyed (Oliver 1886). Their design generally followed the Pearse-model, with an upper or bedroom storey, and a veranda (*left*).[226] Architects took advantage of the new freedom of materials available for building purposes during Ranavalona II's reign. For example, Pool embellished the house model he designed to include stone pillars for supporting the veranda, but the use of stone columns was available only to members of the royal family and the highest ranking Tsimahafotsy, as their cost was prohibitive. Also, balustrades along the edges of the veranda became more ornamental during the Fiadanana Phase. They were made of turned wood, worked on a lathe, or sometimes made of wrought iron.

In place of the long crossed *tandotrano* fixed to the gable ends characteristic of the Late Kaloy and early Fiadanana houses, lightning rods, iron finials and chimneys were added to rooftops of the privileged classes. The chimney was a feature added by Sibree in 1864 (Mantaux 1969:95). It was not always functional, and sometimes served only a decorative purpose to indicate the status of the inhabitants. In addition, the use of glass windows became more widespread (Decary 1958:20). Wallpaper also became popular, as did European-style furniture, most of which was copied and manufactured in Imerina.

Tombs

While houses changed in form during Ranavalona II's reign, tomb style and placement remained constant. Tombs continued to command great respect and attention. Although Ranavalona II was largely Europeanised, she visited the tombs of her ancestors and sacrificed to them regularly (LMS(C) 1883.340). In fact, she probably lived in fear that they disapproved of the pro-western elements of her reign. Interestingly, Ranavalona II, the "Christian" Queen, requested to be buried at Ambohimanga herself, in the same casket as Ranavalona I. For the first time in Merina history a sovereign was initially buried with an ancestor in their tomb. After her death in Antananarivo, the body of the Queen was placed in an Amboara wood coffin with a thin silver lining. A company of soldiers escorted the bier (followed by a great crowd of people), on the six-hour journey to Ambohimanga. Along the road were crowds of people, the women wailing and displaying signs of grief. The procession was more than one mile in length and vast crowds were assembled at Ambohimanga to receive the entourage (Richardson reports 1883:339). Ranavalona II's body lay in state at Ambohimanga on Tuesday the

226 Drawing from Decary (1958).

17th of July, probably in Filaminia, and at sunset, the traditional time for a royal burial, it was deposited in the same large silver casket as the remains of the first Ranavalona.

Below the growing royal necropolis the next closest tomb was that of Andrianjazanavalona, located behind the low stage at the north of the plaza where it was moved by Ranavalona I. Below Andrianjazanavalona to the West were his ancestors, the Andriamasinavalona, in their tomb near Ambatorangotina. Finally, non-royal tombs were located in the *tanindrazana* originally assigned by Andrianampoinimerina, in decreasing order according to rank. These tombs continued to be as large and expensive as possible, built in *tanindrazana* assigned by Andrianampoinimerina. *Famadihana* was regularly practised throughout Ranavalona II's reign, which ensured unified, strong, Tsimahafotsy family groups.

Other Significant Features within the Fortifications

Water sources, the forest and certain rocks retained their significance during Ranavalona II's reign privately, if not publicly.

Water sources and the Sacred Forest

The sacred water source at Amparihy remained particularly significant. Water was collected from the reservoir and from the streams that fed it, to fill the royal pools in Mahandry, and to be used in *fandroana* and other rituals, as well as for drinking water. The streams, Andranomboahangy and Andranomanento, also retained their significance in that sacrifices to the Vazimba, described as "greasy libations" by the missionaries, continued to be left on stones bordering them during Ranavalona II's reign (Mullens 1875:120). The power of the Vazimba as angry destructive spirits, continued to be feared.

In addition to water sources, Ambohimanga retained its abundant natural verdure, which continued to contribute to its healthy, self-sufficient population. In 1870, Sibree observed that Ambohimanga "is beautifully wooded on all sides from base to summit... and forms a most refreshing contrast to the generally bare and treeless character of Imerina."[227] Although Ambohimanga's population increased steadily throughout the Fiadanana Phase, necessitating the clearing of land for building houses, the forest's sacred nature and Andrianampoinimerina's edicts regarding tree-cutting and forest use without royal permission were upheld and it was largely preserved (Oliver 1886:136; Tacchi 1889:492). The trees and plants were used for medicinal purposes and occasionally for building, when absolutely necessary and sanctioned by the Queen. Shrines erected in the forest over the years communicated its sacred significance to the population.

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227 Sibree to Mullens, 21 November 1870, LMS-IL, box 9. Also, see Mullens (1875:122)

The Navel Stone and Low Stage

Certain stones and stone structures also retained their significance during Ranavalona II's reign. The navel stone and fig tree at Fidasiana remained particularly sacred. The area was used for Ranavalona II's coronation, the *fandroana* rituals held during her reign and for displaying and bathing the national idols during *alakaosy* until Fantaka, the Tsimahafotsy's idol housed at Fidasiana, and the other national idols were burned in 1876 on the stone on which they were previously exalted (LMS(R) 1877-8:46).



Ranavalona II chose not to use the high stage at Fidasiana erected by Ranavalona I and opted instead to construct a lower one at the extreme north of the plaza, in front of Andrianjazanavalona's tomb. The structure was similar in form to the stage built by Ranavalona I, in that it was made of rocks with fig trees planted on top and an earthen balustrade surrounding it (*left*).[228] However, the latter structure differed from the former in that it was situated low to the ground and entirely man-made. The rocks carefully shaped into blocks were held together with cement mortar rather than earth. Resembling Ranavalona I's high stage, the lower structure functioned as a venue from where Ranavalona could give *kabary* to those Tsimahafotsy privileged with an invitation to attend. The structure served an additional purpose during Ranavalona II's reign, as an altar for preaching Christian services (LMS(R) 1876:33; LMS(R) 1877-8:47).

Ambatomiantendro

From Ambatomiantendro, Ranavalona II would have observed an increasing number of brick houses across the highland landscape. Ambohimanga's *rova* complex and the town within the fortifications were also changed dramatically in appearance and function. Houses were built in materials other than wood, and the sacred stone at Fidasiana was no longer used for *alakaosy*. Yet, *fombandrazana* was preserved, in that tombs and buildings were erected in accordance with tradition, and the essential national rituals were still performed in private locations, utilising cultural landscape features to keep tradition alive.

Ranavalona III (1883-1897)

Ranavalona III did not affect any recorded changes at Ambohimanga. She passed most of her time at Antananarivo and did not visit Ambohimanga often, except for the annual *fandroana* celebration, in accordance with custom. However, Ambohimanga played an active role during her reign in resisting the French. Ambohimanga's fortifications were resurrected by the Tsimahafotsy, who took it upon themselves to resist the French invasion.

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228 Drawing by Camo (1924).

Fortifications and Royal Compound

Fortunately, the fosses on the hilltops remained in good condition and could still be used as defenses. In 1896 Sibree noted that though they are in many cases probably two or three hundred years old, the sides were generally as perpendicular and unbroken as when they were first excavated. Also, the drains still functioned to channel water to the low lying fields and Amparihy, thus providing a secure source of drinking water and facilitating agriculture, as they had done since the Late Kaloy Phase.

However, because of the relative security enjoyed throughout the Fiadanana Phase, the gates had begun to deteriorate (*left*).[229] Sibree (1896) reported that "for many years past, in most villages, these great slabs of stone have been unused, and the grooves are filled up with dust and dirt so that it is not easy to move the stone out of its place. In many villages the great stone lies on the ground, and the children play games upon it" (Sibree 1896:29). Also, the gate's wooden doors were often removed and used elsewhere. In some cases, instead of a door at the gateway, a number of short poles were hung from a crosspiece at the top, which passed through a hole in each of them. This type of gate served only to prevent animals from moving in and out of the settlement (ibid.). When the French forces threatened to overtake Ambohimanga, the stone discs were quickly moved back into position, guard shelters were resurrected, and solid wooden doors re-hung.



Resembling Ranavalona II, Ranavalona III appeared largely "westernised," yet the *fady* against Europeans



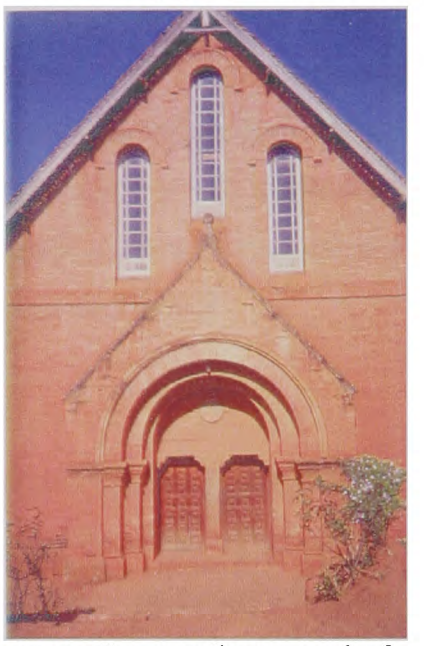
was maintained at Ambohimanga throughout her reign, and the conservative hill's fortifications still served as barriers to taboo ideas, people and objects. In 1884 when the Peills, an LMS missionary family, moved to Ambohimanga, entrance was still forbidden to all "foreigners, pigs and onions" (Peill to Thompson 2 June

229 Drawing by Faurec (1935).

1885; Peill n.d.:8).[230] Therefore, the LMS churches, mission houses, and schools remained outside the gates. In 1892, Tacchi recalled that "foreigners can only see the town from a birds-eye view from Mangabe, a neighbouring hill to the West" (Tacchi 1892:493) (*above*).[231] Thus, the town of Ambohimanga remained exclusive, and the *rova* complex at the top of the hill, the *tanindrazana* of the Merina monarchy, remained unpolluted by European people and ideas.

Architecture

Non-royal houses changed in that the use of sun dried and kiln-dried brick became increasingly widespread as a building material for the general population by the end of the Fiadanana Phase. "The dark green hills were studded with brilliant red brick houses of the inhabitants.... Imerina is now dotted with chapels and schools many of which are neatly built brick structures with tiled roofs; and in almost every village may now be found well built brick houses" (LMS(C) 1886). Although she was not allowed within the fortifications, in 1895 Mrs. Peill noted, after her furlough in England, that Ambohimanga had changed in appearance because of the use of brick (LMS(C) 1895).[232]



Despite the increasing use of brick as a building material within Ambohimanga's fortifications, the rectangular houses retained their traditional function as maps for *vintana*, often conserving a central post for this purpose. In addition, with the door on the southern end of the west wall, the house could continue to be used as a solar clock. When Jully documented the houses in 1896, he reported that each of the phrases describing the position of the sun in the house were still used when telling the time (see also Julien 1931),

No technological inspiration was recorded during Ranavalona III's reign at the *rova* complex. The site remained as it was during Ranavalona II's reign until 1893, when a severe hurricane struck the central highlands. "Saturday, January 28, the capital and surrounding districts suffered from a terrible storm. Great damage has been done to dwelling houses and public buildings. Many houses are un-roofed, and some are in ruins. From Ambohimanga in the north, Ambohibeloma in the west, and Isoavina in the east, news of disaster reaches us. A large amount of property was destroyed" (LMS(R) 1893:108; also see LMS(R) 1894:211). The buildings within the high Mahandry walls, and the better made buildings in the Bevato area, namely Manatsara-lehibe, would have been the only structures to escape destruction (Callet 1974:1179). However, it

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230 LMS-IL, box 20.

231 "Ambohimanga, la Ville Sainte Interdite aux Vazaha 1898." Photograph number 8Fi62 (46). Archives Nationales. Aix-en-Provence, France.

232 Brick-built shops had been built outside Ambatomitsangana, in place of "wayside stalls," and a new church made of kiln-dried brick with stone facings was constructed there in 1898, on the spot where the original LMS chapel was erected in 1869.

is logical to assume that Mananjara, outside the northern gate of Mahandry, would have been devastated along with all the buildings in the Nanjakana Rova: Manambintana, Miandrifanjakana, Fohiloa, Manandraimanjaka, Kelisoa, and Masoandro, all wooden houses that did not have a high protective wall around them. Many of the non-royal houses in the town of Ambohimanga would have been destroyed as well. Those made of thick boards in the archaic style and those made from brick would have probably withstood the disaster best.

Tombs

Tomb styles remained consistent during Ranavalona III's reign. There was a slight change in tomb function, however, in that sepulchers were no longer used as vaults for the family fortune, as they had been previously. Raombana wrote that grave looters had increased in number in Imerina. They stole silk garments and silver ornaments from the tombs (Raombana IIIb:14). "Now [1892] only property of no monetary value is put in the tombs" (LMS(R) 1892). Queen Ranavalona III was exiled to Reunion before her funeral, so we do not know if she would have asked to be buried at Ambohimanga, her *tanindrazana*, with Ranavalona I and II.

Other Significant Features within the Fortifications

Other features that were significant in previous phases remained so during Ranavalona III's reign, including certain rocks, water sources and trees. The last Merina Queen was coronated on the sacred navel stone in Fidasiana (Oliver 1886:382). Throughout Ranavalona III's reign, the rock continued to be used for the annual *fandroana* ceremony held at Ambohimanga immediately following the state ceremony at Antananarivo.[233] Ranavalona III is documented as having used the low stage built by Ranavalona II for *kabary* and Christian services, but the high stage is not mentioned in the literature.

Amparihy and other sacred water sources were used for drinking water, medicinal and ritual purposes. Water from Amparihy was used to fill the royal pools in Mahandry. Certain trees also retained their significance. Fig trees adorned the royal *rova* complex and most likely remained over the sacred stones at Fidasiana and Ambatorangotina, as well as the high and low stages. Also, the sacred forest was responsible for Ambohimanga's descriptive name in the latter half of the nineteenth century – the "Blue Hill."

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear when we trace the changes to Ambohimanga's cultural landscape through each Fiadanana monarch's reign that the Fiadanana stage ushered in extensive change to Ambohimanga, with European technology and design sensibilities altering the cultural landscape significantly. However, beneath the veil of change there was actually a good deal of continuity in form, placement and function of structures, based on tradition and *fombandrazana*. Even if the monarch strayed from tradition politically, sometimes

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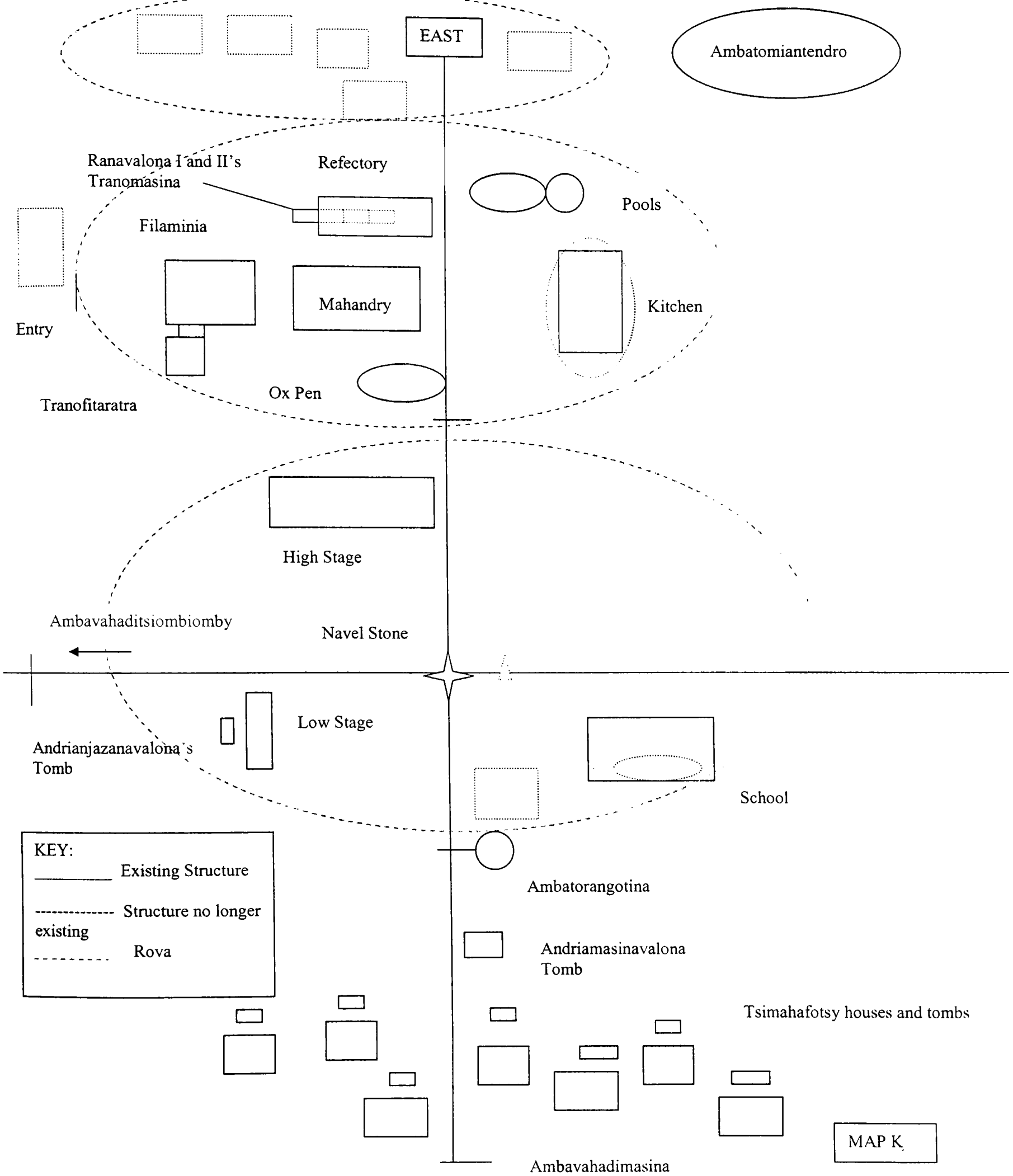
233 *Alakaosy* would have been performed privately at this time.

incorporating modern European ideas and design sensibilities into the landscape, tradition and the conservative Tsimahafotsy kept change from altering fundamental principles, and Ambohimanga remained the most exclusive and sacred settlement in Imerina.

Chapter Seven: The Colonial Phase (1897-1960)

THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: COLONIAL PHASE



Introduction: Forces of Change

When the French marched into Madagascar they entered from Majunga on the west coast and commenced their journey to Antananarivo, passing Ambohimanga en route, but leaving the village alone because of the strength of its fortifications and vehement opposition of the Tsimahafotsy. After the French took Antananarivo, they did eventually invade Ambohimanga and establish a military post there. As a result, army barracks and outbuildings were erected in and around the *rova* complex, a sacrilege to *fombandrazana*.[234] General Gallieni (1897-1905), Madagascar's first governor general, exerted the most influence over the hill in the Colonial Phase in that he decided to use Ambohimanga as a retreat from Antananarivo, spending most weekends in the Mahandry Rova. During these visits, Reverend Peill often visited him and reported on the area's appearance (Peill to Cousins, 24 November 1898; Peill to Cousins 11 February 1899).[235]

Gallieni affected the cultural landscape of Ambohimanga's *rova* complex most significantly in that he had the remains of the former monarchs transferred to Antananarivo. He destroyed their tombs and built a refectory with a cement floor on top of the sacred area, most likely to prevent the Tsimahafotsy from accessing the sacred soil. In addition, Gallieni had the *rova* complex renovated and generally modernized for his use. After Gallieni moved on, the area was allowed to fall into a state of disrepair, despite being classified as an historic site on 8 February 1939, during Coppet's term as Governor-General.

The Fortifications and Royal Compound

During the Colonial Phase the fosse system was also changed. The original fosse created by Andrianjaka was partially filled in on its northern and western sides by the French to make a tarred road, which led from Ambatomitsangana to the *rova* complex. Despite this alteration, the rest of Ambohimanga's fosses were largely ignored and allowed to fall into a state of disrepair (Decary 1954:60). The earthen walls surrounding Ambohimanga existed until at least 1935, when Faurec observed them (Faurec 1935:8); now they have disappeared completely.

The irrigation system established during Andrianampoinimerina's reign, consisting of drains leading from the fosses to the Tsimahafotsy's fields, continued to be used during the Colonial Phase. Agriculture remained all-pervasive and a strength of the Merina, especially *rizculture*, and the Tsimahafotsy thus remained largely self-sufficient. The drains no longer funneled water into Amparihy since the interior fosse was filled in. As a result, Amparihy became a stagnant and dirty pond, no longer suitable for drinking water.[236]

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234 "Ambohimanga 1898." Photograph 7, Album 7. Géographique et Hydrographique Nationale (FTM) Archives. Antantananarivo, Madagascar.

235 LMS-IL, box 28

236 Instead, drinking water was obtainable directly from the springs feeding the reservoir.

As mentioned above, Ambohimanga's exterior gates were resurrected briefly during the French invasion (1895), when they were used to protect the sacred capital against French occupation. But, shortly after the take-over was successful at Antananarivo, the French entered Ambohimanga. Anna Peill recorded that the barriers had broken down completely at Ambohimanga (Peill n.d.:9). She was referring to the gate's function as a boundary to *fady*, barring Europeans from entry. Thus, in 1896, Europeans were officially allowed into the *rova* complex, although they were met with great animosity (1 March 1896, in the Chronicle of the LMS). In fact, "it was thought that the entry into Ambohimanga - the sacred town that had been for so many years carefully guarded from 'pollution' by Europeans - would be avenged by the offended ancestors or by the idols" (LMS(C) 1896:69). Gautier (1897) reported that when the military post was put at Ambohimanga, the Tsimahafotsy were convinced that Andrianampoinimerina, their sacred ancestor, would attack the soldiers with fevers (Gautier 1897:104).

After the Merina monarchy was abolished, and Gallieni commenced to use Ambohimanga as a retreat, he made efforts to conserve only the *rova* complex at the top of the hill. Hence, the fortifications were largely ignored and allowed to fall into ruin (Stratton 1965:217). Raharijaona reported that more than one stone disc had disappeared completely in the brush (Raharijaona 1931:112). In 1933 Chirgwin noted that "The gateways still stand, but some of them are so overgrown by tropical vegetation that they were not easy to find. He noted that the French had tried to repair the ruins, "*Mais d'une façon maladroite et déplorable au point de vue historique*" (Camo 1924; Raharijaona 1931:121). This renovation effort may explain the addition of the newer stone discs, out of proportion to the original gates, seen at Amboara and Andakana.



From photographic and written evidence, we can ascertain that Ambatomitsangana was also renovated during the Colonial Phase. A circular concrete guard shelter was added to the top of the gate, and the dilapidated wooden door was re-hung (*left*).[237] The original stone disc was also restored to its spot. "*Depuis longtemps la pierre ronde de fermeture: immense disque de granit gris, à disparu en des pavages utilitaires, mais elle à toujours grande air avec le mystère de ce trou noir qu'il faut*



237 Le Monde, Issue 31. March 1926. Photo number 8Fi1(168). Archives Nationales. Aix-en-Provence, France.

franchir" (Manhes 1924:16). This explains the absence of the stone disc in the photo of 1898 (*above right*).[238] Illustrative evidence suggests that the stairs were added to the interior side of Ambatomitsangana sometime after the mid-1930's, as neither Delmas (1924) nor Faurec (1935) show them in their drawings.

Significantly, the French destroyed Abavahadimasina, the sacred western gate, when they moved into Ambohimanga (*left*). As described in Chapter Three, the earth from the royal tombs in Mahandry fuelled the Menalamba revolt, just as it fuelled Ramenjana. When access to the royal tombs was denied, Ambavahadimasina, constructed with earth from the tombs, was used. Because the substance was considered so powerful and effectively served to fuel the opposition, the French had the gate removed entirely. Yet, when the French destroyed the gate, the earth around it took on sacred qualities for the Tsimahafotsy and continued to be collected by *zanadrano* for ritual purposes and to make into amulets, as it is today. Ambavahaditsiombiomby, the naturally-formed northern gate, remained in *situ* and unchanged, largely ignored by the French.



The Gates' Functions as Barriers to *Fady*

The fortifications no longer functioned to guard against *fady*. Europeans, as well as pork, onions and other offending substances, were allowed inside Ambohimanga as a result of the French occupation. However, traditional rules of the ancestors remained latent in the population and were respected by them. The *rovas* at the top of Ambohimanga were still the exclusive domain of the ruler, but now they belonged to the colonial governors instead of the Merina monarchy. As we can see from photographic evidence, no walls existed at Bevato or Nanjakana, but Mahandry's thick wall and two stone entrance-ways to the north and west remained unchanged during the Colonial Phase (Camo 1924:3). The large brass and small iron cannons also continued to exist there. During his first visit to Ambohimanga, Gallieni was specifically shown the twelve gauge bronze cannon, manufactured for Queen Ranavalona I by Jean Laborde, which was placed on a cart in the courtyard of Mahandry (*left*). The small iron cannon that belonged to Andrianampoinimerina was not mentioned, but it most likely existed there, as it does today.



238 "Porte 1898." Photograph number 18, Album 7. Géographique et Hydrographique Nationale (FTM). Antananarivo, Madagascar.

Architecture

Royal Architecture

As discussed above, Gallieni had the Mahandry area renovated for his use when in Ambohimanga[239] (Peill to Cousins 24 November 1898; 5 December 1899; November 1901) and it therefore remained essentially preserved.[240] Subsequently, during the later Colonial Phase, when the area was no longer used by the French, the Mahandry Rova was subject to "*tristesse* and abandon" (Raharijaona 1931:111). Evidently, Merina cultural heritage was not a focus of the French government, despite the *rova* complex having been declared an historic site in 1939 (1935:52).

The Mahandry Rova

Mahandry

Mahandry was first documented by a European in 1896, a high functionary writing to Grosclaude, but the threshold of this house was *fady* to him. Although he was not allowed to view the interior of the former royal residence, he offered interesting information regarding the exterior. Europeans were first allowed inside the structure sometime between 1898 and 1926 when "Le Monde Coloniale Illustré" documented Mahandry's interior. This information was invaluable for helping me trace the evolution of the building during the Colonial Phase.

There were several changes made to the house at this time. First, a window was added to Mahandry's north wall, probably to let light inside when the structure became an official monument (*left*).[241] Grosclaude noticed how dark the interior of Mahandry was in 1898. Manhes (1924) also noticed this, which suggests that there was no window prior to 1924. Later authors do not describe Mahandry as being dark. Although the window was first mentioned in the literature in 1976, it was most likely added before this, to provide light when the house was declared a museum for selected guests in 1939. Also, although its form is similar to windows built in other residences during the Late Kaloy period, iron hinges allow it to swing open and closed, whereas a window in a Late Kaloy residence would have been opened and closed by sliding the plank of wood in two grooves mounted at its top and bottom, as discussed in Chapter Five. Also, the placement of the window is against custom. It is located on the north wall rather than on the west, perhaps to conserve the original integrity of Mahandry's façade or, more likely, because of Colonial ignorance of Merina

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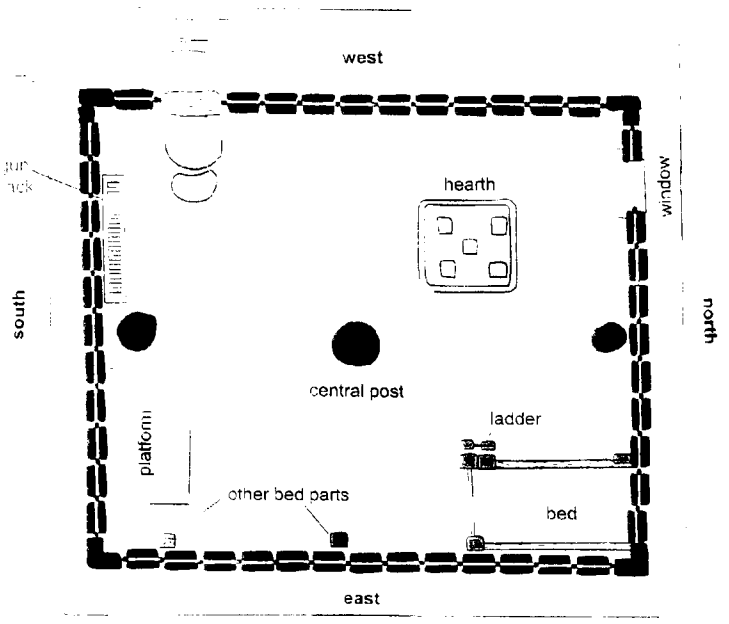
239 LMS-IL, box 29

240 LMS-IL, box 28. The Journal Officiel (12 April 1898, "Le voyage du Goveneur General," issue 234: 1713) reported that certain parts of the rova were in excellent state. "*Bien qu'elle soit construite sans aucune préoccupation de style, elle n'en présente pas moins un cachet tout spécial suffisant pour justifier les travaux de réparation et d'entretien néceessaires pour en assurer la conservation.*"

241 Drawing courtesy of Dr. Henry Wright, University of Michigan.

directional rules and tradition. A large marble plaque was added to the exterior western wall of Mahandry by the Académie Malgache, which reads: "*Ici a veçu et regne le grande roi Andrianampoinimerina 1788-1810*" in French and Malagasy, an unsympathetic Colonial addition to the humble building.[242]



Except for fixed features, such as the hearth and Andrianampoinimerina's bed in the northeast corner, the interior of Mahandry was altered in the Colonial Phase, and was no longer set up strictly according to astrological rules (*vintana*), as discussed in Chapter Five. Most change occurred when it was converted to a museum in 1939 (*left*). At this time, the high platform mounted in the southeast corner was taken down so that it rested closer to the floor, perhaps because its supports became unsafe. Two other beds which were stored in Mahandry (Le Monde 1926:202; Chirgwin 1933:131) were dismantled to make the three long rows of shelves now lining the northern and eastern walls. A variety of material culture from the Late Kaloy Phase was placed on the shelves. In 1933 these included mat cutting instruments, *fanaovaniro* (lamps using a wick and fat), an *antsiva*, the conch shell used to call *kabary*, a cup of round polished stones used as bullets, and a selection of earthenware covered with a graphite glaze (Oliver 1886:87).

Filaminia

Gallieni considered Filaminia the only "habitable" construction in the *rova* complex, and the building was consequently renovated for his use (Peill to Cousins, 24 November 1898).[243] Much of the furniture used by Gallieni belonged to the former Queens. Thus, except for minor repairs, and the removal of some items that Gallieni did not favour, Filaminia would have remained much the same as when used by Ranavalona II and III. The layout of the building also remained consistent during the Colonial Phase, the ground floor serving as a reception room and the first floor continuing to function as private apartments.[244] After Gallieni ceased to use Filaminia as a retreat, it was largely disused and fell into disrepair, although there was an occasional Colonial *fête* held in the building.

During the later Colonial Phase, several eyewitnesses observed that the silk wallpaper on the ground floor had become faded and torn, the chairs showed wear and the mirrors had tarnished. In addition to general decay,

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242 The plaque was first mentioned in the literature in 1931, by Frenee.

243 LMS-IL, box 28

244 Journal Officiel, 12 April 1998, "*Le voyage du Governeur General*," issue 234

since 1946 when Chapman noted that Filaminia was "furnished in Victorian style with heavy furniture, antimacassars, crystal chandeliers, Turkish carpets, and elaborately patterned wallpaper" (Chapman 1946:39), much of the furniture and many of the decorative objects disappeared. A good portion of original furnishings were sold at an auction held in 1897. Some of the prices asked by the French government remain stuck to the bottom of the unsold objects, still housed in Filaminia. Other items were most likely stolen over time.

Tranofitaratra

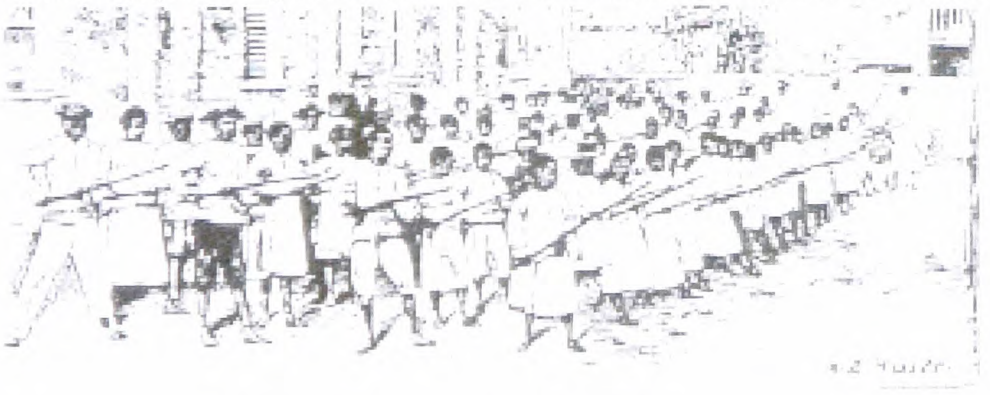
During the Colonial Phase the glass kiosk attached to Filaminia may have continued to serve as a dining room,



as it did during the Fiadanana Phase, although from photographs it appears that Gallieni and his guests often dined outdoors (*left*).[245] The ground floor served as a guestroom and/or office. A telephone was installed during the early Colonial Phase (see 2 November 1899, Peill to Cousins) and still exists in *situ*. Later in the Colonial Phase, when the Mahandry Rova was opened to the public, the ground floor served as a guard post (Guide Bleu 1955). After the French government ceased to use the *rova* as a weekend retreat, Tranofitaratra, like Mahandry and Filaminia, was neglected and fell into disrepair. In 1924 Manhes noted that the rose silk blinds had yellowed in the sun (1924:18). Forty years later, Stratton reported that the same "looped and fringed silken draperies" hung in shreds (Stratton 1965:217).

Fidasiana

Gallieni altered the Fidasiana area quite significantly by removing features from the landscape (Journal Officiel 24 Feb. 1897). During his first visit to Fidasiana in December 1895, Peill noted that "the house of Fantaka



(Manatsara-lehibe) still stands overlooking the town, although it has long been used for other purposes (Peill, 31 December 1895).[246] This suggests that the idol's former residence remained to the west of Fidasiana, where it was placed by Ranavalona I, as the town centre was located in that direction in 1895. Any buildings surviving in the Bevato Rova, including Manatsara-lehibe, were soon demolished during colonial restoration efforts. At the same time, the *fahimasina* located to the southwest of

245 " Le General Pennequin sa Famille, son Ordonnance à Ambohimanga 1898." Photograph number 8Fi1(190). Archives Nationales. Aix-en-Provence, Paris.

246 LMS-IL, box 25. Manatsara-lehibe, being the most well-constructed, with doubled walls, could have survived the hurricane of 1893. Peill did not remark on any other buildings in the Bevato, suggesting that they no longer existed in 1895.

Fidasiana was filled in, and a French government school was built over it (Griffith to Cousins 27 Jan 1900;[247] Journal Officiel 17 February 1897:156) (*above*).[248] "*Cet enclos n'exist plus: il fut détruit en 1897, la fosse a boeufs fut comblée et l'ensemble nivele pour donner place a l'École Officielle*" (Jully 1898b:919-920), which Raharijaona observed in 1931 (Raharijaona 1931:127).[249] Gallieni left the sacred stone, low and high stages in *situ*. The fig tree, if still standing over the navel stone, was probably chopped down at this point, and the standing stone dedicated to Ratompobe would have been removed, since it served no purpose for the Colonial regime and does not exist today.

The Nanjakana Rova

The Nanjakana Rova was all but forgotten by sources during the Colonial Phase. As mentioned above, the structures at Nanjakana were first destroyed by fire during Ranavalona I's funeral ceremonies. After being largely rebuilt and added to by Rasoherina and Ranavalona II, the area was destroyed again, by the hurricane of 1893. That explains why Nanjakana and indeed all buildings outside the Mahandry's walls, except the well-made and reinforced Manatsara-lehibe in Bevato, are not mentioned by the first European eyewitnesses of Ambohimanga.

Tsimahafotsy Architecture

Below the royal complex were the residences of the townspeople, still organised according to their rank and *tanindrazana*. Ambohimanga's population declined during the Colonial Phase (Razafintsalama 1973) as a result of mass immigration to Antananarivo where job opportunities were being created in government for the Tsimahafotsy. Also, when the country became a French possession, the soldiers who were stationed there returned to their own districts, and the population consequently diminished (LMS 1901-1910). Chirgwin captured the situation in 1933: "In the old days, Ambohimanga was the capital of the Malagasy kingdom before Antananarivo. Now it is not merely decaying, it is decayed. It is almost a town of the dead" (Chirgwin 1933:130). Although the physical appearance of Ambohimanga declined during the Colonial Phase, the village retained its glory and significance. Some of its residents temporarily moved to Antananarivo during the Colonial Phase, but it is important to remember that the Tsimahafotsy dead were always returned to the family's *tanindrazana* at Ambohimanga.

Also, the town centre shifted from Ambatorangotina to just inside Ambatomitsangana during the Colonial Phase after the gate was opened to the public and a tarred main road following the path the French soldiers took from Majunga to Antananarivo was built by the French. In addition to population fluctuations and a shift in

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247 LMS-IL, box 29

248 Drawing from LMS(R) 1909

249 The French established state schools with no religious teaching. Two were built in the Ambohimanga district (Griffith to Cousins, 27 January 1900, LMS-IL, box 29). The Journal Officiel (17 Feb 1897, "Ambohimanga," p.156) also mentioned that a French school had opened in Ambohimanga. The LMS opposed the school: "An official school was opened in the town and strenuous efforts made to destroy our work" (LMS(R) 1909).

settlement from the top of the town towards Ambatomitsangana, the appearance of Ambohimanga was altered by the French aesthetic ushered in during the Colonial Phase, which focused on hygiene and functional



organisation. There was a certain standardisation established for buildings where flatter roofs and smooth white walls showed affinity with contemporary European modernism (Wright 1991:289). This house-style encouraged the newly introduced concrete (lime mixed with gravel) as a primary building material, and a new genre of "functional" architecture was born in Imerina (*left*). It is interesting to note that the houses often continued to be built following traditional directional principles, however, on a north-south axis with a door to the west and no openings to the east, towards the family tomb. A central post was sometimes conserved in these constructions, and several can be seen today in the town of Ambohimanga.

Tombs

Royal Tombs

The area of the royal tombs within the Mahandry Rova was altered dramatically in the Colonial Phase when Governor-General Gallieni decided to transfer the royal remains to Antananarivo, in an effort to quell the large scale Menalamba revolt (discussed in Chapter Three). The "sacred earth" from these tombs, where the founders of the Merina empire were buried, was considered to hold the power to fuel the revolutionary movement, just as it had for Ramenjana and other revolts during the Fiadanana Phase. Thus, "*Ambohimanga était reste un foyer d'intrigues et de complots*" (Gallieni 1908:128). The Tsimahafotsy "rebel chiefs" (*ombiassy*), regularly obtained *terre sainte* from the tombs of the monarchs for this purpose. Thus, the French saw moving the remains as a means by which to regain order and "conquer" Imerina ideologically.

Like most French authors, Oberlé asserted that the transfer of remains was made with sensitivity and dignity (Oberlé 1976:46), although some eyewitnesses suggested otherwise.[250] On 15 March 1897 the work commenced. First, the three large *tranomasina* were demolished that covered (from south to north) the "mothers and wives" of the sovereigns, Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Andriambelomasina, and Andrianampoinimerina, respectively. Only the most northern *tranomasina*, that of Queen Ranavalona I and II, was left standing (Oberlé 1976:51). Perhaps Gallieni felt that the Queen's tranomasina did not pose a threat as it was a sufficiently Europeanised construction.

Next, the Zanadralambo (the high ranking Tsimahafotsy *deme* that erected Mahandry's central post for Andrianampoinimerina) removed the soil and stone covering of the southernmost tomb, formerly belonging to

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250 Carol (1897) wrote about the transfer of remains in his diary, extracts of which were presented by Paillard (1922). Also, see the Journal Officiel, 20 march 1897, "*Transport a Tananarive des tombeaux d'Ambohimanga*."

Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, where the wives and mothers were buried. The nine skeletons wrapped in lambas fastened near the heads and feet were lifted out (Jully 1898:920; Callet 1974:597). Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Andriambelomasina were removed from the next tomb to the north. Then, Andrianampoinimerina was uncovered in his silver canoe. In the northernmost tomb the remains of Ranavalona I and Ranavalona II were retrieved from Ranavalona I's enormous silver casket, without damaging the *tranomasina*.

The *lambas* the bodies were wrapped in were not opened (Carol 1897:164), and each packet was simply recovered in a new *lamba*. Next, *jakys* (heavy scarlet sheets reserved for royalty) were wrapped around each of the corpses and they were transported to a tent where they were kept overnight, lined up as they were still in their tombs, with their heads to the east, as per tradition.

After the bodies were exhumed, two Zanakandriamtondra (or Zanadahy), the only group allowed by custom to touch the royal relics (Callet 1974:812), removed all the material objects from the tombs. However, they had to enlist "impure hands" in order to lift the heavy silver casket of Ranavalona I. Also, Mr. Carol, a European, confessed to have handled one of the many ancient *lamba* of Andrianampoinimerina (Carol 1897:165), which was considered *fady*. All of the items were brought out, and more than five hundred objects found in the tombs at Ambohimanga were transported to Antananarivo, where they constituted the first collection of the historical museum that was created there on this occasion. However, it is important to note that those objects too deteriorated or without interest, for example several troubadour time pieces, tools and *lambas*, were not, as reported in the "Journal Officiel" (20 March 1897), "*pieusement réintegres dans les tombeaus, en présence de deux zanadahy, gens de la caste ayant pour charge héréditaire d'entretenir le mobilier des sepulchures royales*,"[251] but were actually placed in a room belonging to the French Lieutenant Commander of the military post, where in 1897 Carol imagined they still were (cited in Grosclaude 1898).

The next day, each corpse was placed on a funeral bier and covered again with a scarlet *jaky*. Andrianampoinimerina was put on his proper bier, one of the most precious relics found in his tomb, which was "profaned" by the non-Zanadahy enlisted to lift it out. The silver caskets belonging to Andrianampoinimerina and the Merina Queens were also each placed on a bier and covered with scarlet *jaky*. The convoy assembled at Fidasiana and withdrew, led by the biers, followed by a band from Antananarivo, the Zanadahy responsible for the relics, the soldiers and then a crowd of approximately two thousand people. The procession would have resembled a large-scale *famadihana*, or funeral procession.

There were two stops en route to Antananarivo. First, the Queen's silver casket proved to be too heavy and the bearers were forced to dismantle its panels and divide the charge. Also, at Ilafy, there was a stop to collect two other bodies which had been exhumed from the *rova* there: Radama II, who had been strangled (and

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251 Journal Officiel, 20 March 1897, "*Transport a Tananarive des tombeaux d'Ambohimanga.*"

therefore not allowed to be buried in his *tanindrazana* as per custom), and the princess Razanadravalona, chosen by Ranavalona II to succeed her, but who died prematurely of unknown causes (Carol 1897:167).

The *cortège* arrived in Antananarivo pointedly accompanied by a Colonial band's renditions of "La Marseillaise," the French national anthem (Carol 1897:167). Upon reaching the Antananarivo Rova, the bodies were kept for one night in the large reception room of Manjakamiadana (the Queen's palace), placed side by side with their heads turned towards the east. The next day, the Zanadralambo and Zanadahy took office once again to re-inter the bodies. Andrianampoinimerina was put in the tomb of his son Radama I, along with Radama II. The Queen's silver casket was reconstructed, received the two Ranavalona, and was placed in Rasoherina's vast tomb. The other bodies of the mothers and wives of the former sovereigns were buried with the remains of Antananarivo's earlier monarchs, including Andrianjaka, in the seven *cases-en-file*. Thus, Gallieni's aim seemed to be achieved, to consolidate all Merina royal power in Antananarivo, now considered the domain of the French (Gallieni 1908:128).

After the demolition of the three *tranomasina* at Mahandry, one building with a concrete base, the dimension of these three structures, was constructed in their place, entirely covering the tombs and the sacred earth on top of them. It served as a refectory for the army stationed at Ambohimanga (Raharijaona 1954).[252] In 1954, this building was removed and beneath it new relics were discovered in Andrianampoinimerina's former tomb. These consisted of textiles (*lamba-mena,* "red lambas"), some metal objects (axes and spears), and the troubadour time-pieces, "which seem to have been forgotten in 1897" (ibid.; see Oberlé 1974:46). These objects were not, in fact, left behind because of the rapidity with which the operation in 1897 was executed; the reason postulated by Raharijaona (1954). Rather, the objects that were deemed worthless during the 1897 excavation were placed in a room belonging to the Lieutenant Commander of the French post, as revealed by Carol (1897) and must have been haphazardly put back in the tombs after the *cortege* left Ambohimanga for Antananarivo.

The *lamba-mena*, surviving a century and a half, were remarkably well conserved. Although the once vibrant red had faded to brown, the fabric was solid. The axes and spears also remained in good condition. This is because the royal tomb's original construction, using Amboara wood with a bed of carbon, protected objects from humidity and decay. Also, the concrete floor of the refectory/kitchen protected the objects from moisture, in the absence of their *tranomasina* that originally served this purpose. The newly found objects were provisionally placed in the Queen's *tranomasina*, which had escaped destruction in 1897.

Besides Raharijaona's article, there is no further documentation about the objects found in the 1954 excavation of the royal tombs. It is likely that many of these items were incorporated into the collection of

252 A thatched kitchen structure was built in the former queen's garden, as seen in Faurec's drawing (1935).

material culture displayed in Mahandry, as discussed above.[253] The discovery of the objects in 1954 suggests that there could be other items forgotten or rejected in the course of transferring the remains in 1897, which have yet to be excavated from the tombs.

Andrianjazanavalona's Tomb

Below Mahandry in Fidasiana, Andrianjazanavalona's tomb, located behind the low stage since Ranavalona I had it moved there in the mid-nineteenth century, would have been largely ignored during the Colonial Phase. Its *tranomanara* had probably deteriorated by this time and it was most likely not recognised as a tomb by the French. The Andriamasinavalona tomb below Fidasiana served during periods of revolution as a *douany*, a place where *ombiassy* could access the Merina ancestors for guidance, via *tromba*, as discussed in Chapter Three.

Tsimahafotsy Tombs

Although some of the Tsimahafotsy's houses were deserted by the Colonial Phase, the dead continued to be brought back to Ambohimanga to be buried in their *tanindrazana*. In contrast to the relatively unkempt appearance of many houses in Ambohimanga at this time, tombs continued to be large, strong, solid and well cared for.

As with housing, modes of funerary construction paralleled technological and stylistic evolution in Imerina. Although the tomb's form did not change in the Colonial Phase - they were built in the same pyramidal style characteristic of the Fiadanana Phase - concrete was added to the materials used for tomb construction. This provided an economical and practical alternative to the stone-dragging practices. Also, some stone tombs were covered with a layer of concrete, to reinforce them and ensure their impermeability to the elements. Despite changes in building material, the spatial layout of these tombs, with a door to the west and shelves for the bodies, remained true to tradition.



Because many residents of Ambohimanga lived away from the village during the Colonial Phase, they faced the possibility that bodies would be lost and never returned to their

253 In addition, I located one *lamba-mena* from the tombs, still in good condition although its colour had changed from red to brown, stored in the black walnut dresser on the first floor of Filaminia. Oliver (1886) noted that "the silk, called *landy*, is thick, without brilliancy, but extremely strong, and serves to weave a cloth of remarkable durability (Oliver 1886:82). Dr.Vinson (cited in Oliver 1886), reported that pieces of this silk when exhumed from the graves where they had been for centuries "have lost nothing of their firmness."

(Harry 1939:107). Gallieni, on his first visit to Ambohimanga in 1897, observed the nursery near Amparihy where he had instructed these exotic species to be cultivated.

The Stages

Both the high and low stage also remained in *situ* during the Colonial Phase. The high stage was not used for oratory; however, Gallieni did use the Low Stage for this purpose. Vidal, Couant and Razafimahefa chronicled Gallieni's visits to Ambohimanga in an official capacity, and many of these involved a *kabary* at Fidasiana, given from this stage.[256] As mentioned in Chapter Three, *kabary* was Gallieni's preferred method of communication, in accordance with *tâche d'huile*. However, we also know that because the governor's words were not embellished by superior *hasina*, they were largely ineffective.

Ambohimanga's fourth "stage," Ambatorangotina, changed little in form during the Colonial period. Faurec noted its red clay balustrade and fig tree still present in 1933. The gate at Ambatorangotina also remained during the Colonial Phase (noted by the "Journal Officiel" during Gallieni's visit in 1897). Although it had lost its function as a tribunal (most cases were tried in Antananarivo), the area remained a place from where *kabary* were disseminated to the twelve hills of Imerina. From Ambatorangotina, Colonial decrees would be relayed to governors indigènes, as Gallieni adopted this traditional form of Late Kaloy communication for his regime.

Ambatomiantendro

During the Colonial Phase, the rock at Ambatomiantendro remained an important feature, a place where the governor-generals and their visitors would have enjoyed the far-reaching view over their newly acquired territory. It may have also retained its function as a guard post. If so, *fanorona* was no doubt played by the Merina guards stationed there. The kiosk built in the Late Kaloy Phase, destroyed during Ranavalona I's funeral fire, and probably renovated later in the Fiadanana Phase, was destroyed again by the hurricane of 1893. It was reconstructed once more in the Colonial Phase, which can be confirmed by the concrete found inside the structure. Trevis mentioned the kiosk in 1924. Faurec (1935) also mentioned it, suggesting that it survived until the mid-1930's.

Conclusion

In renewing the evolution of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape during the Colonial Phase, we can see that the face of Ambohimanga changed quite dramatically with the addition of the French themselves, their technology, building methods and aesthetics. However, if we look beneath the surface, there was actually continuity in the form, placement and function of structures. Although the French tried to destroy the Tsimahafotsy power base by violating *fady*, entering within the *rova* complex, destroying the royal tombs, the sacred gate of Andriamasinavalona, and banning Merina purification rituals, their efforts were ineffective, largely because of

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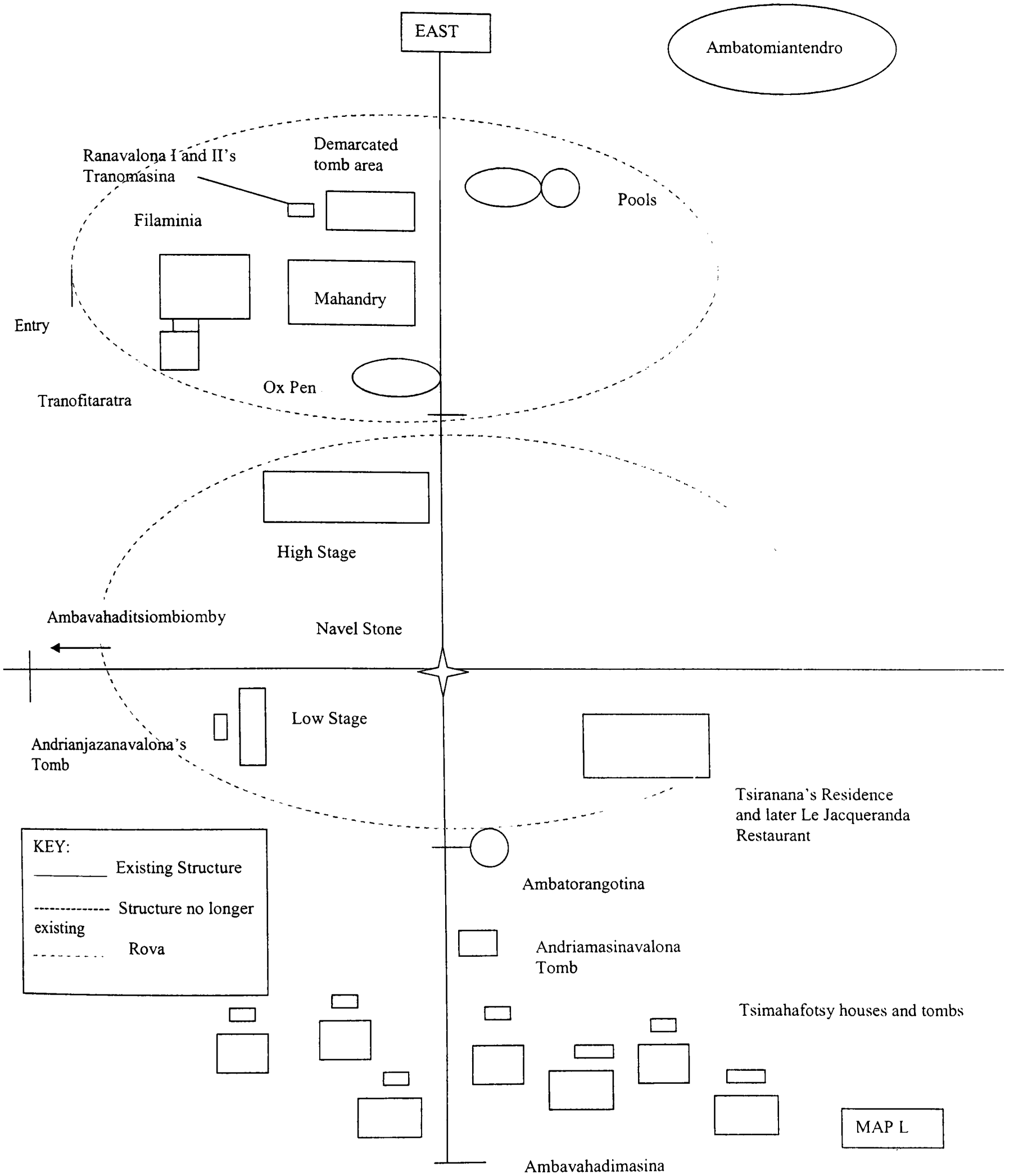
256 Journal Officiel, 12 April 1898, "*Le voyage du Governeur Général*," issue 234.

features in the cultural landscape which allowed the Tsimahafotsy to identify with their past or communicate with the royal ancestors. For example, when *zanadrano* were banned from the *rova* complex, sacred earth could be procured from the gate of Ambavahadimasina. When the gate was removed, the sacred substance could be collected directly from the site of the gate. Also, sacred water could be obtained directly from Amparihy. Further, the royal ancestors could be accessed via high-ranking Tsimahafotsy tombs, such as the Andriamasinavalona tomb at Ambatorangotina. As a result, *fandroana* and *alakaosy* could take place consistently, albeit on a small scale, overseen by *ombiassy.* Thus, Tsimahafotsy culture remained strong in the face of great potential for change and destruction of the Tsimahafotsy collective self-image.

Chapter Eight: The Modern Phase (1960-Present)

THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: MODERN PHASE



Introduction: Forces of Change

Ambohimanga has been conserved quite well during the Modern Phase primarily because it has become a shrine for the *zanadrano* and a tourist attraction. At the beginning of the Modern Phase, the first Malagasy President, Philibert Tsirananana, used Ambohimanga as a weekend retreat. In 1960, when freedom of religious practice was declared, *zanadrano* flocked to the *rova* complex in increasing numbers. At this time, all features that were sacred to the ancestors became shrines, *douany*, where *zanadrano* would openly practice *tromba* and sacrifice.



Ambohimanga has been affected by several renovations in an effort to make it more "tourist-friendly," but the influence of the *zanadrano* is strong; they use the site as a spiritual base, and tradition is strictly upheld. Madame Berthine, the "official" guardian of Andrianampoinimerina's spirit, an acclaimed *ombiassy*, is a prominent figure at the site and is consulted on all renovation projects. Conservation bodies, comprised of Ambohimanga's "elders" with the guidance of *ombiassy*, such as Madame Berthine (*right*), are responsible for the site's upkeep. Tourists are charged a small fee to enter the site, and are encouraged to hire a guide. Funds collected are used towards conservation efforts and to pay a chief security guard, Rajery (one of my primary informants), as well as several other day and night guards.

The Fortifications and Royal Compound



Since the Late Kaloy Phase there have been few cosmetic changes made to Ambohimanga's fosse system. However, over the years, the fosses have taken their toll on the landscape. Gullies, called *lavaka*, have formed mid-hillside, primarily as a result of the ditches and drains (*left*). Cutting the laterite and channelling water runoff set off tremendous erosion on the hillside below. According to Migliorini (1981), *lavaka* have erosion rates perhaps seven times the global average (cited in Wells and Andriamihaja 1997:44).[257]

Several of the drains leading from the fosses, traditionally used for

257 Cart tracks and cattle trails have also caused considerable erosion, as during the dry season the contraction of the soil causes natural soil cavities that are able to transport ground water at speed and thus enlarge by internal erosion until they cause the collapse of the overlying surface. This surface, when wet, is churned into mud, which is washed away in the next rainy season, creating a chute and pool structure. Removal of vegetation, overgrazing, slash and burn agriculture and setting grass fires to provide a green bite (regrowth forage) for cattle are additional causes of *lavaka* (Wells and Andriamihaja 1997:59-60).

field irrigation, have been resurrected. After independence, many Tsimahafotsy in government lost their high ranking positions and moved back to their *tanindrazana* and "traditional" lifestyle. Most residents of Ambohimanga once again practice subsistence farming, working the lands originally allocated to their *demes* and families by Andrianampoinimerina.



The external gates have continued to fall into disrepair throughout the Modern Phase, despite some renovation efforts. Over time, the guard shelters that most likely existed on all the external gates disappeared, except for the one at Ambatomitsangana, a concrete kiosk built by the French. Round wooden shelters, copying the French design at Ambatomitsangana, were added to the external gates during a restoration effort in 1984-5 (*left*). They consisted of wooden poles mounted in concrete, with thatched roofs. They quickly deteriorated and their remains can be seen on Amboara, Andakana, Ampitsaharana, and Andranomatsatso.

The main gate, Ambatomitsangana, was destroyed in 1997 as a result of heavy wind and rain and has recently been rebuilt using traditional methods. The gate functions as an icon of Ambohimanga, and is its most photographed feature. The internal gates exist in varying states of disrepair, and some are completely missing, namely Ambavahadimasina, Ambatorangotina and Andriamborona. Their former functions are no longer remembered by those I interviewed, except for the "original" gates of Ambavahaditsiombiomby and Ambavahadimasina, which are considered sacred. Most visitors know that Ambavahaditsiombiomby was used exclusively by the Merina monarch and that Andriamasinavalona was a sacred gate used by the Tsimahafotsy population. Even through Ambavahadimasina is entirely missing, *zanadrano* collect earth from the area where it stood, which is considered just as powerful as when Andrianampoinimerina built the gate using earth from the royal tombs to fix its stones together. The gate at Ambatorangotina has been removed to facilitate access to the *rova* complex, and the wide stone staircase leading up to it has recently been renovated, its stones fitted together with cement mortar.

The Mahandry Rova remains the most significant and best-preserved area in Ambohimanga's *rova* complex, as it has been continuously in use and therefore somewhat maintained. Since 1998, several renovations have taken place in an attempt to preserve and protect the sacred site. The exterior wall has recently been restored, cracks have been filled in, and the broken palisades replaced. In large sections of the wall, the egg and lime glaze remains in its original state, still glossy and impermeable to the rain, but where it has worn away it has not been replicated, and has been patched with matte plaster. Today, the large brass and small iron cannon

are positioned side by side, permanently mounted with cement on the wall overlooking Fidasiana, showing wear from their constant exposure to the elements.

The Nanjakana Rova is non-existent today except for a few archaeological remains consisting of walkways,



foundations and the hearths of some of its houses that were built in the Late Kaloy style. The area was never rebuilt after the 1893



hurricane and therefore its significance has been largely forgotten, except for the site of Nanjakana, the original house built by Andriambelomasina for his son. Only the outline of paving stones (*above right*) and the hearth (*above left*) remain to denote the house, and offerings are left there by *zanadrano*. The remains of Miandrafanjakana's foundation (to the east of the Mahandry Rova) can also be seen (*right*), although the area is not considered sacred.



Fidasiana

The Bevato Rova has also virtually disappeared after Manatsara-lehibe, the sacred fig tree, the *fahimasina*,



and perhaps Ratompobe's standing stone, were removed by the French. However, remnants of building foundations and bits of the original stone enclosure can still be seen. The sacred navel stone and root structure of the fig tree exist in the centre of the plaza. Both the high and low stage also remain, with their fig trees still in place, and the tomb of Andrianjazanavalona continues to be tucked behind the low stage to the north of the plaza. The "École Officiel" at the south end of the plaza was converted into President Tsirananana's weekend home in the 1960's. In the 1980's it was converted again, into a restaurant, Le Jacaranda, a purpose that it serves today (*left*).

Architecture

Royal Architecture

Mahandry

Although Fidasiana (the former Bevato Rova) and the Nanjakana Rova have no buildings remaining, those within the Mahandry Rova have been restored. Significantly, the refectory and kitchen structure erected by the French were removed from the tomb area by the late 1950's. Mahandry has recently undergone an extensive

restoration led by an *ombiassy,* Madame Berthine, Andrianampoinimerina's spirit guardian. Leaking roofs have been repaired, cement patched, and some wooden elements have been replaced with more permanent materials.

Mahandry was opened as a museum to the public in 1960 and in addition to objects placed on shelves around the building's interior described in Chapter Seven, material culture has also been fixed directly to the walls of Mahandry in an effort to display it. Tools, such as axes and wooden hammers, and weapons, such as spears, knives and shields, have been mounted on the western wall. An empty rifle rack remains on the southern wall, and iron tripods for cooking and a seven pronged fork, formerly used for grilling meat during the *fandroana* ritual and when making sacrifices to the ancestors at the hearth shrine to the east of the royal tombs (Callet 1974:812), have been hung next to it. There have been no official records kept, but it is likely that most of these objects were placed in Mahandry in 1939 when the site was declared a museum, and some may have been added in 1954 when the royal tombs were re-excavated. Although most of the objects on display would not have been kept in the King's dwelling originally, this material culture serves to educate the observer as to what types of objects would have accompanied the King in his day to day and ritual life.

Andrianampoinimerina's "throne," originally observed next to Mahandry's central post, is now missing; but the three legged stool used for his visitors and the King's *fanorona* board remain. Andrianampoinimerina's bed still exists in the northeast corner, as well as the storage platform in the southeast corner, although, as discussed in Chapter Seven, its legs have been removed. The central post itself has been altered in that some of its wood has been scraped away by the *zanadrano* who make amulets (*ody*) with the powerful material, but now a plastic shield deters this action. A list of *fady* items has been mounted on the post, which include the familiar onions, garlic, pig, as well as a new *fady*, smoking. Offerings are left on the five stone hearth to the northwest of the central post. Also, Mahandry's northeast corner remains a particularly sacred place, where *zanadrano* will go to show their respect to Andrianampoinimerina, often asking his permission to sacrifice within the *rova* complex.[258]

Filaminia

Filaminia and Tranofitaratra still stand proudly to the north of Mahandry. The last official event that took place in Filaminia was a dinner given for General Charles de Gaulle in 1959. This was held in the former reception room on the ground floor, giving way to a popular misconception that the ground floor always served as a dining room, as a large dining table was moved in for the function. The furnishings and other objects that remain in Filaminia continue to deteriorate, although measures are being taken to ensure their conservation. The black walnut Victorian bedroom set still exists in *situ*; along with a Venetian mirror, another gift from Queen Victoria, and an English clock which still stands on the walnut dresser. Photographs of the former queens have been added around the room for historical interest. The colour scheme of the bedspread,

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258 Also as a sign of respect, anyone entering the building is asked to remove their shoes (Callet 1974:191; personal observation).

armchair and covered curtain rails is purple, characteristic of the English monarchy. The adjoining room, which served as a dressing room for the queens, is now nearly bare, except for a washbasin and a standing towel rack. The lace curtains that once hung on the windows have been removed to the Victorian dresser. However, the room remains traditionally arranged, with the head of the bedstead to the north. On the ground floor the windows to the east remain blocked, in accordance with custom.

Tranofitaratra

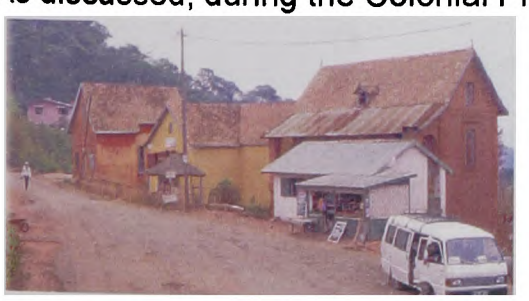
The bottom floor of Tranofitatra continues to function as a guard post, especially important since the area was opened to the public in 1960. Because of the material culture inside, it is now commonly believed that the glass room on the upper floor originally functioned as the queen's and prime minister's conference room when the court visited Ambohimanga. Inside the kiosk is a round wooden table, several chairs and a heavily decorated inkwell. The shredded rose-coloured blinds no longer hang over the windows. They have been put away in the Victorian dresser drawer in the bedroom, with the lace curtains which adorned the first floor of Filaminia. The table and chairs likely comprise the original dining room set, as they fit perfectly in the kiosk. But, the ornate inkwell would have probably belonged on the ground floor of the building, when it served as a reception room, or perhaps it adorned Gallieni's desk, which was set up there in the Colonial Phase, according to an informant. The etched windows that have broken have been replaced with clear glass. In 1996, the walkway linking the Filaminia with Tranofitaratra was deemed unsafe, and it was impossible to visit the small kiosk for a year. Although this has been repaired, the carrying capacity in these antique buildings is low and numbers of visitors have yet to be officially restricted.

Mananjara and Kelimalaza's Shrine

Leaving Mahandry by the northern gate, one is struck by the open sandy area with remnants of the stone foundation where Mananjara once stood. To the left is a newly-constructed guard house made of brick. Following the well-worn path up the hill, one is led to the rock where Kelimalaza was once worshipped, now serving as a shrine. Poultry and sometimes zebu are brought to the rock, where they are sacrificed in accordance with tradition. Pink sweets, coins and honey are also left for the "sovereign of the idols." Now, all sacrifices that do not take place at the navel stone in Fidasiana (see below) take place at Kelimalaza's shrine, as animal sacrifices are no longer allowed to be performed within the Mahandry Rova, as per government decree.

Tsimahafotsy Architecture

As discussed, during the Colonial Phase the location of Ambohimanga's commercial centre shifted from the top of the hill at Ambatorangotina further down the hill to the area just outside the gate of Ambatomitsangana, where it was situated on the main road to Antananarivo (*left*). As a result of Ambohimanga being opened to *vazaha* in 1895, most shops moved inside the fortifications, near Ambatomitsangana, and a paved road has been built around the gate,



which leads up to the *rova* complex. The area of the "new town centre" now serves as the commercial hub of Ambohimanga.

The population of Ambohimanga regained its strength in the Modern Phase (Razafintsalama 1973). But, although there has been a return to subsistence agriculture, some of the residents of Ambohimanga continue to work in Antananarivo, a trend initiated in the Colonial Phase. They commute by minibus (*taxi-be*), which shuttles them back and forth from the main gate, Ambatomitsangana. *Taxi-be* also bring an increasing number of tourists, both domestic and foreign, to the town. In 1993 these numbered 5,956 throughout the year. In 1997 their numbers increased dramatically to 29,147.[259]

To visitors, the town of Ambohimanga projects a mixture of historic and modern images. There are no



traditional wooden houses left from the Late Kaloy Phase and few from the early Fiadanana Phase, but brick buildings from the second half of the nineteenth century are numerous. In fact, they continue to be constructed by middle class Tsimahafotsy, using a combination of cooked and dried brick to emulate the "Pearse-model" (*left*). Poorer resident's habitations are smaller. They continue to use only sun-dried brick, and follow the Late Kaloy model. Construction methods for both styles have remained largely the same as in the late nineteenth century. However, Colonial-style concrete houses and shops, often brightly painted, with metal roofs, are becoming increasingly popular. Although somewhat impractical for the climate, many wealthier Merina prefer a concrete foundation to stone, and a metal roof instead of thatch, wooden or clay shingles. Walls may be manufactured, using concrete breeze-blocks. Sometimes furnishings include exotic trinkets collected from the world outside Madagascar.

As a result of this eclectic mix of house style and the fact that repairs are made by patching instead of



replacement, that they are built over a long period of time (as materials and labour can be afforded by the proprietor), and that custom dictates that ancestors' work should never be destroyed, Ambohimanga projects a rather cluttered, shabby appearance (*left*). However, underlying it, there is still a profound sense of order. Houses continue to conform to the *vintana* system; they almost always lie on a north-south axis, with doorways to the west and no openings towards the family tomb. An *ombiassy* is often still consulted when commencing house building in order to determine the correct placement of the house in the landscape and the correct day on which to begin building. Approximately half of individuals I interviewed,

259 Greater numbers of zanadrano visiting the area have contributed significantly to this figure.

including the Mayor of Ambohimanga, admitted to having visited an *ombiassy* for this purpose. Most importantly, houses continue to be organised according to the *tanindrazana* assigned the family during the Late Kaloy Phase, top down from the Mahandry Rova in order of social rank.

Tombs

Royal Tombs

Despite the removal of the royal remains from The Mahandry Rova during the Colonial Phase, the tomb area continues to be considered the most important place in the *rova* complex, according to all Merina I interviewed during the participatory mapping exercise. A rectangular grassy area demarcated by a red and white picket fence, the Queen's *tranomasina* and Andrianampoinimerina's "male stone," are all that signify the tombs today (*left*). *Zanadrano* regularly leave offerings at the stone in exchange for bits of the still-sacred earth.





The sacred stone and hearth structure located behind the tomb area to the east is used for making sacrifices to the royal ancestors (*right*). As mentioned above, the government has stipulated that no animals can be killed within the Mahandry Rova because of the offence it might cause to tourists. Thus, the animals are slain at Fidasiana, or at Kelimalaza's rock, outside Mahandry's walls. Blood libations are then deposited at the established *douany* within Mahandry.



Although animals are no longer kept within it, the *fahimasina* created by Ranavalona I to the southwest of the Mahandry Rova is considered sacred. Offerings are sometimes left on the crib inside the structure to honour the royal zebu (inferior *hasina*) that were kept there (*left*). In an effort to conserve this feature, foliage has been cut back and the rotting wooden balustrade has recently been replaced by a metal one.



The Tombs of Andrianjazanavalona and the Andriamasinavalona

Just below Mahandry, in Fidasiana, Andrianjazanavalona's tomb remains in *situ* to the north of the plaza, behind the low stage (*right*). Now, with a revival of the "cult of the ancestors," Andrianjazanavalona's tomb is maintained and revered, but the *tranomasina* that once adorned the tomb has not been rebuilt. Although

zanadrano are often unsure who is buried inside the tomb, offerings are left to this ancestor, whose importance is indicated by his grave's proximity to the royal tombs.

The Andriamasinavalona tomb, now reinforced with a layer of concrete, can still be seen to the west of Ambatorangotina, where it was moved during Ranavalona I's reign. Today it is widely known that the tomb belongs to the "*Chefs des Tsimahafotsy*." It is respected and cared for by the family and community but no longer used as a medium for contacting the royal ancestors now that *zanadrano* can visit the royal tombs in the Mahandry Rova freely.

Tsimahafotsy Tombs



Beneath the Andriamasinavalona tomb are the tombs of the Tsimahafotsy, who are still considered noble, as declared by Andrianampoinimerina. The family tomb remains extremely important in the life of the Tsimahafotsy. All families have a tomb, almost all of which are topped with *tranomanara* to denote the family's noble status (*left*). In Ambohimanga, the family tomb remains on the particular piece of land originally allocated to the *deme* by Andrianampoinimerina, its *tanindrazana*, and *famadihana* is practised regularly in an effort to keep the descent group united. Also, at least annually, families commune with food and drink and general festivity, tidying the graves of their ancestors. Further, large standing *vatolahy* continue to be erected next to the tombs in both stone and concrete, in an effort to attract lost spirits back to the family tomb.

Other Significant Features within the Fortifications

Amparihy and other Water Sources

The water sources, forest and rocks sacred to the Tsimahafotsy's ancestors remain so today and have been declared *douany*. The pools at Mahandry are no longer filled from Amparihy, yet the rain water that collects in them is still sacred and is used during Fandroana and other blessing ceremonies. *Zanadrano* collect the water from the pools to bathe in when ill, to bless those who partake in *tromba* ceremonies and to purify the animals that are sacrificed. In exchange for the water, *zanadrano* make offerings on three small standing stones erected at the head of the pools, to the north of them, as a shrine. Honey, wax candles, zebu and goose fat can be seen. The small shrine at the head of the pools is another one of the places where blood libations are left to the ancestors when an animal is sacrificed at Fidasiana or at Kelimalaza's stone.





Other significant naturally-occurring water sources were made into official *douany* after 1960. Today the springs that feed Amparihy, the sacred reservoir, are still used for drinking water, to supplement the pumps that often do not work at the top of the town (*above left*). Andranomanento, the reservoir Andrianampoinimerina created within the fortifications near the top of the hill, has been sheltered with a small cement house painted white with red detailing (red and white colour most of the *douany* in Imerina) (*above right*). The shrine was built by *zanadrano* who regularly visit the site to take sacred healing water from the spring. Also, offerings are left to the Vazimba spirits on the rocks next to Andranomboahangy, a spring that continues to be used by the infirmed (such as this blind man, *right*), its original intention set out by Andrianampoinimerina.



The Sacred Forest

The forest surrounding Ambohimanga within its fortifications remains sacred, thought to be inhabited by ancestral spirits. That is why Ambohimanga continues to be wooded, one of the last remaining stands of primary forest in Madagascar.[260] However, according to Rakotoarisoa (1997) and personal observation, the initial vegetation is receding. The indigenous forest of Ambohimanga and its ground cover, once rich in medicinal plants, has been largely taken over by the exotic species introduced by the French, namely Jacaranda and Eucalyptus. The Eucalyptus are especially damaging, leaching the soil of important nutrients, which starves other plant types. Thus, the introduced species have crowded out native plants that, if they still existed, would form a veritable botanical museum at Ambohimanga, as well as curtail *lavaka* formation. Fortunately, research is currently being undertaken as to which trees would be best for reforesting Ambohimanga and the surrounding hills, to find a mutually beneficial solution for both nature and culture (Kawamata, McCutcheon, Kikawa and Razafindratsira 1999).

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260 Only fifteen percent of original forest cover remains in Madagascar ("Minor Miracles," BBC Radio 4, 28 February 1996).



The project aims to remove exotic species and restore indigenous species to the forest. "Native trees are more desirable ecologically, and some produce valuable wood and/or permit a natural dense undergrowth" (Wells and Adriamihaja 1997:70). When asked what trees the residents of Ambohimanga would like to see planted there, the unanimous response to my question was "*plantes originales*." These were named by most as being Amontana, Aviavy and Amboara, along with a plethora of medicinal plants. The French Colonial nursery near Lake Amparihy has been resurrected for this purpose (*left*). As a result of efforts to reforest Ambohimanga with original species, the forest's ecosystem will hopefully recover and the forest will be conserved. Also, many of the shrines within the forest (Callet 1974:580), including Ambatonsakalava, have been preserved as *duoany*, and it is widely believed that the ancestral presence in the forest will protect it for future generations.

The Navel Stone

The navel stone in Fidasiana was considered by my informants to be the second most important feature in the *rova* complex, after the tombs in the Mahandry Rova. It is located in the centre of the plaza and is unmarked except for the sacrifices left upon it for the ancestors. Many of its former functions have been resurrected and it is considered *fady* for anyone except high-ranking *ombiassy* to step on the stone.

With the resurgence of public observance of tradition, zebu, as well as fowl, are once again slain on the sacred stone at Fidasiana. In addition to offerings left at the royal tombs within the Mahandry Rova, blood libations from sacrifice are donated at all locations deemed sacred within the *rova* complex by the *zanadrano*, including the pool-shrine and the sacred rock and hearth behind the tombs. Offerings are also left at Ambatomiantendro, at the summit of the hill, and usually at Kelimalaza's stone to the northeast of the Mahandry Rova. After making the sacrifice, the skull of the animal is often left on a Jacaranda tree near the sacred stone in lieu of the sacred fig tree which once stood there (*right*).



Interestingly, the national idols, resurrected after their apparent destruction at the sacred stone during Ranavalona II's reign, are again venerated there during a week-long *alakaosy* event celebrated every October (see Callet 1974:208,222). The event serves as an occasion to sanctify and fortify the *sampy*, as they are thought to weaken in strength over time. Like *fandroana* for humans, the purification bath for idols was also a practice brought with the Indonesian immigrants from their homeland and practiced continually, either publicly or privately, ever since.

The *sampy* continue to be kept by *ombiassy* who function as "idol keepers," much the same as they had been cared for during the Late Kaloy Phase. These guardians reside at areas sacred to the Merina ancestors, often close to Ambohimanga, and *zanadrano* make pilgrimages to these sacred sites to worship the idols. During *alakaosy,* the talismans are brought to Ambohimanga by their guardians. They are put in a basket on top of the idol-keeper's head. Various benedictions are recited, asking the ancestors to renew the *sampy*'s strength, and sacred water from Amparihy mixed with honey is put in the basket. After they are removed from the bath, the *sampy* are tested by various means, often quite violently, to gauge their effectiveness. This is a frightening time for many of the guards at the *rova* complex because the idols are thought to contain so much power. Thus, the entrance to the complex is left open and unguarded during *alakaosy.*

In addition to generalised sacrifice and the navel stone's role as a venue for talismans renewal, *fandroana* celebrations have been re-established at the stone. From 8-9 March 1994, at the new moon of the new year (Alahamady), *fandroana* was officially celebrated in Ambohimanga for the first time since it was abolished by General Gallieni during the Colonial Phase. The event was inspired and organised as part of a "cultural revitalisation project" by the Ministry of Culture.

Jacques-Yves Cousteau and Francois Sarano (1995) witnessed the ceremony, attended by about 5000 persons. After removing their shoes at the gate, *zanadrano* processed thorough Ambatomitsangana dressed in red and white, the royal Merina colours, singing and dancing behind musicians, led by *ombiassy* who would officiate at the event in place of the monarch, and two zebu. The procession regrouped at the top of the hill near Ambatorangotina and climbed the stairs to Fidasiana. Once there, the zebu were tied to the roots of the sacred fig tree with a red cord fixed to their horns. The music continued, the crowd clapped their hands and a female ombiassy, in trance with *tromba*, rolled to the ground at the feet of the animals. Offerings of clean red and white *lambas* were presented via the medium to the ancestors. Carrying sacred water from Amparihy on her head, a young girl: "*ses yeux hypnotises contrastent avec la pureté du visage*" (Cousteau 1995) entered the plaza. Then, an o*mbiassy* bathed in the sacred water and purified the zebu, sprinkling them with the water and earth mixture contained in a white zebu horn (*tandrompotsy*), and then sprinkled the mixture on the crowd as blessing, thus "disposing" of the old year and "purifying" the new one. A privileged few drank a bit of the water that the *ombiassy* had bathed in. One of my field assistants, Thierry, cut the throat of the first zebu.[261] Many of the *ombiassy* and *zanadrano* gathered plunged their hands into the cut and marked their heads with drops of blood. Their eyes were closed, indifferent to the crowd. Each participant addressed their wishes that the blood of the zebu would be transported to the ancestors. *Fandroana* has been held at the navel stone in Fidasiana every year since the 1994 event, albeit on a smaller scale.

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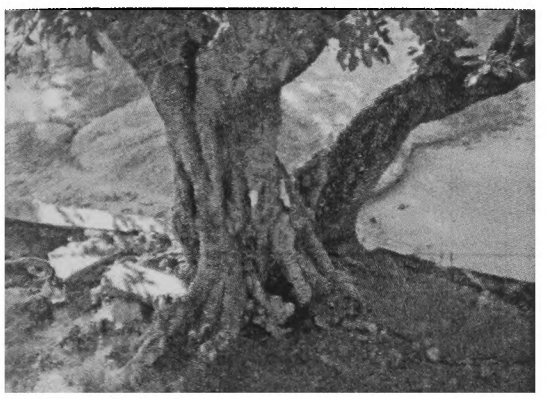
261 Though the *fahimasina* at Fidasiana was filled in during the Colonial Phase, and a school built on top, the zebu were still brought to the sacrificial stone in accordance with custom, from west to east.

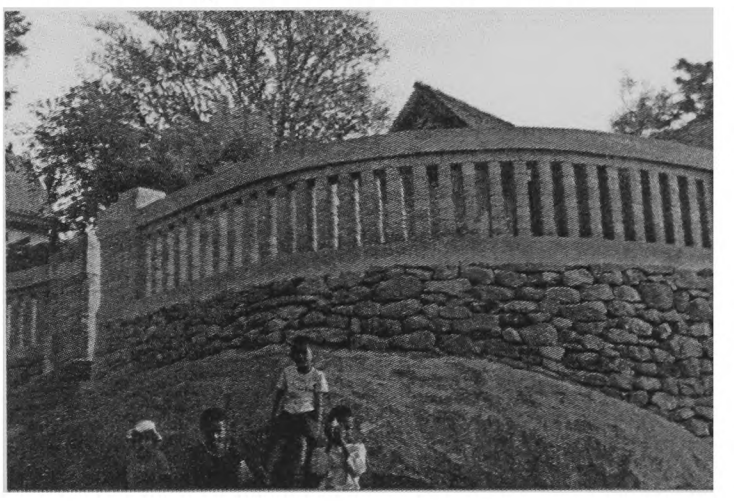
Fidasiana is still considered the "place for *kabary*" in the Modern Phase. The sacred stone continues to be used for *kabary* by *ombiassy* who speak to those gathered from the ancestral realm via *tromba*. The high stage built by Ranavalona I still exists to the east of the plaza, with its ancient fig tree growing on top (*left*). It is also considered a *douany*, a place sacred to the ancestors, and is still used for *kabary*. Although a few *zanadrano* are unsure of its historical significance, many attribute it correctly to Ranavalona I and know that she addressed her people from the stage. Thus, *tromba* involving this royal ancestor are often performed on the stage. The low stage's form has changed slightly in the Modern Phase. The earthen balustrades have disappeared and the terracing at the sides of the stage has collapsed. However, the two fig trees planted on either side of it survive. Now the stage serves as a place where teachers lecture to school groups, where concerts are held (*below*), and where the Mayor speaks to the people of Ambohimanga about secular issues, such as public health. *Tromba* is not performed here, largely because Queen Ranavalona II and III were considered "untraditional" monarchs.





Ambatorangotina

Ambatorangotina, the Andriamasinavalona's "stage," also remains a significant landscape feature in the Modern Phase and has been preserved. During the 1960's the earthen balustrade was replaced by one made with sun-dried brick. In 1997 the then-dead fig tree was removed and the balustrade of Ambatorangotina was renovated again, using red kiln-dried bricks and cement mortar to create a more imposing structure (*right*). Because the area lacks direct association with the royal ancestors, it is considered historically important but not sacred. However, Ambatorangotina remains a popular gathering place for the residents of Ambohimanga, reminiscent of its former function as the commercial centre of the town.



Ambatomiantendro

Ambatomiantendro continues to be a favourite feature of Ambohimanga with its commanding view over the highland landscape. The *fanorona* board etched into the stone is still used by the palace guards and residents of Ambohimanga (*right*).



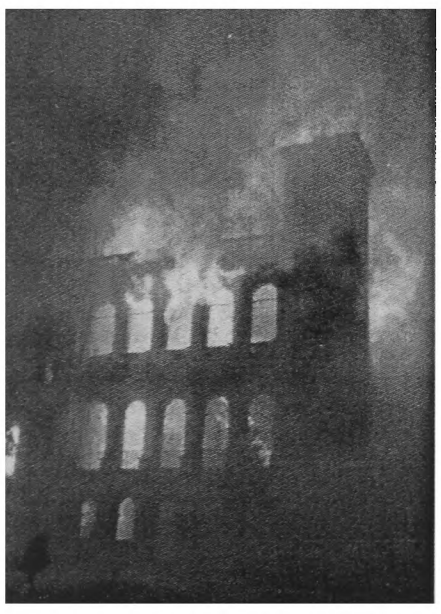
To the left of the fanorona board are more indentations in the rock, partially

filled with pebbles, added after 1960, when the *zanadrano* were given access to the site. This is a fertility "game" for women who are newly married or those having trouble conceiving (*right*). The object is to pitch seven pebbles into two holes, seven into the southern ("female") hole and seven into the northern ("male") hole. If the woman succeeds in getting all fourteen pebbles in the appropriate holes she will be blessed with children. If her wish is granted, she will return to Ambatomiantendro to leave a sacrifice to the ancestors who are thought to control her fertility (Raherisoanjato 1993:13). This corresponds to a marriage blessing still popular in Imerina: "may you have seven sons and seven daughters."



Although the guard shelter at Ambatomiantendro had been destroyed by the Modern Phase, another shelter in the shape of a lean-to with an entirely concrete base was built to the south of the original kiosk. Informants confirm that the structure was erected during the term of Tsiranana for his use when he stayed in his weekend residence at Fidasiana. Eventually it was also destroyed by the high winds and inclement weather that often develops from the southeast over the rocky outcrop.

Ambatomiantendro is still used as a vantage point and a place for contemplating the future for the Tsimahafotsy. Residents of Ambohimanga often spend time there after the museum closes, gathering on the rock to watch the sunset. From the precipice, a mosaic of houses, hills and valleys and water sources comprise the cultural landscape approximately one hundred metres below. In the distance, to the southwest, Antananarivo can be clearly seen, now without its rova that was destroyed by fire on the night of 5 November 1995 (*left*), leaving Ambohimanga as the only *rova* complex remaining in Imerina.



Conclusion

Now, without Antananarivo as Ambohimanga's secular twin, Ambohimanga has come back into focus. There is great public interest in returning to tradition and learning about the cultural landscape, the language and its meaning. It is clear that although there has been significant change to Ambohimanga and its *rova* complex from the Early Phases to the present, an underlying conservatism on the part of the Tsimahafotsy has kept the landscape true to tradition. Change has been largely additive. Despite surface fluctuations, the fundamental form, placement and functions of structures have been consistent, which has kept the cultural landscape's visual language intelligible to its user-groups. The features my Tsimahafotsy informants considered important exemplify and reinforce this point, as they were the same features deemed significant to their ancestors, for the same reasons, as recorded in the Tantara. Further, there was a unanimous response to my question regarding restoration (Appendix B) - that the site must be preserved for both historical and religious reasons, for future generations to use, understand and enjoy.

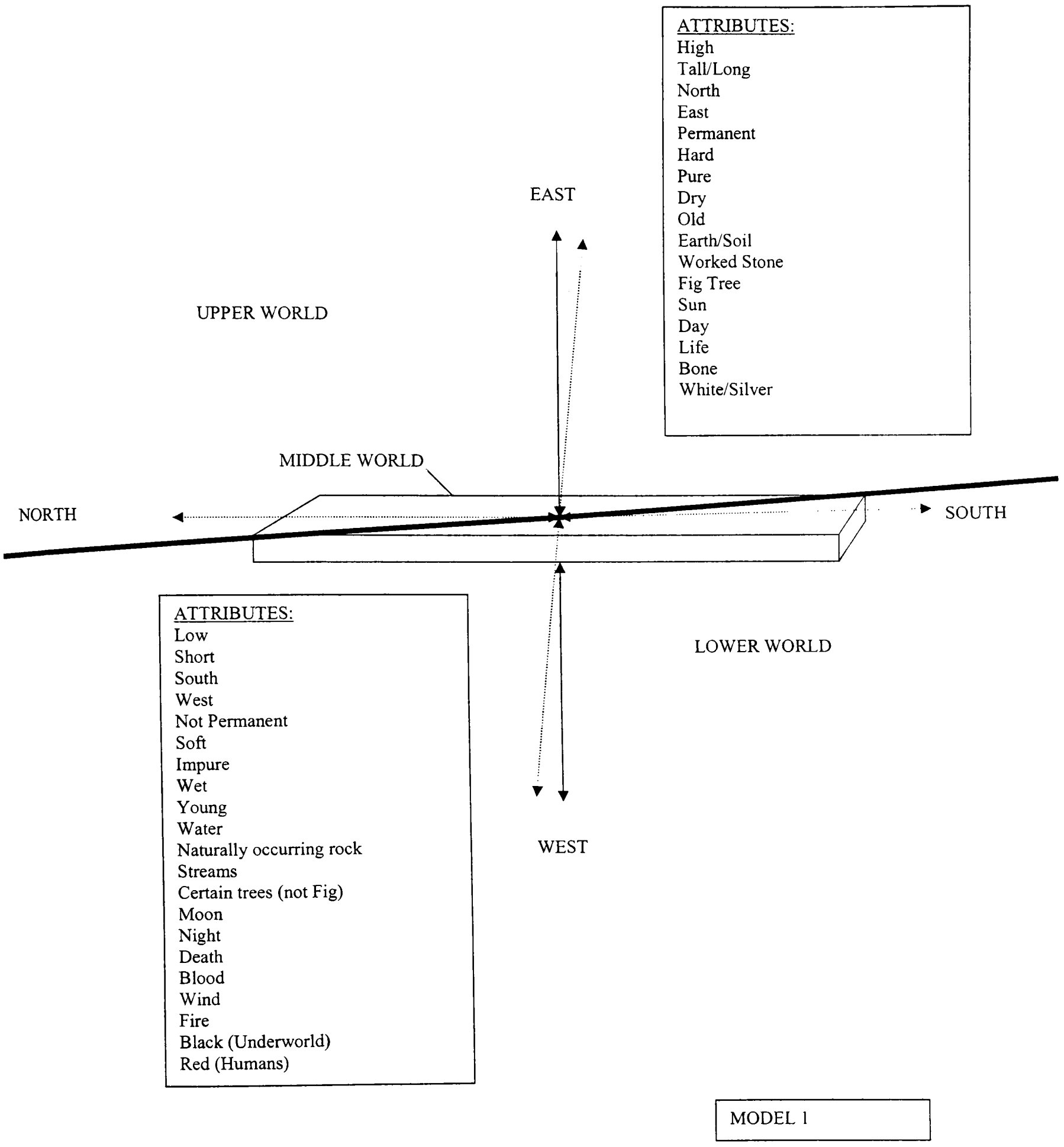
PART THREE

In Chapters Four through Eight, I presented the vocabulary of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape (its features, their form, location, spatial relationships with other objects, and functions) and traced its evolution through time, focusing on what changed and what stayed the same. In Chapter Nine I attempt to "read" the language of the Tsimahafotsy Merina's cultural landscape and achieve a detailed temporal and spatial resolution of their history by following Sahlins' and Kirch's integrated methodological model, combining archaeological and anthropological sources ("archaeological anthropology"). Once the visual language was learned by identifying the features that comprise Ambohimanga's cultural landscape and the evolution of their forms, functions and spatial relationships through time, I could consider the language in cultural and historical context and trace redundant themes and consistent patterns. As Eliade asserted, "symbols never disappear from the reality of the psyche. The aspect of them may change, but their function remains the same; one only has to look behind their latest masks" (Eliade 1969:16).

From the evidence gathered, it became clear that the face of Ambohimanga had changed significantly from the Early Phases to the Present. To the uninitiated, the changes appear to be quite extensive. However, when we consider the anthropological, historical and archaeological texts together, we see that beneath a fluctuating surface there is actually remarkable continuity of meaning. This, I argue, has served to bind the Tsimahafotsy Merina together in a common notion of cultural identity, in which Ambohimanga has consistently served as the Merina's socio-cosmic centre, with the Tsimahafotsy in a privileged position in the power hierarchy. Thus, in the following chapter, I attempt to show how history (the Tsimahafotsy Merina's approach to change and continuity) is intimately bound with place (Ambohimanga's cultural landscape), which has played and still plays an active role in Tsimahafotsy Merina identity formation, thereby preserving the Tsimahafotsy's strong and cohesive self-conception into the present.... For as "persons make places, places make persons" (Tilley 1999:262).

Chapter Nine: Reading and Understanding the Language of Ambohimanga's Cultural Landscape

SOCIOCOSMIC MODEL: THE DIVISION OF SPACE, DIRECTIONAL ATTRIBUTES, AND FLOW OF POWER



MODEL 1

The Early Phases, Ambohidray Phase and Early Kaloy Phase (13C- Circa 1770)

Establishing the Visual Vocabulary

During the Early Phases, the foundations of the socio-cosmic system were laid down and a visual vocabulary reflecting them were mapped onto the cultural landscape of Madagascar's central highlands. As discussed in Chapter Three, the Hova immigrants imported a socio-cosmic system based on complementary opposition mediated by a chief or ruler, a great respect for the ancestors and ancestral ways which drove continuity and bound them together, and knowledge of a state system based on hierarchical social organisation. Although when the Hova arrived in the central highlands they initiated great change in the cultural landscape there, introducing innovation such as hilltop fosses, *rovas*, plazas, rectangular wooden houses and impressive stone tombs, the changes were actually continuous for the Hova immigrants (the Tsimahafotsy's ancestors) in that they reflected the landscape from whence they came (southeast Asia) and the fundamental cosmological and socio-political concepts that guided that society. Thus, the Hova imported a symbolic language (widely understood and comprehensible to the Hova people), which served to meaningfully communicate to the immigrant population, reinforcing the message and ideal of an emerging power hierarchy based on and justified by cosmology and history.

Andrianjaka, the first Hova to settle Ambohimanga in approximately 1660, provided the first layer of the hill's visual map. Andriantsimitoviaminandriana (1700-1730) used this to his advantage in the Early Kaloy Phase, when he took over Ambohimanga with the Tsimahafotsy, adding components of meaning to it. Andriambelomasina (1730-1770) added still more significance enhancing the original message even further. Over the years, knowledge of a common organisational system enabled the Tsimahafotsy Hova to share the ideal of "unity through hierarchy" and rise to a dominant position over other Hova groups in Avaradrano, becoming wealthier and more powerful in the process. It also demonstrated that the cultural landscape played an active role in state building and identity formation from early times.

The Symbolic Language

It is clear from historical and archaeological evidence that the visual language has its roots in the La Galigo epic imported by the Bugis immigrants to Madagascar's central highlands, as oral tradition, which eventually evolved into the Ibonia epic collected by Dahle in the nineteenth century. The legends provided the basis of the organisational system set out in Chapter Three, upon which the fundamental cultural structure of the Tsimahafotsy Merina's *imago mundi* was based. To review, in both legends, the volatile underworld, the vulnerable human world and the powerful and ordered ancestral world are mediated by a semi-divine chief/monarch who possesses both human and ancestral characteristics, drawing together the upper and lower realms as well as the four cardinal directions (symbolised by the corners of the earth) in his person at the centre. Both the human world below this individual (supporting him or her) and the ancestral world above the chief/monarch (guiding him or her) were organised into a complex hierarchical social system based on the

Indianised state model. This was expressed by certain centric and linear structures clearly and repeatedly mapped onto Luwuq's and Ambohimanga's cultural landscape, respectively.

Essentially, space was conceptualized as a square or rectangle bisected by two axes with a vertical axis in the centre, a structure which was thought to represent perfect balance. The three-tiered cosmos was represented by the vertical axis. The upper world (heavens) was considered the realm of the ancestors, and the area beneath the earth was considered the realm of the underworld. The middle world was organized hierarchically with the chief at the highest point, closest to the supernatural realm, and the lowest ranking individuals at the bottom, closest to the underworld. Horizontal space was also organized according to principles explicit in La Galigo. The cardinal directions were invested with meaning, with the north and east as privileged directions on the compass. North was the direction of the lord of the cosmos, the creator deity and all things noble. South was a mundane direction associated with daily life and women. East was associated with the ancestors, life and the rising sun. West was associated with the setting sun and death. These directions and their opposing attributes were brought together in the centre, the *axis mundi*, where they were mediated by the semi-divine chief. A priest (*bissu*) facilitated the ruler's ability to mediate from outside the human realm, acting as an assistant in the process. In the La Galigo world, the *axis mundi* was located in the city of Luwuq, a sacred and powerful place signified by its exclusivity, riches, and most importantly, its ancestors.

In Madagascar a similar structure can be inferred from the Ibonia epic, with the upper world of the deities and ancestors at the top of the vertical axis, the underworld filled with disgruntled and volatile spirits (personified by the Vazimba) at the bottom, and the world of human beings organised hierarchically in the middle, with the ruler positioned at the boundary between the middle and upper worlds, serving as a mediator on the vertical continuum. The semi-divine ruler was also considered to be at the centre of the horizontal axis, uniting the four cardinal directions. We saw this in the Ibonia epic when the four brothers of the four corners of the earth presented themselves to their grandfather in crossed order (east, west, north, and south) (Ottino 1991:965). As in the La Galigo epic, the directions of north and east were favourable, and south and west were unfavourable, yet all opposing directions complimented each other and were necessary for a balanced whole. Ibonia, as "Prince-of-the-Centre-of-the-Earth", the semi-divine ruler, presented himself to his grandfather last, establishing his pre-eminence over the four cardinal points and uniting them. *Ombiassy* (priests) served to support the ruler's ability to mediate. Like *bissu*, *ombiassy* were considered to be outside the human realm, acting as assistants to the semi-divine chief. The *axis mundi* of the Ibonia epic was also located at a sacred place, the village of Long Standing, which could be likened to Ambohimanga, where the Ibonia tales were collected.

In both epics divine order is replicated in all physical aspects relating to space and orientation in pursuit of balance. Towards achieving these ends, the layout of the residential compound at Ambohimanga resembled that which the Bugis left in Sulawesi, as described in Chapter Four. The Buginese culture represented a syncretic blend of Chinese, Hindu and Buddhist beliefs fused with an underlying Austronesian animism, and it

is this melange which informed the layout and construction of the residential compound in Ambohimanga. Correct orientation in space, combined with ideas of ritual purity and pollution, were key concepts, providing a cosmological framework for maintaining a harmony between the lives of those who lived within compound walls and the rest of the universe. Everything was conceived as having an ideal location and must be correctly aligned or co-ordinated if the desired harmony between humans and nature was to be achieved. In this way, the macrocosmos was reflected within the mirocosmos, and never was one separated from the other. Citizens of both Luwuq and Ambohimanga considered themselves to be superior, as a result of their privileged connection to the upper world.

This tripartite cosmic system and emerging power hierarchy, based on commonly understood symbolism and structural opposition, could be traced through Ambohimanga's cultural landscape, using evidence from the first settlements in Madagascar's central highlands from the Fiekena Phase through the Early Kaloy Phase. The model could also be used and manipulated to emphasise the emerging power hierarchy, thereby demonstrating a symbolism of space that is inseparable from political intention (Ottino 1991:965). The model was flexible and could be built and added to through time to suit changing cultural circumstances, reflecting and driving Ambohimanga's rise to a position of superiority and power over Avaradrano during the Early Phases.

The Hill, Fortifications and Royal Compound: Boundaries of Ethnic, Cultural and Social Separation

We first see evidence of the model during the Fiekena Phase, with the conquering of the Vazimba by the Hova immigrants and their spirits' relegation to the underworld. This action had symbolic repercussions in Ambohimanga's cultural landscape. The Hova wished to remove themselves as much as possible from these supposedly "uncivilised" forces, so they physically ascended from the Avaradrano valleys to the hilltops, up the vertical axis towards the realm of the ancestors and a position of real and symbolic superiority. They used boundaries of height and physical walls to protect and differentiate themselves from the aboriginal inhabitants of Madagascar's central highlands, whose spirits quickly became associated with the underworld. Thus, natural and built features in the landscape communicated the initial and fundamental divide between Vazimba and Hova, with the Hova positioned high on the hilltops, closer to their ancestors, in what they considered the upper world and the Vazimba relegated to the valleys, representing the underworld.

The height of Ambohimanga in relation to surrounding hills also had symbolic significance. Because Ambohimanga is the highest hill in the central highlands, when the early chiefs occupied it during the Early Kaloy Phase this factor signified that they and their populations (the Imamo and later Tsimahafotsy) were closer to the sacred realm than their Hova neighbours. They were able to maintain this superior position because the hill was also one of the most defensible, with abundant natural resources near the residential compound at the summit. Further, by creating the first *rovas* (royal enclosures) at Bevato, the early chiefs

separated themselves and their populations even further from the Vazimba and other Hova groups, both literally and figuratively.

The divide within the Hova of Ambohimanga between the chief and lay people was also clearly mapped onto the landscape using barriers of height and fortifications. While Andrianjaka had his population grouped around him at the top of the hill, Andriantsimitoviaminandriana demonstrated his rise to a position of superiority over his subjects by removing them from the royal compound. By establishing the Mahandry Rova further up the hill, Andriambelomasina placed himself in an even more superior position. Thus, by creating progressively stronger *rovas* for themselves, more and more removed from the population, higher on the hill, the Hova chiefs illustrated a visual separation between royal and non-royal space.

In addition to the vertical axis (emphasising height), the horizontal axis (emphasising direction) was adhered to when organising features within the residential complex on the hill, thereby further enforcing the ideal order.

At the top of the hill, within the fortifications, the macro-cosmos of the La Galigo/Ibonia world was clearly mapped onto the landscape, using the horizontal axis as well as the vertical. The naturally occurring navel stone in Bevato, established as the compound's centre point, would have symbolised the centre of the Hova universe, just as it had in southeast Asia. The fig tree planted near the stone in the centre of the compound was representative of the vertical axis leading to the upper world. The spirits of the upper world would have been thought to reside in the tree's branches and leaves, just as they did in Bugis settlements. The underworld was represented by the rock itself, which contained volatile spirits below ground.

An axis drawn to bisect the navel stone gave the space directional significance, bringing together the cardinal directions, north, south, east, west, and their disparate attributes, establishing a visual map that the Hova must follow to maintain holistic harmony. For example, physical and symbolic signifiers of ideal social order were clearly established when Andrianjaka created the two entrances to Ambohimanga, Ambavahaditsiombiomby and the gate at Ambatorangotina. As discussed in Chapter Four, Ambavahaditsiombiomby was the largest, highest and strongest gate, located to the north (a noble direction) and it was thus allocated to the chief, whereby the gate at Ambatorangotina, the smaller, lower, weaker gate to the west (a more mundane direction) was used for the general population. Two lines drawn from the gates cross almost perfectly at the navel stone of Fidasiana, the *axis mundi* connecting the middle and upper world.

Andrianjaka's shrine in the northeast corner of the compound demonstrated the power of talismans over the chief and the people, from the most powerful direction on the spatial map. The chief emphasised his own importance by making his residence the most central and eastern in the compound, near the sacred navel stone, thus communicating his mediating position at the centre of the socio-cosmic model, closer to the ancestral realm (to the east) than any other resident. The chief's house to the southwest of the shrine demonstrated his subservient role to the talismans, but superior role in relation to his people located to the west. The building for receiving visitors, and the entrance to the compound, was also appropriately situated to

the west, a profane direction. The kitchen, women's working areas and animals were located in the more mundane southern direction.

It is interesting that Andriantsimitoviaminandriana conserved this visual map when he expanded his fortifications and added another western gate. By keeping his royal complex at Bevato organised according to the same directional principles, he identified himself with ancestral tradition. When Andriambelomasina constructed the Mahandry Rova higher and to the northeast of Bevato, the message of superior power was further emphasised. Although there was no navel stone within the new *rova* (there was only one navel stone per complex), he organised the space according to the same visual map as at Bevato, putting his dwelling at the centre, his shrine to the northeast, and housing his children (heirs) to the south of himself. During Andriambelomasina's reign the ancestral importance of Ambohimanga was enhanced by the addition of Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's tomb and then his own tomb. It is significant that the tombs were built to the east of the King's residence, a sacred direction of respect and superior power. It is also significant that they were positioned slightly off axis because of their potentially overwhelming power draw on the living monarch. The addition of the royal tombs of Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Andriambelomasina, successful Early Phase chiefs, to the Mahandry Rova gave the hilltop settlement a power boost and illustrated the importance of the ancestors over living Hova.

Symbolic of the emerging hierarchy and the chiefs' growing wealth and power, the chiefs' residences at Ambohimanga became more and more removed from the laypersons. Andriantsimitoviaminandriana cordoned off Bevato as his own, moving all non royal elements to the south and west, and Andriambelomasina built an even better fortified *rova* (Mahandry), higher and to the east of Bevato. This placement of lay people at the feet of royalty, separated by physical boundaries, suggests that the ruling *Andriana* was becoming increasingly important and differentiated from the general population, now located lower on the hill to the south and west, more mundane directions. The chief's movement higher on the hill, to the east, and the establishment of his residence adjacent to the "royal" tombs, suggests an increased significance and power, as he moved closer to the ancestral world. Thus, the ruler was symbolically aligned with the ancestors – a potent force outside the human realm –as set forth in the La Galigo and Ibonia epics.

Architecture and Social Hierarchy

The same socio-cosmic model laid out in the royal compound (*rova*) was applied on a smaller scale to the Hova's Bugis-style houses, which reinforced cosmic order as well as indicated the importance of the occupant in the social hierarchy, by their size, materials and decoration. Thus, the house in Madagascar served the same function as it did in Indonesia, as a microcosm of ideal order.

As described in Chapter Four, houses in Madagascar were rectangular, wooden, with high roofs and a central post, as in Indonesia. The house was vertically divided literally and figuratively into three segments; the area beneath the floor was signified by the hearth, which corresponded with the underworld (a place of danger

where malevolent spirits prowled), the living quarters above were associated with the human realm, and the roofed over attic space above the tie beams was symbolic of the upper world.

Direction was also significant to house symbolism. We have seen that in Madagascar, as in Indonesia, houses were always placed on a north-south axis, "facing" north, the direction of the creator deity and nobility. East was another auspicious direction, since it was the direction of the ancestors, where the tombs were located. Thus, space was organised so that important people and objects were placed to the north and east and more profane and mundane objects and people were allocated the south and west. The cosmological orientations of the house thus provided a set of spatial co-ordinates for the representation of social categories such as senior and junior, affine and agnate, close kin and distant, as well as male and female according to gender-based concepts of purity/impurity.

The house's most important architectural feature was its central pillar, seen to unite the vertical and horizontal axes and their attributes. The post was known as the *posi bola* (the navel) in the La Galigo world and the *andry* in the Ibonia world. Resembling the navel stone and tree structure in the centre of the residential compound, the central post rested at the intersect of the house's cardinal directions and was seen to connect the upper, middle and lower worlds, as well as north, south, east and west on the *vintana* map. It was considered the source of the house's power and assumed an active role as a mediating structure, representing the monarch and disseminating power in the form of blessing, as we see in the Late Kaloy Phase.

In addition to the significance of its location within the residential compound, the house itself defined the occupant's social group, by its ancestral association. Typically a family's status was correlated with the original founders of the house. As discussed in Chapter Three, ancestral origins conferred and confirmed group membership, inheritance rites, social status, gender relations and succession to office. The membership of a particular household thus defined an individual's place in society. It was generally considered preferable to live in a residence that belonged to one's ancestors. The ancestral significance that the house represented explains why homes were generally moved in the landscape rather than being destroyed.

Stylistic features of the house also indicated social class. In caste-based Sulawesi society, for example, villages and individuals were only permitted to decorate their houses with the symbols and motifs appropriate to their social station. Elevated social status was indicated by long sticks representing zebu horns affixed to the house's gables. As we saw in Chapter Four, this tradition was carried over into Madagascar, where zebu horns (*tandotrano*) adorned the house's gable-ends and denoted rank. The length of the *tandotrano* indicated the degree of the proprietor's nobility, along with other ornamentation topping the finials, such as silver birds. Thus, the monarch displayed the longest *tandotrano* with the most valuable carvings at their tips, visually separating him from his population.

Tombs and Ancestral Hierarchy

As discussed in Chapter Three and laid out in the La Galigo and Ibonia epics, at the top of the cosmic hierarchy were the Hova ancestors, imbued with wisdom and strength, serving as a guidance system for the living Hova. This power was indicated in the cultural landscape primarily by tombs, relying on the same visual language used in the residential compound and in the houses.

First, the tombs illustrated the division between the Vazimba and Hova, pure and impure. The Vazimba, whose ancestors were relegated to the underworld at the base of the hierarchy, were buried in crude graves in the valleys of the hills and the Hova were buried in much grander style, in large fire-cracked stone graves near their houses at the top of the hills. Thus, through height (physical separation), size and stone working (stylistic and technological separation) the broadening gulf between Vazimba and Hova was emphasised in the cultural landscape. Although the Vazimba and Hova were on different ends of the social spectrum, all ancestors were considered powerful. The disgruntled Vazimba ancestors were therefore feared by the Hova, their oppressors, and their grave sites were handled with great respect and caution. Further, natural features such as streams and trees which the spirits might inhabit were revered, and sacrifices left upon them in hopes of averting the polluting and destructive power of the Vazimba spirits and other spirits of the underworld.

The tombs also illustrated the well-developed hierarchy within the realm of the Hova ancestors, which mimicked that of the living population, indicating that ancestors held varying degrees of power according to their social station. The socio-cosmic position of the Hova was indicated by the location of their tombs at the top of the hill, the number of bodies the tombs contained, the quality of their construction and stylistic features. As discussed in Chapter Four, Early Phase rulers recognised that consistency of direction and correct tomb-placement in the landscape in relation to houses was extremely important to ensure an accurate visual message.

The royal tombs topped the ancestral power hierarchy in importance. Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's and Andriambelomasina's tombs were located at the top of the hill, within the royal enclosure of Mahandry, thus set apart from others by both height and physical boundaries. The tombs positioned to the east of the royal residence demonstrated the supreme and sacred power they possessed. The appropriate progression of nobility was set out in the Early Phase cultural landscape through tomb-building, as each chief was buried to the north of the last. This visually suggested that the newest, northern-most ancestors were supported by the oldest, southern-most ones – the south being traditionally a direction of support. Finally, the *tranomasina* (holy houses) built on the chief's tomb, as per Andrianjaka's prescription, conferred his semi-divine status.

Noble and non-noble Hova ancestors were also differentiated through tomb location and stylistic features. Like the chiefs' tombs, the laypersons' tombs were always placed to the east of their houses, in that sacred and important direction, indicating the great power the tombs contained and the respect given to the ancestors above the living family. The most noble family's ancestors were located highest on the hill, closest to the royal

complex. Thus, the status of the Tsimahafotsy was communicated by their family tombs' proximity to the chiefs' tombs. Their tombs were topped with *tranomanara* (differing from *tranomasina* only by their significance in that *tranomanara* were not considered "holy"). Below the noble tombs were the tombs of the general Tsimahafotsy population, buried in communal graves with no *tranomanara* adorning them, indicating their secular status, until all Tsimahafotsy were declared noble by Andrianampoinimerina in the Late Kaloy Phase and allowed to erect *tranomanara* on top of their tombs.

Perhaps the most important visual differentiation between a chief's tomb and a layperson's tomb was the number of bodies buried within it. As per Andrianjaka's edict, chiefs were buried alone in the centre of their tombs. Being buried singly visually demonstrated the ancestral chief's semi-divine status. As discussed in Chapter Three, chiefs' corpses were already considered partially ancestral and therefore did not require *famadihana*. The corpse did not need to be conjoined with other bodies to be a potent source of fertility, as opposition was considered resolved within the chief's body alone. Tsimahafotsy laypersons, on the other hand, were buried in family tombs with multiple bodies. Because they were considered to be further from the ancestral world, Tsimahafotsy laypersons required *famadihana*, which promised a rebirth for the individual as an ancestor and a renewal of the world of the living through blessings administered by the ancestor and his or her kin re-united in the family tomb. Thus, the tomb also served as a visual demonstration of the ideal of "strength in unity" (as well as "unity through hierarchy"), a fundamental concept of the Hova's organisational system which allowed them to rise to such a powerful position.

From my analysis of the tombs at Ambohimanga, it became clear that priority was increasingly being given to the dead over the living Hova, and that the "cult of the ancestors," brought with the Bugis immigrants from Indonesia was developed and enhanced during the Early Phases. The fundamental separation between the "civilised" Hova ancestors (in the upper world) and the "uncivilised" Vazimba spirits (in the underworld) as well as a clear ancestral hierarchy within the Tsimahafotsy Hova in the middle world, top-down from the chief to the Tsimahafotsy layperson, was made explicit through tomb location (*tanindrazana*), form, stylistic features, and the number of bodies buried within them. Thus, Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Andriambelomasina, buried in the highest tombs on the hill, singly, in the easternmost direction, indicated their power over all other ancestors. These concepts of Hova separation from the Vazimba, the cult of the ancestors as a power base, and a clear social hierarchy within the Hova, form the foundations of the "organisational system" which was to be actualised on a large scale by Andrianampoinimerina in the Late Kaloy Phase.

Power Flow between Tombs and Houses

As well as symbolising the ideal order, cultural landscape features played an active role in maintaining that order. For example, the house and tomb, seen together, formed a conduit for ancestral blessing (superior *hasina*), as power was thought to flow from east to west, north to south. All persons received constant power from the tomb to the east of their house. It is important to note that one was only as powerful as one's ancestors, and the most powerful ancestors could disseminate the most powerful blessing. Thus, the "royal"

ancestors at the top of Ambohimanga, fuelled the ruling monarch with continuous concentrated power to rule the kingdom, as long as the ancestors were kept content with sacrifice. Only the chief could ask for royal ancestral blessing for the kingdom. Therefore, citizens provided inferior *hasina* (material goods and labour) to ensure the ruler was content and that he would seek blessing on their behalf. Thus, the power hierarchy was established and mapped into the cultural landscape, with the chief dispersing power and blessing to the lower ranks (superior *hasina*), supported by inferior *hasina* given to him in return.

Mediating Structures and Persons

We can see in the arrangement of fortifications, houses and tombs how features in the cultural landscape served to make the emerging power hierarchy, and the ideal of unity through hierarchy, explicit. An essential element of this system was the chief, at the apex of the social hierarchy, near the most powerful ancestors at the top of the ancestral hierarchy, who served to mediate between the human and ancestral realms by uniting the upper and lower worlds. Hova chiefs possessed the power to mediate because of their semi-divine positions in the socio-cosmic model, receiving power and direction from the royal ancestors and belonging to both the ancestral and human realms (as per the La Galigo and Ibonia legends). This privileged position was made explicit in the cultural landscape and played a large role in binding the population to the ruler of Ambohimanga. The chief mediated and transmitted power and blessing through certain combinations of cultural landscape features.

The Navel Stone and Fig Tree as *Axis Mundi* of the Tsimahafotsy Universe

The navel stone, and its sacred fig tree, were the most important of these mediating structures, illustrating the ruler's ability to intercede between the upper and lower worlds of the Hova universe. The rock and tree symbolised these complimentary opposites which were united by the chief. In addition to serving as the crossing point of the cardinal directions, the stone itself would have also symbolised the unbridled underworld contained beneath the earth. By contrast, the branches of the fig tree planted above it would have been seen to contain the generalised ancestral spirits (*zanadahy*) of the upper world. Its trunk would have symbolised the monarch and his mediating role, connecting the two worlds. It is important to understand that power could only actually be transmitted and resolved by the living monarch. As we saw by analysing the rock's myriad functions, the chief had to physically climb onto the rock where he received power from both realms, mediating it in his person and disseminating it, resolved, to the living Hova in his presence. Thus, the spatial arrangement of the rock and tree indicated the crucial role of the chief, at the junction of the cardinal directions, mediating between the heavenly (upper, north and east) and earthly (lower, south and west) realms of his kingdom, from earliest times.

Andriantsimitoviaminandriana assigned additional symbolism to the sacred stone during its consecration. As discussed in Chapter Four, the rock was "established" (i.e. given ancestral significance) by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana with Ratompobe, Andriamborona's mother, considered to be Ambohimanga's

eldest resident. This suggests an attempt by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana to create a permanent conspicuous symbol of ancestral power and support for his rule, turning ever more towards supernatural forces, the ancestors, for power and strength. The action also symbolised ancestral support for his reign, because as in many cultures, women in both Sulawesi and Madagascar possessed the qualities of protectors and supporters. That is why the standing stone commemorating the event was erected to the south of the navel stone, in the direction of support.

In addition, Andriantsimitoviaminandriana brought together several opposing qualities that gave the navel stone and fig tree motif increased significance. These actions were recorded in the oral traditions concerning Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's reign, but stem from the Tsimahafotsy's Indonesian heritage. Most significantly Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, a man, consecrated the stone with Ratompobe, a woman, thus uniting these fundamental complimentary opposites in collective action. Another indication of the chief's abilities to unite complimentary opposites was made explicit by the act of burying items beneath the rock, which symbolised the famous resolution between the ancestral and human realms. The red beads, representing the vital chaotic elements of blood and flesh, symbolised the human realm. The ancestral realm was denoted by the white beads, representing the purity and order of dry bones. The whole Piastre signified the virtues of unity.[262]

As a result of the above symbolism, the navel stone served to visually justify Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's right to rule the hill despite the fact that he had no genealogical association or ancestral link to it. Standing on top of the rock, Andriantsimitoviaminandriana demonstrated that he possessed the power to affect the resolution of complimentary opposites – which served as a sort of visual campaign promise to the Tsimahafotsy. In addition, stone embodied the obvious symbolic properties of everlasting strength and permanence, "*un souvenir imperissable*" (Callet 1974:384). Thus, the stone was used by generations of Tsimahafotsy rulers at their "coronation," to validate their mediating positions in the socio-cosmic system, as well as for *mufakat* (called *kabary* when the oral traditions were collected). The King, standing on the stone above the population, would have been seen to receive expert and divine guidance from the upper world via the fig tree's branches, in effect, speaking from the realm of the ancestors. Therefore, his words would have been considered sacrosanct and would have been obeyed.

Most importantly, the *fandroana* ritual (royal bath), the ultimate resolution of opposition,[263] was held annually on the stone. As discussed in Chapter Three, each year the powers of the ruler, priests and idols had to be renewed by a purification bath. *Fandroana*, the purification ritual for humans, illustrated the resolution between

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262 White is the symbol of purity in the ritual sense, due to the impression it gives of light and transparency (Leib 1946a). Red is "the symbol of power, might and wealth" (Leib 1946a:131). As Mack has noted "the use of red suggests potent, ardent or forceful characteristics" (Mack 1986). Red and white have been used liberally through time to denote the characteristics of Merina royalty. This colour symbolism was inherited from Chinese and Indian influence in the archipelago, where white signifies the colour of bone and ancestral purity, and red, the colour of blood, symbolizes human life, vitality and power (Waterson 1993).

263 *Fandroana* also united the four elements : earth from the tombs, water from Amparihy, and air from blowing blessing upon the people and fire by candles/cooking sacrifice, all of which Ibonia conquered in his odyssy (Haring 1994).

chaos (represented by water taken from springs assigned the volatile Vazimba power), and order (represented by earth taken from ancestral tombs), which was mixed together and used as bath water in which the chief, the mediator, was submerged. Then, he would blow the "resolved" mixture on the population as blessing, thus re-establishing the correct socio-cosmic order of things. This was followed by the sacrifice of a zebu on the sacred stone as inferior *hasina* to the ancestors at the top of the system. *Fandroana* thereby served as the quintessential illustration of the ideal socio-cosmic order, incorporating all of its important elements: the fundamental oppositions (rock/tree, wet/dry, human/ancestral), the monarch as mediator between the earthly and divine realms, and the resulting cosmological order and socio-political hierarchy with the royal ancestors in a privileged position.

Thus, the stone and tree, and all the features' functions mentioned above during the Early Phases lent significance to the area and reinforced its role as the *axis mundi* and centre of the Tsimahafotsy world. It was also representative of the power hierarchy. As we have seen, power was thought to flow from east to west, north to south, high to low. Thus, blessing was passed from the Chief, standing on the sacred stone in the centre of the settlement, to the people gathered to the west beneath him. After the bath ritual was over, the trunk of the fig tree served as a permanent reminder, a monument, of the monarch's mediating power to unite opposing forces and disseminate power and fertility in exchange for support and allegiance.

The Central Post as the Central Axis of Imerina

Likewise, the central house post (*andry*) also came to symbolise the chief and his ability to resolve opposition, between the upper, lower and human worlds. It should be remembered that in the Ibonia epic, Ibonia was born on the tie beam of the house, symbolically at the boundary between the human world (the living space) and the upper world (symbolised by the attic space). Also, the underworld was signified by the hearthstones that contained the unbridled forces of the underworld beneath them. As Ibonia jumped into the fire in the hearth as an infant, emerging without injury, he therefore symbolically conquered the underworld within the microcosm of his mother's house at Long Standing and established himself as the semi-divine mediator using features in the cultural landscape.

As discussed above, all houses received constant power from their family tombs located to the east of their dwellings. The chief also received continuous power and blessing from his ancestral tombs to the east his residence. But, in addition, he received power directly from the upper world. He could access this power when standing on the sacred stone at Fidasiana, as described above. But, he could also access general ancestral power when standing, leaning, or sitting near his central house post.[264] Only the chief had the ability to actively mediate power from the upper world. Others could not access ancestral power directly. Thus, in their houses the post served as a conduit for power allocated by the chief. Because only the chief could transmit power,

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264 The house post was seen as a living entity in both Indonesia and Madagascar, "planted" in the direction that it grew as a tree. Thus, the ancestral spirits were figuratively contained within the tree's branches in the attic space of the house.

ancestral charge was therefore passed down the hill from east to west, high to low, from his residence at Bevato and later Mahandry, via the central posts of his subjects' houses. Those living closest to his residence received a greater concentration of blessing than those further away, and were therefore considered more powerful and higher in social rank. This explains why it was so important that all houses in Ambohimanga had identical construction and layout and why *fady* were established against building counter to directional norms.

In summary, resembling the tree trunk in Fidasiana, which symbolised the monarch and this mediating ability, the central posts of houses also denoted this gift. Thus, the post served as a reminder of the developing *hasina* system, as well as a source of constant blessing being emitted from the family tomb. [265] Because of the semi-divine chief's association with the realm of the ancestors, he held great power over the living, harbouring the unique power to bless them with fertility. Therefore, he was given a constant supply of inferior *hasina* in return for blessing (superior *hasina*) emanating from the royal tombs. This reciprocal arrangement, renewed annually through *fandroana,* fuelled a power-generating machine which would serve to keep the Tsimahafotsy strong and bound to their ruler.

Ambohimanga and Tsimahafotsy "Superiority"

As a result of the above concepts and ideas mapped into the cultural landscape at Ambohimanga, the hill became one of the most dominant in Avaradrano during the Early Phases, a fact supported by archaeological evidence and oral tradition. Although no proto-Merina ruler achieved supremacy over the twelve hills that comprised Avaradrano, Ambohimanga was, since Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's reign, home to some of the wealthiest and most powerful of the Hova, the Tsimahafotsy. In addition to its abundant natural resources (such as wood, water, and medicinal plants), which separated the Hova from the Vazimba, protected Ambohimanga from invasion and provided the Tsimahafotsy population with essential provisions, I argue that the Tsimahafotsy of Ambohimanga rose to a position of power largely because they shared an organised socio-cosmic system with a common aim to be successful rulers over Avaradrano, and the central highlands more broadly. This clearly defined power hierarchy, based on the La Galigo/Ibonia legend, served to produce a successful and prosperous population, bound together through a common history and the *hasina* system.

The cultural landscape of Ambohimanga played an active role in the exploitation and evolution of the socio-cosmic system, and from the above examples and discussion, we can see how the Early Phase Tsimahafotsy chiefs built on symbolism already ingrained in the Hova visual lexicon from their Indonesian heritage in order to ensure broad understanding of their messages. This led to Hova, particularly Tsimahafotsy, domination in Avaradrano, with their chief at the top of the human hierarchy serving as a semi-divine mediator.

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265 Thus the pillar was sometimes called the "*hasina* post" in the oral traditions (see Callet 1974:30).

As we have seen, structural opposition in the cultural landscape, such as higher/lower, centre/periphery, larger/smaller, stronger/weaker, north/south, east/west, red/white, permanent/non-permanent, wet/dry, was used to communicate the ideal socio-cosmic balance. Stylistic conventions in house and tomb building, such as *tandotrano* and *tranomanara/tranomasina*, were also used to denote wealth and nobility. Physical boundaries and ancestral connection further symbolised hierarchy, differentiating between rich and poor, royal and non-royal, noble and layperson, and slave. Symbols of mediation such as the centre, circles, tree trunks and posts, and the bringing together of the above oppositions, denoted unity, achieved through hierarchy. Thus, the Tsimahafotsy Hova laid out a comprehensive visual language at Ambohimanga which complimented the oral traditions and legends, by promoting the cult of the ancestors, an hierarchical state-based organisational system, and the mediation of cosmic opposition by a semi-divine chief.

Consequently, Ambohimanga became the most powerful Early Phase hilltop settlement in Avaradrano, and the Tsimahafotsy ancestors were seen to be responsible for this great success. As a result, Ambohimanga became imbued with sacred significance and power. The hill therefore became exclusive and desirable, yet few could challenge it. The strong fortifications and defensibility of Ambohimanga, coupled with the growing importance and wealth of its chiefs and citizens, ultimately illustrated the widening gulf between Tsimahafotsy and other groups in Avaradrano, with the Tsimahafotsy emerging as superior.

The Late Kaloy Phase (Circa 1770-1810)

Change and Continuity

As discussed in Chapter Three, the Indianised-Indonesian state model was actualised, and the Merina formed a cohesive group for the first time in the late eighteenth century, with the Tsimahafotsy at the helm, under the guidance of Andrianampoinimerina. I argue that this ruler utilised and added to pre-established and accepted cultural landscape symbolism from the Early Phases, to create and maintain his powerful image of sacred authority, without disturbing the fundamental "ways of the ancestors." This continuity of meaning worked to ensure the support of the Tsimahafotsy, and help him achieve his imperial ambition: to rule over a "unified" Avaradrano, and expand his domain "to the seas."

Andrianampoinimerina, the first Merina "King," added to the organisational system rooted in the Ibonia legend, the cult of the ancestors, and the state-based socio-political system inherited from his predecessors. He invited specific talismans and cosmological advisors into his power hierarchy to feed him and his kingdom with additional power from the supernatural realm, which complimented the systems already in place. Also, he organised an even clearer social hierarchy beneath him in the earthly realm, with the Tsimahafotsy always in privileged position. He communicated this enhanced socio-cosmic order, and maintained it through *kabary* and especially through features in the cultural landscape, which comprised the daily, ritual and political lives of himself and his citizens. It is important to note that Andrianampoinimerina carefully *added* to the existing

system so as not to upset *fombandrazana* "the ways of the ancestors" and to make his message comprehensible to a still unlettered population.

Thus, building on the past, Andrianampoinimerina was able to utilise symbolism objectified in the cultural landscape for political and social ends, focusing on the concept of a clear social hierarchy and the mediation of cosmological oppositions to create unity. This was possible because the Hova (now called Merina) "spoke" the same symbolic language, built upon tradition and made manifest in the cultural landscape that they observed and used every day. Andrianampoinimerina cleverly exploited pre-existing symbolism and utilised visual redundancy to communicate his message to the population. As a result, the landscape played a crucial role in creating a sense of common identity, which helped the Tsimahafotsy rise to a position of power over other Merina and Malagasy groups during the Late Kaloy Phase.

The Hill and Fortifications – Boundaries of Ethnic, Cultural and Social Separation

First, by adding to and expanding the fortifications at Ambohimanga, Andrianampoinimerina reinforced the divide between the Tsimahafotsy and other Hova groups. He was responsible for creating the highest and most impressive multiple fortifications in Avaradrano, which served to protect Ambohimanga from invasion and communicate the hill's power to its neighbours. Further, as he acquired territory and conquered the eleven other hills of Avaradrano, Ambohimanga became the most northeastern hill, which reinforced its sacred significance. Andrianampoinimerina also used the fortifications surrounding Ambohimanga to communicate an enhanced power hierarchy and his position within it to the growing Tsimahafotsy population. By applying the *vintana* system to the distribution of gates around Ambohimanga's fosses, both internal and external, he reinforced and added to the ideal socio-cosmic model.

As discussed in Chapter Five, space became more complicated during the Late Kaloy Phase with the introduction of the *vintana* system, in that directional significance and a cosmological element was added to the established system based on the *ba-gua* and *vashtu. Vintana* was easily added to the well-known system of cardinal directions, and actually served to reinforce their attributes. Thus, the directions of north, east, west and south retained their original significance, as demonstrated by the features or objects placed in them and their functions in the compound, but their significance was enhanced.

In the *vintana* system, north, originally associated with the creator deity (Andrianahary), came to be associated with nobility and advisors. The south and west were associated with non-noble people and objects, a direction of women, female things and qualities, and of support. The east was associated with the sacred ancestors, purity, order, and "male" qualities; the west was associated with pollution, "female" qualities and the profane. The northeastern direction held the combined properties of north (noble) and east (sacred), just as it had during the early phases, enhanced by being given its own name, Alahamady. The central position on the *vintana* map also remained privileged, reserved for the King, as mediator.

Concepts of *vintana* were perceived to be spatially arranged around a rectangle, just like the former system, but could be applied to any space as long as the cardinal directions could be identified. Thus, *vintana* was applied to the arrangement of features within the fortifications, where it served to reinforce the system of directional significance already in place. This repetition of symbolism, mapping a new system onto an older established one, would have worked to facilitate the acceptance and understanding of *vintana*. Also, like the former system, *vintana* was mapped onto the cultural landscape using features that were part of the Tsimahafotsy Merina's everyday ritual and practical lives, which served to cement it in the minds of the Merina. Mapping the model onto the cultural landscape using familiar *modus operandi* would have been an effective mechanism for ensuring widespread understanding and adherence to the ideology.

Thus, applied to the entire hill and its fortifications, the system enhanced meaning in the cultural landscape. *Vintana* was seen as the "voice of the ancestors" and obeying its rules was another way to ensure their blessing. Therefore, in accordance with *vintana*, Ambatomitsangana was placed to the northeast (Alahamady) to be used as the "gate of state," explicitly demonstrating that the King combined both noble and divine characteristics in his person. Likewise, Andakana was placed to the west, a non-sacred direction, to be used as the gate for the Tsimahafotsy lay people. Amatsatso, the southern gate was used for mundane purposes, namely for surveillance. Amboara, the northern gate was logically allocated specifically to noble castes, for bringing their dead into the village when they died elsewhere. Miandravahiny, also a northern gate, was used by esteemed visitors to the hill.

In addition to spatial symbolism, ancestral significance was also taken into account and utilised by Andrianampoinimerina to bolster his image. For example, the gates built by Andrianjaka and Andriantsimitoviaminandriana (Ambavahaditsiombiomby and Ambavahadiatandranomasina), now internal gates, were conserved by Andrianampoinimerina and their practical and ideological functions were maintained. In this way, Andrianampoinimerina demonstrated his commitment to *fombandrazana*, or the ways of the ancestors. Thus, he arranged the gates so that Ambatomitsangana led to Ambavahaditsiombiomby, the original gate of state located to the north of the complex, established by Andrianjaka. Likewise, Andakana led to Ambavahadimasina, the external gate for lay people during Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Andriambelomasina's reign, and then led on to Ambatorangotina, the original western gate established by Andrianjaka. Because the western gates were used for lay people, without a constant connection to the divine royal ancestors and blessing, Andrianampoinimerina had Ambavahadimasina reconstructed with sacred earth from the royal tombs, to be used as a charm for the Tsimahafotsy leaving the village. Although Ambavahadimasina was rebuilt in the Late Kaloy style, by incorporating significant ancestral symbolism the gate used for the Tsimahafotsy's comings and goings constituted an icon that functioned to protect the town and communicate the pervading power of the royal ancestors. It also added to the Tsimahafotsy's conception of superiority and confidence, as every time they passed through Ambavahadimasina into the outside world they would receive blessing from the upper world.

In addition to the placement of the gates and ancestral significance, social hierarchy was reinforced by the tasks (inferior *hasina*) assigned to specific Avaradrano *demes* when building the gates. The assignments brought together disparate Hova groups in a single construction project. By working together they achieved a unified, circular whole, boasting a clear symbolic ideal for the growing empire. Further, because Andrianampoinimerina had the most important social ranks build the most important gates, their social position was permanently recorded in the monuments. The project of constructing the gates of Ambohimanga was therefore a symbolic manifestation of Avaradrano's unity as well as a demonstration of the correct socio-political order, with the Tsimahafotsy in a superior position. Various authors (Razafintsalama 1973; Belrose-Huyghues 1983; Kus 1989) have discussed the ideological significance of Andrianampoinimerina's building/rebuilding of Ambohimanga's gates, and most infer that it was a clear symbolic statement of his political aim: unification, which he achieved through hierarchical social organisation.

Within the royal compound, buildings and their traditional spatially-determined functions were conserved from Andrianampoinimerina's ancestors. He refused to destroy the features or significance of the ancestral *rovas*, instead maintaining and adding to them, enhancing directional significance using the *vintana* system. During the Late Kaloy Phase, Bevato represented a place of support and protection, containing Ratompobe's standing stone and the Andriamasinavalonas' tombs, the idol Fantaka and the royal zebu, as well as representing the vital feminine pole, serving as the home of Andrianampoinimerina's wives when they were in Ambohimanga to listen to *kabary* or partake in national ritual. The Mahandry Rova, erected to the northeast, represented the masculine pole, the centre of the kingdom. Within this enclosure existed the "dry" sacred power at the apex of the power hierarchy, and the force behind the Merina monarchy; including Andrianampoinimerina's personal talisman (Manjakatsiroa), the tombs of the royal ancestors, as well as the central post of the King's residence from where power was symbolically disseminated throughout Imerina. The third *rova*, Nanjakana, was designated for the monarch's descendants just as it was during the Early Phases. The area to the northeast of Mahandry, a direction of nobility (north) and divine power (east), denoted the kingdom's future, the outward reaching "branches of the tree," stemming from the "roots" of Bevato, through the "trunk" of Mahandry; thus, it was a symbolically appropriate place for royal progeny.

The organisation of buildings within each of the *rovas* also reflected the enhanced socio-cosmic order, whilst relying firmly on tradition. For example, in the Mahandry Rova, the house of the monarch was placed to the west of tombs, to the south of his idols, as per tradition. This demonstrated the monarch's place subservient to his ancestors and idols. While the idols were always placed in a position of authority over humans, they gained even more kudos during Andrianampoinimerina's reign when he created the national pantheon, and this was clearly demonstrated in the cultural landscape. Housing Manjakatsiroa (and its guardian) in the most venerable position, the traditional place of honour to the northeast of his own residence, symbolised the power hierarchy inherent in the organisational system. This act demonstrated that Manjakatsiroa supplied the monarch with power and that the monarch offered inferior *hasina* to the *sampy* in return for its blessing. Further, Kelimalaza (the "sovereign" talisman) was placed to the northeast of the Mahandry Rova, a sacred and royal direction in

accordance with the *vintana* system. This gave Kelimalaza instant ritual importance and credibility in the eyes of the population, suggesting Kelimalaza's role, watching over the entire kingdom not just the monarch. Its placement indicated its superior position both to the King and Manjakatsiroa. As in the Early Phases, lay people followed this example by keeping their idols in the sacred northeast corners of their residences – thus being reminded every day of the socio-cosmic order and their position within it. During the Late Kaloy Phase, higher ranking communities owned increasingly powerful idols and Ambohimanga had the most powerful talismans of all (Kelimalaza, Manjakatsiroa and Fantaka).

It follows that the idols' guardians also took on a more formalised role in the Late Kaloy government. Andrianampoinimerina's turn towards the idols as an official voice of the ancestors (like *vintana*) lent priests an official role as mediators in the Late Kaloy Phase. They were still considered not-quite-human beings who existed outside the social order, yet priests developed a hierarchy within themselves, the most important and powerful keeping the most powerful royal idols and advising the monarch, the less powerful advising the general population. Their placement in the landscape reinforced their perceived power and position. The most powerful priest lived to the northeast of the Mahandry Rova and guarded the most powerful idol, Kelimalaza, which watched over the growing kingdom. The next most powerful priest lived to the north of Mahandry within the Mahandry Rova, guarding the idol Manjakatsiroa that watched over Andrianampoinimerina personally. The third most important priest in the Late Kaloy hierarchy guarded Fantaka, which watched over the Tsimahafotsy population, living with the idol in its house to the west of Fidasiana overlooking the town of Ambohimanga.

Below the royal complex, social hierarchy was explicitly illustrated in Ambohimanga's cultural landscape even more so than in the Early Phases. By assigning residents specific *tanindrazana* (ancestral land) to the west of the royal compound, Andrianampoinimerina reinforced the social hierarchy of the Tsimahafotsy lay people through the landscape. The individuals assigned *tanindrazana* closest to the monarch, highest on the hill, were the most privileged and powerful. In the Late Kaloy Phase, these people were Andriamasinavalona, who were assigned ancestral land just below the Mahandry Rova in Fidasiana, designated as "royal" space since the reign of Andriantsimitoviaminandriana. Below the Andriamasinavalona were other Tsimahafotsy *demes* organised in order of importance from high to low, east to west. While the town may have been organised in this fashion prior to the Late Kaloy Phase, it was formalised at this time.

Architecture and Social Hierarchy

In addition to location, houses themselves, their size, specifications and decoration, also indicated social status, with Andrianampoinimerina clearly located at the top of the Late Kaloy human hierarchy. Like Andriambelomasina, Andrianampoinimerina lived in the Mahandry Rova, in the most impressive house, in the most fortified space, closest to the royal tombs, thereby demonstrating his superior social position as well as his intimate and privileged link with the ancestors. He enhanced this symbolism with Mahandry's superior size, height and stylistic features such as the longest *tandotrano* in the kingdom, topped with silver birds and chains, the largest and hardest central post, and the exclusive and expensive materials used in the dwelling's labour-

intensive construction,[266] which set it apart significantly from any other residence in Ambohimanga. But, Mahandry was similar enough in form to the laypeoples' residences that its intended message, communicating Andrianampoinimerina's exponentially greater wealth and therefore power and his privileged position within the *vintana* system, would have been easily and clearly understood.

Houses continued to serve as cosmic maps in the Late Kaloy Phase. The high pitched roof space represented the upper world, the earthen floor, and in particular the stones comprising the hearth, would have signified the underworld. The central post would have been seen to connect the three worlds. As with the organisation of the royal compound, the four cardinal directions were particularly important, and the northeast took on increased significance as a result of the *vintana* system, combining both sacred and noble attributes.[267] The monarch's house served as the prototypical example of this arrangement, the enormous centre post of Mahandry functioning as the metaphorical central point of Imerina.

The arrangement of furnishings inside the house reinforced the message of Andrianampoinimerina's superiority even further. As in Sulawesi, and most likely during the Early Phases, the ruler had his bed placed on the eastern wall, the east being the most sacred side of the house, so that ancestors could watch over him during sleep. But, unlike his predecessors, Andrianampoinimerina's bed was positioned in the northeast corner. This was significant because, like the placement of the external gate Ambatomitsangana in this direction, it suggested the increased nobility of Andrianampoinimerina in the power hierarchy. Thus, the placement of the living king in the section of the house previously reserved for amulets and talismans, media for the voice of the upper world, reinforced his semi-divine position. The west, by contrast, was still the side of the "profane," accommodating features associated with women and the underworld, such as the hearth (containing the unbridled forces of fire and the forces of the underworld) and the door (possibly symbolising the entrance to the womb). The north, which held characteristics of nobility and respect, was therefore the place where honoured guests were seated when taking audience with Andrianampoinimerina, on a stool leaning against the northern post. This corresponds with the noble visitors' entrance to the compound via Miandravahiny, the northern gate. The south, the direction of the non-noble, also associated with women, was logically where the King's weapons and provisions were stored. The huge central post was associated with the monarch, drawing all the opposing forces together in his person, supporting his growing kingdom. Thus, this was where Andrianampoinimerina sat on his "throne," receiving power from the upper world via the central post.

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266 See Mack (1986) regarding the hierarchy of materials.

267 Houses were the perfect microcosmic maps for vintana, as they were rectangular, consistently oriented with their long side on a north-south axis, thus all the directions could be neatly mapped, linked by the centre post. Each axis of the *vintana* system could be clearly understood. The house could function as a mediating device for ancestral blessing only if the *vintana* system was in perfect order.

Tombs and Ancestral Hierarchy

The ancestors were situated at the apex of the power hierarchy during the Late Kaloy Phase, just as they were during the Early Phases. The royal tomb's presence in Mahandry designated Ambohimanga as the *ville sainte* of Imerina, especially when Andrianampoinimerina, the first ruler to unite and rule over all Avaradrano, was buried there himself. Andrianampoinimerina was placed in accordance with tradition, to the north of Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Andriambelomasina, which again demonstrated the youngest ancestor receiving guidance and support from the elder ancestors, remembering that the southern direction supports the northern - just as the Bevato Rova supported the Mahandry Rova, which supported the Nanjakana Rova.

Despite being located slightly off the north-south axis, [268] direction held the same significance within the tomb as it did within the house. Although there was no central post, the opposing directions were seen to be linked in the centre. Directional significance was evident in that on the west side of the tomb the *vatovavy* or "female stone" was placed, and the direction from which one places the body into the tomb, from the world of the living into the world of the ancestors, through the western door. On the east side of the tomb was the *vatolahy* or "male stone" and the direction in which the head of the deceased was oriented, towards the ordered ancestral world. Andrianampoinimerina's body, like Andriantsimitoviaminandriana's and Andriambelomasina's, was placed in the centre of the tomb, alone, in the mediating position at the centre of the system.

In addition to location, the tomb emphasised the rank and power of Andrianampoinimerina. The King's tomb was more permanent, expensive, and impressive than the tombs of his ancestors, which articulated his superior position. It was also significant that Andrianampoinimerina was buried in a casket made from inferior *hasina* (uncut silver Piastres) and wrapped in *lambas* brought from all the divisions of Imerina. This was a visual demonstration of the King's importance as an ancestor, an indication of the *hasina* system's presence in the ancestral world and his ability to unify disparate social factions. Andrianampoinimerina was also furnished with the uncut Piastres and *lambas* in order to encourage his donation of superior *hasina* from the ancestral realm. This emphasises Andrianampoinimerina's power to unite the kingdom both in life, as semi-divine leader, and then in death as a full ancestor.

As a result of the presence of the remains in the Mahandry Rova, Ambohimanga had been designated as a royal necropolis by the Late Kaloy Phase, and the earth from the King's tombs, obtained within their *tranomasina*, was deemed sacred, still representing the dry power of the ancestors, even more so than in the Early Phases.[269] As described in Chapter Five, Andrianampoinimerina regularly made sacrifices to his

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268 The incredible power of the royal tombs continued to be illustrated by the spatial relationship between them and the royal residence, placed slightly off axis, so as to avoid too powerful an energy transfer from the ancestors to the living. In addition, the power of the royal tombs was thought to disturb the vintana of the King, which would endanger the entire kingdom.

269 As discussed in Chapter Three, because the ancestral bodies were considered "dry," and turned to dust or soil, the earth on the top of the royal tombs was thought to contain their spirits. The chief or *ombiassy* would be priviledged to obtain bits of this earth in

ancestors at the shrine established to the east of the tombs in exchange for the earth that he used to construct the sacred gate of Ambavahadimasina, the powerful charm protecting Ambohimanga and the Tsimahafotsy, and in the *sotrovoakaka* oath of allegiance, to make amulets, and most famously (mixed with water) in the *fandroana* ceremony held at Ambohimanga's navel stone. After Andrianampoinimerina's death, the earth became even more sacred in that it became infused with the spirit of Avaradrano's unifier and most powerful and successful ruler.

The wives of the monarch were buried to the south of the royal tombs, to the south of Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, in a position of support. Just as Ratompobe's stone was placed in a direction of support relative to the navel stone in Fidasiana, so were the actual tombs of the mothers and wives of the sovereign. Next, the Andriamasinavalona, the second most important nobles, were allocated *tanindrazana* to the west of the King's and wives' tombs.

The tomb style used for Andrianampoinimerina's wives and the Andriamasinavalona also signified their privileged status in that they were buried singly, thus suggesting that they were "royal" enough not to require the presence of other bodies and *famadihana* to be a potent source of blessing. They were instantly considered dry and ancestral, just like the monarch. However, the tomb's location to the south (the wives) and below the royal burial grounds to the west (the Andriamasinavalona), as well as the topping of their tombs with *tranomanara*, which were smaller than *tranomasina*, kept them firmly in their place. The rest of the Tsimahafotsy were arranged according to *tanindrazana* assigned to them, sloping down the hill from the Bevato Rova to the west, in decreasing order of social rank, which served to permanently illustrate the *hasina* system.

Because ancestral blessing was considered crucial to a prosperous state, Andrianampoinimerina continuously encouraged the "cult of the royal ancestors." He emphasised their omnipotent status at the top of the power hierarchy, above the living, and attempted to keep them, his power base, content. We see evidence of this when Andrianampoinimerina sacrificed zebu at the tombs of Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Andriambelomasina when changes were made to the cultural landscape at Ambohimanga. This process indicated ancestral involvement in change, suggesting that change must conform to ancestral approval (e.g. *fombandrazana*). The monarch sacrificing a zebu to the ancestors represented a particularly significant appeal to them, and publicly marked their role at the top of the power hierarchy overlooking the human world.[270]

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exchange for sacrifice. The substance would be used for protective amulets or to mix with sacred water when blessing the population.

270 Also, Andrianampoinimerina ensured that the form and functions of obects imbued with ancestral significance and *fombandrazana* were preserved, such as ancestral gates, buildings, and other significant features. Andrianampoinimerina reinforced his power hierarchy and role as mediator by appealing to ancestral ways and using these ancestrally significant objects, thereby alligning himself with his ancestors. Thus, with the emphasis on tradition (*fombandrazana*), and the cult of the ancestors, and age, objects associated with the ancestors became more important in the cultural landscape vocabulary as legitimation tools.

Power Flow between Tombs and Houses

The "cult of the ancestors" and their hierarchical arrangement was reflexively reinforced and reflected the "*hasina* system" as discussed above, whereby sacrifices were left as inferior *hasina* at tombs following the hierarchical pattern set out by Andrianampoinimerina. Tsimahafotsy nobles and laypersons sacrificed to their personal ancestors at their family tombs, asking for personal blessing and protection. Likewise, the King would sacrifice to the more powerful "royal" ancestors at their tombs to ask for protection for the entire kingdom. Sacrifices at the royal tombs were symbolic of the inferior *hasina* owed to the ancestors by the monarch in exchange for their blessing. In turn, citizens of Ambohimanga would give the monarch inferior *hasina* in the form of uncut Piastres, animal sacrifices and a percentage of their rice yield, in exchange for ancestral blessing mediated through him. These sacrifices were tangible reminders of the debt owed to the ancestors at the top of the power hierarchy, as well as the complex mediation system required to procure ancestral blessing. This hierarchical arrangement kept Tsimahafotsy society strong and functioning efficiently throughout the Late Kaloy Phase.

Mediating Structures and Persons

The Navel Stone and Fig Tree as *Axis Mundi* of the Tsimahafotsy Universe

Andrianampoinimerina used familiar objects and imagery in the cultural landscape to legitimate himself as the unique mediator between the ancestral and human realms. The most important combination of features signifying Andrianampoinimerina's role as mediator was the sacred stone and fig tree at Fidasiana, which he used similarly to his predecessors, adding functions and significance. The stone and tree continued to serve as the primary signifier of Andrianampoinimerina's semi-divine status. The structure connected the King (symbolised by the tree trunk) to the upper world, illustrating his conquering of the lower world, as well as his ability to unite the directions of the *vintana* system.

Coronation

When Andrianampoinimerina became King he followed the protocol established by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana for his inauguration, stepping onto the sacred navel stone at Fidasiana. This action emphasised the support of the royal ancestors that were responsible for his reign and the most potent source of his power. The standing stone established by Ratompobe and Andriantsimitoviaminandriana to the south of the navel stone also remained symbolic of ancestral support.

The clothes and ornamentation Andrianampoinimerina wore during his coronation were symbolic of his mediating power. Their meaning was based on past significance, reflecting the objects Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Ratompobe had buried beneath the stone in the Early Kaloy Phase. The red coral beads inlaid with white, worn by Andrianampoinimerina, were especially significant in that they symbolised the marriage of white and red, the upper and middle world, ancestors and humans, in his

person.[271] He received uncut Piastres (symbolising unity) as inferior *hasina* from the Tsimahafotsy nobles (Andriamasinavalona) responsible for placing him in power. This action implied their deference to him, taking one step below him, as well as enforcing the message that they would uphold the ideal of unity. From this example, it is clear that the items placed under the stone by Andriantsimitoviaminandriana and Ratompobe remained culturally significant in the Late Kaloy Phase, and were cultivated and used by Andrianampoinimerina to identify his semi-divine power, emphasise his sacred authority, and secure his followers' commitment to his political ambition.

Fandroana

Fandroana, performed annually on the stone during Andrianampoinimerina's long reign, further demonstrated the King's role as mediator. Sacred water from the two springs feeding Amparihy and sacred earth from the royal tombs in Mahandry were mixed together and used to bless those gathered for the ritual. Mixing water and earth symbolised the monarch's mediating role more explicitly than any other complimentary opposition. The symbolism was so important and explicit of the King's mediating power that he had the pool built within Mahandry so as to have a readily available sacred water source, juxtaposed alongside the sacred earth of the royal tombs. This arrangement of sacred earth and water in the cultural landscape within Andrianampoinimerina's personal domain served as a permanent reminder of his mediating power. As discussed in Chapter Five, during *fandroana* and at times of instability the earth from the royal tombs would be mixed with the water contained in the pool and blown on his subjects, purifying them and renewing their commitment to Imerina through the binary opposition of wet and dry, vital and ancestral, temporarily united and resolved by the monarch.

During *fandroana*, the King administered blessing to his wives, the Andriamasinavalona, and other Tsimahafotsy invited into Fidasiana and arranged according to the social hierarchy he had established. The power was then passed down symbolically by the wives to their constituents on the twelve sacred hills of Imerina. Once conquered physically by Andrianampoinimerina, the twelve hills were conquered ideologically in that Andrianampoinimerina set up their cultural landscapes as replicas of Ambohimanga. Ancestral significance was assigned to the hills, and from that point forward they would be known as either birthplaces or burial places of the "great" (real or mythical) Hova chiefs. A navel stone and fig tree structure was established in the centre of each royal compound, where Andrianampoinimerina stationed one of his wives to represent him. The wives thus assumed the role of the King and could act as he did, standing upon the navel stones of their hills, between the upper and lower worlds, and pass on the blessing of socio-cosmic order to the people of Imerina.

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271 The *vintana* system, imported to the central highlands by Andrianampoinimerina, reinforced the colour symbolism that the Indonesian immigrants had brought from the archipelago. In both systems, white is associated with purity, black is associated with sorrow, pollution and death, and red is associated with humanity and the ruler (see Mack 1986:39-41; 1989:42).

Alakaosy

The purification of idols (*alakaosy*) was another tradition inherited from Indonesia, performed on the navel stone at Fidasiana. During the early phases, this ritual would have probably taken place privately. But, with the newly formed "national pantheon" during the Late Kaloy Phase, a grander public ritual was required. It was logical to hold the ceremony on the stone, because idols were considered mediums for the ancestral voice. By placing the chosen royal pantheon, taken from the twelve hills of Imerina, on the stone and inviting selected high ranking Merina to observe their purification there, Andrianampoinimerina associated the idols with past ancestral power, in a sense "coronating" them, as the Tsimahafotsy "coronated" him. In this way, the King figuratively demonstrated his supplication to the idols, placing them above himself but beneath the ancestors, as another power source which needed to be sanctioned by them and annually renewed. Combined with the idols' placement in the cultural landscape as discussed above, this ritual bathing served to encourage the acceptance of the continually fluctuating pantheon. After *alakaosy*, when each idol was taken back to its home, whether at Ambohimanga or on one of the other Imerina hills, it was considered purified, able to offer blessing and communicate ancestral sentiment as before.

Kabary

Significantly, the navel stone was also used by the King to deliver addresses (*kabary*) to his wives and the highest ranking Tsimahafotsy, the Andriamasinavalona, who acted as his direct political advisors. By standing upon the rock, Andrianampoinimerina's message was legitimised by ancestral connection, and his role as mediator was emphasised by the resolved mixture of symbolic items buried beneath it. Thus, whatever message Andrianampoinimerina was communicating was accepted as "superior *hasina*," a gift from the ancestral realm that must be respected and upheld. As a result, the sacred stone symbolically connected the speaker to the ancestors, truth and order.

From the navel stone, Andrianampoinimerina proclaimed areas sacred and revealed *fady* (ancestral commandments), some of which were manipulated for his own benefit. For example, Andrianampoinimerina realised that he required a strong, healthy, nucleus population at Ambohimanga to multiply, represent him and fight on his behalf, and used his powers as a mediator for the ancestral word to achieve these ends, primarily by preserving natural resources. Thus, he sanctioned the forest as sacred to the ancestors, thereby preserving a resource that gave Ambohimanga a clear advantage over other denuded hills and regions. He established and/or maintained ancestral shrines in the forest, and declared the use of its resources without permission *fady* to the ancestors. Amparihy was also consecrated by the King who, in addition to proclaiming it auspicious as a result of the conjoined streams, threw red and white coral beads, along with a silver ring, into the water. This action symbolised the fundamental oppositions resolved by the monarch into unity (the ring) and sacred authority. Throwing these items into the water re-emphasised ancestral order, conquering the vital Vazimba forces of nature, while retaining their wet vitality, thus imbuing the water with sacred potential. Andrianampoinimerina also verbally declared that the ancestors demanded the water was to be respected and kept clean. Further, the other springs imbued with sacred properties, namely Andranomboahangy, sanctioned

for weaker residents of Ambohimanga and Andranomanento, established for medicinal purposes, were preserved. Andrianampoinimerina made it clear, through *kabary*, that using the above resources without permission from the monarch (e.g. the ancestors) would result in calamity, thus they were protected and used responsibly and sustainably throughout the Late Kaloy Phase.

In addition to internal *fady*, the external gates that Andrianampoinimerina had built were a material reminder of the *fady* established against certain foreign objects, ideas and technologies in order to preserve the language of the cultural landscape. As discussed in Chapter Three, although they were said to have originated from the ancestors and idols, many *fady* were established by Andrianampoinimerina himself as a mediating mechanism for change, forbidding things and ideas to be brought into Ambohimanga which he thought would corrupt the nascent state. *Fady* evolved over time, incorporating most exotic imports introduced by Europeans. Also, *fady* enforced the *vintana* system in that it was considered taboo to build houses against the rules of *vintana*, a house larger than the ruler's, or to build a house with any other material except wood, an exclusive material difficult to procure. Behind the system was the constant quest for ancestral approval, which was believed to be granted when *fombandrazana* was not deviated from excessively. Further, *fady* worked to sustain the social hierarchy as set out by Andrianampoinimerina, in that it was *fady* to move out of one's *tanindrazana* or to build houses larger than the monarch's dwelling, etc. Thus, the *fady* system illustrated in the cultural landscape served as an effective mediating device, linking taboo with the supernatural realm. This association allowed the system to work as a control to preserve Tsimahafotsy cultural integrity, during times when things could have changed dramatically and disrupted the "correct" and productive order of things.

Ambatorangotina

Kabary followed the *hasina* hierarchy set up by Andrianampoinimerina in the way that messages were relayed. After hearing Andrianampoinimerina's declarations at the navel stone in Fidasiana, the Andriamasinavalona, as representatives of the King, would then recount the message at Ambatorangotina, standing on the stone there, shaded by the fig tree. Andrianampoinimerina recreated Fidasiana's navel stone and fig tree structure to lend the Andriamasinavalona's words credibility. Just as at Fidasiana, the rock of Ambatorangotina was associated with chaos, the vital Vazimba spirits of the earth; the tree was associated with the sacred and ordered realm of the royal ancestors, a "*hasina* tree", which could only be planted in royally sanctioned locations and which signified ancestral blessing. As discussed above, in Fidasiana the tree growing on top of the rock represented to the general public the recurring conflict between the vital and ancestral, with the monarch in the middle, the "trunk" of the tree, mediating between the two realms, and representing resolution. Therefore when Andrianampoinimerina's message was repeated at Ambatorangotina and on the twelve hills, the structure gave his messages legitimacy and infused them with ancestral blessing and approval, even through they were relayed by emissaries for the King.

Thus, from the navel stone at Fidasiana, and the replicas at Ambatorangotina and on the twelve hills, Andrianampoinimerina used this accepted image of himself, guided by the ancestors, surmounting and

overcoming chaos, to establish socio-political order and organise the people of Avaradrano into a relatively cohesive group, the Merina, with the Tsimahafotsy at the helm, thereby actualising the ideal of unity through hierarchy. Essentially, the rock, monarch, tree trilogy added legitimacy to Andrianampoinimerina's messages, allowing his socio-cosmic design to be widely accepted and adhered to during his reign and after, thereby creating order, uniting the Tsimahafotsy and the expanding polity around him.

Mahandry's Central Post as the Central Axis of Imerina

Finally architecture also effectively demonstrated Andrianampoinimerina's mediating role, even more so than it had during the Early Phases. The most significant mediating structure was the enormous central post of Mahandry, which increased in size dramatically in the Late Kaloy Phase. While houses in the Early Phases had central posts, serving both a structural function and symbolising the connection of the three cosmic worlds, Mahandry's central post was designed to symbolise Andrianampoinimerina's role as mediator and ruler over all of Imerina.[272] The post, or *andry*, was ideologically important in that it was symbolic of the King, considered to be literally and metaphorically the central axis of Imerina. Thus, the regions of Avaradrano were seen to be united by the centre post of Mahandry, which Andrianampoinimerina designated by the term *foibe*, "the centre point" (Callet 1974:673). It represented the strength of the monarch, supported by the ancestors, holding up the house, as well as the kingdom.

Bloch has acknowledged this strong association of central post and person among Merina royalty, *andriana*. In fact, he has suggested that the word *andriana*, meaning "head of state," is most probably derived from the Malagasy word *andry* which means "house-post" or "support." The ruler was thus the "exemplary centre" of society, symbolised by the post. Similarly, Kus recognised, the image of the singular sovereign standing at the centre of Imerina is a recurring element in the "propaganda" associated with recounting and justifying Andrianampoinimerina's claim and rise to power. Resembling Bloch, Kus has also asserted that the sovereign was comparable to the singular and central pillar of the traditional house, that not only materially symbolised the ordering principle of the house and cosmos, but also linguistically referenced strength and peace (Kus and Raharijaona 1995:24).

Power Dissemination via the Central Post

In addition to serving as the Merina's centre, Mahandry's central post was also seen as a receptacle for ancestral power. As discussed in the previous section the post was considered a depository for ancestral power flowing from the tombs located to the east of it. It makes symbolic sense that the most powerful ancestors would disseminate power to the largest and most impressive post. It was thus thought that the power and blessing from Andrianampoinimerina's central post could then be disseminated to the population via

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272 It should be remembered that Andrianampoinimerina was chosen to be king because of his propensity for leaning against the central posts of houses.

the smaller central posts in their residences located below the royal compound, thereby passing superior *hasina* from the top of the hill downwards, from east to west. Power was thus conveyed from the King, represented by the central post of Mahandry, to the post of his wives' symbolic house in Fidasiana, to the Andriamasinavalona's residences and their central posts near Ambatorangotina, to the lay peoples' dwellings below. Power was passed down similarly from the royal *rovas* on each of the twelve hills. Within each household the hierarchical dissemination of power continued from the eldest male at the top of the family power pyramid to the children at the bottom, thus effectively reinforcing the ideal order on every level. Because all Hova houses were organised identically, the visual message was effective. Essentially, this hierarchical dissemination of power was possible because of redundant design, a consistent mapping of the socio-cosmic order onto the cultural landscape of the Merina's royal, ritual and everyday lives.

Ambohimanga and Tsimahafotsy "Superiority"

The Late Kaloy Phase marked the pinnacle of fortified hilltop settlements in Imerina. Ambohimanga stood out as the most powerful of all, the strongest, highest, and most northeasterly, visually reinforcing its strength and power in uniting Imerina, with the Tsimahafotsy as its leading residents. Even when the political capital moved to Antananarivo, Ambohimanga remained the true power source of Imerina, its sacred centre. Andrianampoinimerina reconciled the move, successfully adding Antananarivo to the system by perpetuating verbal and visual imagery that suggested the two hills were conjoined.

At the end of the Late Kaloy Phase the hills, seen together, took on the term *foibe*, or centre of Imerina (Callet 1974:675), when previously Ambohimanga was the unique centre. The central posts of Mahandry and Besekana (Andrianampoinimerina's residence in Antananarivo) were considered connected and Andrianampoinimerina declared, "*Je ne séparerai plus jamais Ambohimanga de Tananarive*" (Callet 1974:707). His words in the Tantara include various metaphoric images of this conjoining. For example, the residents of Ambohimanga and Antananarivo are said to be like "a guinea fowl; without two colours of feathers" (Callet 1974:708). At one point in the oral histories Andrianampoinimerina is figuratively described as standing at the central position of Ambohimanga and Antananarivo holding the threads of the four corners of the silk *lamba* that constituted the unified Merina state (Callet 1974:715). Repeatedly in the Tantara the names of Ambohimanga and Antananarivo are cited together in a formulaic statement (Callet 1974:672,706,872,910,1022,1053,1056). Finally, Andrianampoinimerina declared himself to *be* Ambohimanga and Antananarivo (Callet 1974:708).

Andrianampoinimerina reinforced this perception of conjoined capitals by maintaining Antananarivo and Ambohimanga alike in form and function. The spatial arrangement of buildings, separate *rova* areas ranging from southwest to northeast, the lines of tombs, *fahimasina* and sacred stones, were identical in both landscapes during the Late Kaloy Phase. Further, the hills were functionally identical in that national ritual activities were repeated in the two locales, such as *fandroana*, the royal bath, and *alakaosy* (Callet 1974:161,171). *Kabary* was also repeated in both places. Also, certain buildings shared the same name in

Ambohimanga as those in Antananarivo. This identical ordering of space reinforced the political propaganda promoted during Andrianampoinimerina's reign, which stressed the unity of Ambohimanga and Antananarivo (Kus 1989:50) and Imerina, more generally. Kus has argued that "what we have in the 'dual' mapping of Ambohimanga and in the 'confounding' of Ambohimanga and Antananarivo (as presented in the Tantara) is the articulation of two major symbolic images to the advantage of the state" (ibid:52). The two capitals of Imerina were explicitly mapped representations of the social order and the ideal of political unification (Kus 1979:277; 89-90:51), where the King maintained the monopoly of the privileged positions of centre (*foibe*), represented by the conjoined capitals, and the northeast corner (Alahamady), represented by Ambohimanga alone. Thus, material and linguistic propaganda, characteristic of state organised societies, worked to serve practical and ideological ends, to legitimize the creation and maintenance of a new political capital, while preserving the original sacred one.

This linking of Ambohimanga and Antananarivo and the almost identical modelling of the *rova* complexes assisted the King by granting him an ideological foothold in local knowledge and symbols, which helped to guarantee the intelligibility and assimilation of his message by average citizens, and to support his claim to power (Kus and Raharijaona 1995:6). Thus, based on tradition, Andrianampoinimerina successfully crafted the words and material symbols of the early Merina polity to justify its presence, legitimacy, and its desirability. As a result, he was able to move his chain of fortified frontier villages, also structural and functional microcosms of Ambohimanga, further outward in a series of steps encompassing more and more of Madagascar, thus extending his boarders nearly to "the seas" by the time of his death.

It is important to understand that Ambohimanga and Antananarivo were conjoined as complimentary opposites in accordance with the cosmological system underlying Merina perception. Throughout the Late Kaloy Phase Ambohimanga would remain the sacred capital and Antananarivo would serve as the secular capital, receiving power from its northeasterly twin, as power flowed from northeast to southwest. Although Antananarivo became larger, more politically important, and wealthier, in effect Ambohimanga always reigned superior. It was the older settlement, highest and most northesasterly on the *vintana* map, enjoying a privileged position in the cultural landscape. Also, it contained sacred geography such as the original navel stone at Fidasiana, Mahandry's central post and the tombs of Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, Andriambelomasina and Andrianampoinimerina himself. Further, it served as the centre of ritual life in Imerina, a source of superior *hasina* so potent that it could be disseminated throughout all of Imerina, uniting its citizens in a common ideological perception of strength and superiority.

The Fiadanana Phase (1810-1897)

Change and Continuity

Although, with increasing amounts of European influence, much change occurred during the Fiadanana Phase, the Late Kaloy organisational system was carefully maintained in Ambohimanga, and the Tsimahafotsy

preserved their cultural identity and superior position. Resembling previous phases, I argue that the cultural landscape played a primary role in this process.

As we discussed in Chapter Three, the Fiadanana Phase was characterised by a series of "traditional" and "non-traditional" monarchs. The "traditional" monarchs, Radama I (for some of his reign), Ranavalona I, and Rasoherina, assumed their position in the organisational system as mediators of opposition, spending a good deal of time at Ambohimanga, holding the annual royal bath ritual there, promoting *fombandrazana* and carefully managing change so as not to upset the ancestors. They used the cultural landscape as Andrianampoinimerina had, to emphasise their message and promote their semi-divine image at the apex of the population.

The citizens of Ambohimanga also played a large role in maintaining *fombandrazana* and their sacred geography. The Tsimahafotsy harkened back to the "golden age" of the Late Kaloy Phase, during which time they held a superior social and political rank in Imerina, by obeying the *fady* established by Andrianampoinimerina and religiously following the ways of their ancestors to ensure ancestral blessing.

When non-traditional monarchs such as Radama I (for some of his reign), Ranavalona II, Radama II and Ranavalona III came to power, they retained their royal status and accompanying wealth and grandeur. They respected their ancestors, and all were legitimated as mediators on the sacred stone of Fidasiana. However, they did not always provide a satisfactory link between the ancestral and terrestrial worlds to keep the system functioning. As a result, the self-regulatory features of the additive change system came into play to mediate change that was too extreme and maintain the reconciliation between the ancestral and human realms.

Ombiassy from Ambohimanga (also serving as idol guardians) took on a new independent role, linking the general population with the ancestral guidance system, rising to fill the monarch's place as mediators and preserve the organisational system of their ancestors. Although they fell outside the power hierarchy, *ombiassy* originally administered superior *hasina* and guidance to the monarch, so it was logical for them to assume the monarch's position in times of crisis. Also, o*mbiassy,* who had achieved a high rank as guardians of national palladia, felt that their positions were under threat and wished to preserve traditional order.

Thus, the Tsimahafotsy, led by o*mbiassy* (guardians of tradition), protested what they saw as excessive change and took it upon themselves to restore *fombandrazana*. As discussed in Chapter Three, several protest movements were instigated from Ambohimanga, the "cradle of the Merina" and seat of sacred ancestral power. The disaffected Tsimahafotsy would commune with the royal ancestors via *ramenjana/tromba* and utilise the sociological or ideological systems under threat to demonstrate their and their ancestors' displeasure, in hopes of influencing the ruler to revert back to former ways. These movements demonstrated the chaos caused by straying from *fombandrazana* and implied that order must be restored by returning to the former organisational systems established by the ancestors, primarily Andrianampoinimerina. Therefore, as a

result of their conservative approach to change, the Tsimahafotsy upheld a position of power and influence in Imerina during the Fiadanana Phase.

The cultural landscape of Ambohimanga played a significant role in maintaining the organisational system as established during the Early Phase and Late Kaloy Phase and facilitated the Tsimahafotsy's role as guardians of the old order during this tumultuous period. Although the symbolic language of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape changed quite dramatically on the surface, taking on different forms during the Fiadanana Phase, its function and meaning was consistent. No structural principles were added to the language of the cultural landscape, but those that existed were enhanced and exploited further. For example, because royal ancestral tombs were not accessible without royal invitation, certain noble tombs and features consecrated by Andrianampoinimerina for everyday practical usage, such as springs, standing stones, or gates, became "*douany*," or media for ancestral spirits. *Ombiassy* held *tromba* ceremonies in these locales, demonstrating their flexibility and determination to uphold ancestral connection.

Thus, Tsimahafotsy (and broader Merina) unity through a common understanding of cosmological and social order was maintained throughout the Fiadanana Phase, sometimes above ground, sometimes underground, but always held in check by the people and place (the cultural landscape) of Ambohimanga. Ambohimanga therefore retained its position as the sacred capital– the "real" Merina seat of power, cradle of tradition, and a hotbed of revolution. Above or below the surface, the "language" of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape was conserved, its message serving to bind the Tsimahafotsy Merina together in spirit and place and maintain their cultural identity and notion of privilege.

The Fortifications and the Royal Compound – Boundaries of Ethnic, Cultural and Social Separation

Ambohimanga's walls and external gates continued to separate the Tsimahafotsy from other Merina groups and Europeans during the Fiadanana Phase. Although they largely lost their primary defensive role, the gates remained significant and their functions consistent. In particular, Ambatomitsangana and Ambavahaditsiombiomby were exclusively used by the monarchs when they visited Ambohimanga, and Andakana was consistently used by the populace, along with Ambavahadimasina, which continued to be revered for its sacred power.

Also, all of the external gates of Ambohimanga continued to function as barriers to *fady*, the ancestors and idols' "commandments" throughout the Fiadanana Phase. Ambohimanga maintained a ban on things and people deemed harmful to tradition (*fombandrazana*), even when adjacent hills lifted their *fady*. This reinforced the role of the Tsimahafotsy and their cultural landscape features as mediating between Merina tradition and foreign influence. Alien people, things and ideas were not allowed inside the barriers without both royal and ancestral approval. If royal approval was given too readily, as it was during the time of non-traditional rulers, the Tsimahafotsy would respect ancestral precedent and rebel on the ancestors' behalf, as described above.

As a result, Ambohimanga largely retained its cultural integrity and exclusivity throughout the Fiadanana Phase. Tradition continued to be respected and heeded there despite outward acceptance of foreign ways on the part of some monarchs.

Even though the living monarch was not always resident in Ambohimanga, the ancestors in their tombs were a continuous presence. Therefore, royal space remained clearly defined. Ambatorangotina retained its function as a boundary between royal and non-royal space at the top of the hill. Also, within the royal boundaries, the three *rovas* remained consistent in function. Although the Bevato Rova underwent significant change in appearance, being basically disassembled during the Fiadanana Phase, the original *rova* consistently maintained its role as a place for supporters, protectors, the metaphorical "roots" of the kingdom – namely the talismans, wives and parents of the monarch. The Mahandry Rova also experienced significant change in form, with the expansion of the enclosure, the dismantling of Manjakatsiroa's residence, and the addition of Filiminia and Tranofitaratra, the Queen's pool, garden and tomb. Nevertheless, the *rova* remained organised according to tradition and served as the nexus of royal power, containing the monarch's Ambohimanga residences, Mahandry (Andrianampoinimerina's sacred abode with its powerful central post) and the royal tombs. The Nanjakana Rova probably changed most of all during the Fiadanana Phase as houses were repeatedly added, accidentally destroyed and rebuilt. Yet, the area was consistently used to house royal progeny, denoting the future and progress in accordance with tradition.

Architecture and Social Hierarchy

It was inevitable that the cultural landscape of Ambohimanga would change during the Fiadanana Phase as new materials and design concepts were selectively imported from Europe, but messages inherent in its architecture remained consistent. Social hierarchy continued to be defined by house placement in the cultural landscape as well as the dwelling itself.

At the top of the human hierarchy was the monarch, illustrated by well-known and accepted location symbolism. First, the placement of the Fiadanana queen's residence (first Manjakamiadana, then Filiminia) to the north of Mahandry, suggested to the population that she was important and powerful enough to live in a superior position to Andrianampoinimerina's former dwelling. Also, with the addition of Filiminia and Tranofitatra, the growing architectural opulence of each generation of royalty communicated the Queen's increasing wealth, power and status, positioning the monarch at the top of the social power hierarchy via material culture.

It is interesting to note that by moving royal houses from Antananarivo to Ambohimanga, and among the Ambohimanga *rovas*, monarchs maintained a strong ancestral connection through architecture. For example, when Ranavalona I removed most of the houses at Fidasiana to different areas of the *rova* complex, she did not destroy them, rather she restored and added to them. A particularly good example of this is her restoration of Manatsara-lehibe by building a protective layer around it. Also, it is remarkable that even despite being

levelled by fire during Ranavalona I's funeral fire, the houses at Nanjakana were rebuilt by Rasoherina and their names and identities conserved. Further, when Ranavalona II had several buildings moved from Antananarivo to Ambohimanga to save them from demolition, she also conserved their original names.

Mahandry perhaps illustrated the greatest example of ancestral connection. Although the queens lived to the north of this old house in progressively grander, more Europeanised buildings, Andrianampoinimerina's former abode was considered the quintessential royal home, as it contained the only true ancestrally enforced central post. Even the enormous central post of Ranavalona I's palace in Antananarivo had little ritual significance, primarily signifying the queen's political power over Madagascar. Thus, the two posts of Ambohimanga and Antananarivo remained conjoined as they did at the end of the Late Kaloy Phase, with Mahandry and its sacred central post signifying the sacred centre of Imerina. The post in Ranavalona I's dwelling at Ambohimanga was not mentioned in the oral traditions, and therefore it is assumed was much smaller and less significant than Mahandry's post. It is quite possible that Ranavalona II and Ranavalona III elected not to have a house with a central post in Ambohimanga as deference to Andrianampoinimerina, so as not to compete with his supreme power.

The Tsimahafotsy's houses in Ambohimanga also continued to illustrate and reinforce the power hierarchy throughout the Fiadanana Phase. Although they changed form in some ways, they continued to illustrate their occupant's elevated social rank through style, size and materials used. The indication of the owner's social position, formerly determined by wooden construction and the length of the *tandotrano* above the apex of the gables, gave way to the largeness of their dwellings, decorative features, stone pillars, the use of sun-dried and cooked brick, and non-flammable roofing materials. But, despite these changes in form, directional principles were strictly adhered to during the Fiadanana Phase and central posts were generally conserved. Thus, the language of *vintana* was maintained and the message remained consistent through exclusive design and orientation. As a result, the houses built in Ambohimanga throughout the Fiadanana Phase, although changing in form and location, continued to communicate the wealth, social position and power of the individual proprietor through their size, building materials and stylistic features, just as they had done during the Late Kaloy Phase. Also, because of continuity in orientation and form, the house continued to serve as a receptacle for royal ancestral power disseminated from the upper world via Mahandry's post, which had posthumously come to signify Andrianampoinimerina himself, the true *andry* of Imerina. Further, the idols and other sacred heirlooms maintained their privileged position within the Tsimahafotsy's homes, by their placement in the sacred northeast corner.

Thus, during the Fiadanana Phase, architecture, especially in Ambohimanga, exemplified syncretism between European and Merina culture, incorporating innovation as it maintained fundamental continuity of tradition established by the Merina ancestors. As we have seen, European artisans in Madagascar replicated the style of dwellings they knew at home, adapting forms, materials and meanings to their new surroundings. In turn, these innovations were incorporated and adapted further by the Merina, evolving into a unique architectural

style which complied with what had become essential Merina elements of form and function, thereby maintaining continuity of meaning in the face of change. Thus, through architecture, traditional order was maintained, with the Fiadanana monarch at the top of the social hierarchy.

Tombs and Ancestral Hierarchy

The royal ancestors of Ambohimanga remained clearly positioned at the apex of the ancestral hierarchy throughout the Fiadanana Phase. The monarchs sacrificed to their ancestors at the stone and hearth behind the royal tombs in the Mahandry Rova, offering inferior *hasina* to Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, Andriambelomasina, and especially Andrianampoinimerina throughout the Fiadanana Phase. In fact, Ranavalona I established the *fahimasina* at Mahandry so as to have a ready supply of zebu for this purpose. As a result, the earth covering the tombs containing ancestral power remained powerful and sacred. We should recall that during Radama's reign, an arrogater attempted to use the earth to usurp royal power. Also, throughout all the monarchs' reigns, the sacred earth was consistently used for the *fandroana* ritual, mixed with water from Amparihy, thereby contracting a symbolic union of earth, water and sovereign, as tradition dictated.

When an untraditional monarch did not provide superior *hasina* (blessing) to the people via *fandroana*, Tsimahafotsy *zanadrano* proactively used the western gate (Ambavahadimasina) as a source of the powerful ancestral earth. It is to be remembered that Andrianampoinimerina had had the gate built with the sacred soil from the royal tombs in order to create a "charm," a source of blessing, for those Tsimahafotsy passing through it. Thus, it could be used during the reigns of non-traditional monarchs when access to the royal tombs was denied, and consequently became the most important *douany* in Ambohimanga, with the most direct link to the royal ancestors. The importance lauded on this sacred earth demonstrated that royal ancestors were still firmly stationed at the top of the Tsimahafotsy socio-cosmic hierarchy during the Fiadanana Phase.

Ancestral hierarchy also continued to be expressed through tomb building, tomb location and burial practice, as it did previously. Resembling the transformation in houses during the Fiadanana Phase, layperson's tombs were likewise embellished, often incorporating European elements of technology and design, but retaining their fundamental form and orientation, with *tranomasina* and *tranomanara* used to distinguish the monarch and nobility respectively. Also, tombs continued to be located in the *deme*'s *tanindrazana*, originally assigned by Andrianampoinimerina, which demonstrated a clear differentiation in social rank, top down from the *rova* complex. Ranavalona I and Ranavalona II, both buried at Ambohimanga during the Fiadanana Phase, also followed tradition in that their shared tomb, like their houses, was grander than Andrianampoinimerina's and placed to the north of his.

Although its major tenets stayed true, there was a slight disruption in the social and ancestral power hierarchy that can be detected in the Fiadanana cultural landscape in that the twelve wives of Andrianampoinimerina no longer served a purpose on the twelve hills of Imerina. In fact, Ranavalona I had many of them executed when she came to power. Reflecting this disregard for the royal wives, the tombs containing the wives' remains

within the Mahandry Rova to the south of the monarchs' tombs had deteriorated by Ranavalona I's reign, and were not replaced. Thus, there was no longer a visual reminder of their traditional status as established by Andrianampoinimerina, one rung below the monarch in the *hasina* system. Another significant change took place when the Andriamasinavalonas' tombs were moved out of Fidasiana, except for Andrianjazanavalona's tomb, which was moved to the extreme north of the plaza. Despite the movement of their tombs in the landscape, the Andriamasinavalona were now the physically closest non-royal ancestors to the sacred necropolis, assuming the rank the wives once held.

The Tsimahafotsy retained their *tanindrazana* in Ambohimanga during the Fiadanana Phase, religiously conserving their tombs and embellishing them as well as they could afford. Therefore, the ancestral hierarchy within the Tsimahafotsy remained constant. Even if citizens temporarily moved away from the village to find work, they would return to care for their ancestor's graves and for their own burial. Their tombs therefore became increasingly permanent reminders of the family's unity and ancestral social status. Thus, we can see from the Fiadanana Phase landscape that at the top of the power hierarchy were the royal ancestors, with the Andriamasinavalona below them and the Tsimahafotsy arranged hierarchically by *deme* further down the hillside.

Mediating Structures and Persons

Paradoxically, when the "non traditional" monarchs moved further away from their ancestral roots in public life, Ambohimanga became more and more significant as a sacred centre. It housed the tombs and guiding spirits of the most important Tsimahafotsy monarch, Andrianampoinimerina, and it was the place with most historical significance for the Merina monarchy and the original supporting population. As a result, during the Fiadanana Phase, age and tradition became the most important mediator for change. As many monarchs and Tsimahafotsy citizens sought to restore *fombandrazana*, those features of the cultural landscape associated with Andrianampoinimerina and the royal Tsimahafotsy ancestors became particularly auspicious.

The Navel Stone and Fig Tree as *Axis Mundi* of the Tsimahafotsy Universe

Coronation

For example, the sacred stone at Fidasiana remained an extremely important feature in the cultural landscape and its function consistent as the *axis mundi* to the upper world. It is interesting that even after Antananarivo became the political and economic capital and monarchs were publicly ordained near Antananarivo, they always visited the hill (their sacred capital) a short time after their investiture. They would climb onto the stone at Fidasiana to be legitimated by the ancestors and command the allegiance of the Tsimahafotsy, still the most important and powerful cultural group in Imerina. Thus, for much of the time during the Fiadanana Phase, the monarchs upheld their role as mediators. All were coronated on sacred stone imbued with ancestral power, where they demonstrated their ability to resolve opposition as per tradition, even though some held bibles in their hands.

Fandroana and Alakaosy

Inferior *hasina* continued to be collected for the crown, in the form of crops-shares, labour, and uncut Piastres, all in return for superior *hasina*, which was provided by the monarch at ritual events such as *fandroana*. Resembling the coronation ceremony, *fandroana* also functioned to reinforce the monarch's mediating role during the Fiadanana Phase. Although the ritual was held first at Antananarivo during this time, the monarch him or herself normally performed the ceremony again at the sacred stone in Fidasiana shortly thereafter. While the ritual at Antananarivo was largely a ritual of state, the one held at Ambohimanga would have carried sacred significance and meaning. Although during Ranavalona II's reign *fandroana* was syncretised with Christianity in that hymns were sung and prayers to the Christian God recited simultaneously with Malagasy parables, the ritual still functioned to resolve chaos into order, "purifying" and renewing the residents of Imerina's original capital.

However, occasionally during the reigns of the "non-traditional" monarchs *fandroana* would not take place or it would be deemed unsatisfactory. In these cases, the ritual was performed privately by *ombiassy* (idol guardians) who procured earth from the ancestral tombs in Mahandry, if possible, or the sacred gate of Ambavahadimasina (as discussed above). They mixed the earth with water from Amparihy, and took it upon themselves to administer blessing to small groups of Tsimahafotsy, often standing on the tombs of significant nobles such as the Andriamasinavalona at Ambatorangotina, seen as closest in rank to the monarch, thereby achieving the resolution of opposition, renewal of socio-cosmic order, and blessing from the highest ranking ancestors that they had access to. Using cultural landscape features, the *ombiassy* acted as mediators for the power of the royal ancestors, thus assuming the monarch's former role. The *ombiassy* administered "superior *hasina*" in the same manner as it had been administered through the monarch, speaking to those gathered from the upper world and then blowing the sacred mixture of water and earth upon them as blessing. In return, the "clients" would leave a sacrifice to the ancestors at the *douany*, as well as pay the *ombiassy* "inferior *hasina*" in the form of coins or material goods. Through these means the Tsimahafotsy guardians of tradition, via the royal ancestors, kept a watchful eye on change and stepped further into the role of the semi-divine monarch.

Alakaosy was also practised annually at the navel stone at Fidasiana. The monarchs would transport the national idols to Ambohimanga from Antananarivo and the other hills of Imerina, where they would be bathed on the stone as per tradition and sacrifice offered to the ancestors. It is significant that when Ranavalona II had the idols (or facsimiles of the idols) publicly burned, the ritual was kept alive just like *fandroana*, in that it was held privately in *douany* sacred to the ancestors.

Kabary

From the above example, it is clear that the rock, monarch, and tree motif made significant during former reigns, also continued to work to maintain the monarch's role as mediator between the heavenly and earthly realms during the Fiadanana Phase. To review, the tree, a symbol of the ancestral realm, remained near the navel stone, a symbol of earthly Vazimba fertility, with the monarch standing on top of the stone, as mediator

between the two opposing forces. The fig tree would have served as a constant tangible reminder of the monarch's mediating role.

Ranavalona I and II established their respective stages in this image to lend credibility to their message of sacred authority. It was significant that Ranavalona I's stage, comprised of a naturally occurring rock with a fig tree on top, was located to the east of the navel stone in a sacred position, consistent with her self-perception of superior divinity. By contrast, Ranavalona II's stage was entirely man-made and located to the north, a noble direction, promoting an honourable, but more secular image. Because both stages were constructed using stone with fig trees mounted on top, they lent sacred continuity to the monarch's words during *kabary*.

Similarly Ambatorangotina, with its rock and fig tree, also functioned as a "stage." It was used throughout the Fiadanana Phase as a place where the Andriamasinavalona would hold judicial meetings and trials, doing their best to uphold the old order, *fombandrazana*. It is obvious that the imagery that was exploited during the Late Kaloy Phase aided the Andriamasinavalona in their cause, giving their *kabary* from the ancestral realm legitimacy.

Mahandry's Central Post as the Central Axis of Imerina and Power Dissemination

In addition to the trunk of the sacred fig tree in Fidasiana, the central post of Andrianampoinimerina's residence, Mahandry, also continued to symbolise the monarch's mediating power throughout the Fiadanana Phase. As discussed above, although the queens did not live in Andrianampoinimerina's house, they were reported to have deeply respected the royal dwelling and its powerful central post. This suggests that the building continued to illustrate the values and ideology of the Merina *imago-mundi*, the central post still representing the sacred centre point of the growing kingdom, even though the political centre was firmly established at Antananarivo. It was therefore revered as a reservoir of superior *hasina*. Even through Andrianampoinimerina was no longer living, power was thought to be passed from the post representing him to the Tsimahafotsy to the west of the royal complex, via their central posts, just as it had been in the Late Kaloy Phase. This explains why the Tsimahafotsy's houses generally incorporated posts as a design feature, even when structurally unnecessary.

Ambohimanga and Tsimahafotsy "Superiority"

The Fiadanana Phase marks an important period in Tsimahafotsy Merina history and their cultural landscape. Although the hills were still considered linked, Antananarivo and Ambohimanga grew even more distinct from one another in that Ambohimanga increasingly represented the sacred capital and Antananarivo represented the secular and political one. Instead of perfectly complimenting each other as they did during the Late Kaloy Phase, Ambohimanga served as a retreat for many monarchs who wished to return to their roots and reaffirm ancestral order, removing themselves from the corruption of Antananarivo. Their mediating powers could only be renewed at Ambohimanga, where they would offer inferior *hasina* to their ancestors by sacrificing zebu at the tombs in Mahandry, and through the act of performing *fandroana* on the navel stone in Fidasiana, and

having their talismans renewed during *alakaosy*. In fact, *fandroana* and *alakaosy* were considered genuine only in Ambohimanga, using the earth obtained from the royal tombs there and water from Amparihy, either from its source or contained in the sacred pools. Thus, Ambohimanga remained exclusive and powerful, and the Tsimahafotsy, led by *ombiassy*, acted as the stewards of *fombandrazana* throughout the tumultuous Fiadanana Phase.

Ombiassy protected the former capital well during the uncertain times of the Fiadanana Phase, upholding ancestral *fady*, violently opposing the inroads of Christianity, and enforcing tradition. They and the Tsimahafotsy population at large guarded the royal remains from European "pollution" and threats to their socio-political status using the strong barriers of the fortifications erected by their ancestors to keep out threatening and undesired foreign interlopers, ideas and objects. As a result, the symbolic language of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape remained strong, the organisational system survived intact, and the cultural landscape continued to play an active role in Tsimahafotsy Merina identity formation and their superior self-image throughout the Fiadanana Phase.

The Colonial Phase (1897-1960)

Change and Continuity

During the Colonial Phase, the Merina lost more and more control over Imerina and Madagascar. The monarch (Ranavalona III), the Merina's socio-cosmic "mediator," was exiled to Reunion, the royal bath ritual was banned, the royal remains were moved to Antananarivo in an effort to de-sacrilise the earth covering them, all public worship was forbidden, and Ambohimanga's fortifications and *fady* were broken. Thus, the organisational system, as the Merina had known it, appeared to disintegrate completely. However, although the Merina lost control politically, they were not beaten ideologically. Many, especially the Tsimahafotsy from Ambohimanga, took an even deeper proactive step underground (towards *fombandrazana*) than they did in the Fiadanana Phase, in order to retain the socio-cosmic system upon which their society was based.

From the evidence described in Chapter Seven, we can see that the cultural landscape at Ambohimanga played an active role in this process. *Tromba* (which had been used for mass protest in the form of *ramenjana* in the Fiadanana Phase) became increasingly popular and well developed as a means by which to communicate with the royal ancestors and an increasing number of *douany* were established in the cultural landscape outside the *rova* complex for this purpose. Thus, the Tsimahafotsy Merina stayed in touch with their cultural heritage throughout the Colonial Phase via the cultural landscape, and Ambohimanga remained the stronghold of Merina tradition.

Tromba continued to be directed by *ombiassy* who traditionally fell outside the socio-cosmic system. By the Colonial Phase, *ombiassy* had taken the Merina monarch's place at the top of the human hierarchy as

mediators, and therefore demanded inferior *hasina* (payment) in return for blessing (superior *hasina*) and the renewal of order. Idols were also brought back into the socio-cosmic picture[273] and re-elevated to the status they formerly commanded, demonstrating their significant role in the socio-cosmic system as the voice of the ancestors and taking an active role in the Menalamba revolt. Because idols could not be worshipped publicly, they remained in several *douany* close to Ambohimanga such as Mahazaza, Ambatondradama, Mangabe and Ankazomalaza, places significant to the Merina ancestors, where they were kept by an idol guardian and quietly revered by many Merina, much like they were from the time of Andrianampoinimerina to Ranavalona II.

As a result, the symbolic language of the Late Kaloy organisational system was kept alive in spite of external threats during the Colonial Phase. When they began to lose control politically, the Tsimahafotsy sought to return to former days when they reigned supreme over Imerina. By nurturing the cult of their ancestors who guided them to that privileged status. Even without the monarch to enforce *fombandrazana*, the residents of Ambohimanga continued to obey *fady* and act as their ancestors had, in an attempt to please them and regain their superior position. Therefore the Tsimahafotsy took the situation into their own hands, proactively utilising the landscape to tap into and mediate power from the upper world, reminding themselves and other Merina of their privileged status in both the social and ancestral realms.

Architecture and Social Hierarchy

Mahandry remained the most superior dwelling in Ambohimanga during the Colonial Phase, as it had during the Late Kaloy and Fiadanana Phases. The building was left unchanged by the French, its post still personifying Andrianampoinimerina to the Tsimahafotsy as the pillar of Imerina and supreme mediator.

Beneath Mahandry to the west, though no longer required by law, the Tsimahafotsy Merina continued to live in rectangular houses with central posts built in the *tanindrazana* allocated them by Andrianampoinimerina, with descendants of the Andriamasinavalona remaining closest to the top of the hill. This gave the Tsimahafotsy the security of continuous ancestral blessing, receiving power from Andrianampoinimerina's central post just as they had for generations. This process of perceived power dissemination reinforced the Tsimahafotsy's image of themselves as the most powerful Merina, as they have consistently lived in closest proximity to the royal tombs, even though they were no longer necessarily the richest or most privileged politically.

Status also continued to be denoted by the materials and technology used for house building in Ambohimanga. Resembling the wooden dwellings constructed during the Late Kaloy and Fiadanana Phases, the concrete houses with metal roofs, which came into vogue during the Colonial Phase, promoted a modern image, thus demonstrating the Merina's connection to the western world, "progress" and privilege. The richest and most

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273 As discussed in Chapter Six, it is likely that pieces of the original idols had been conserved when the talismans were burned durign the Fiadanana Phase, and were "regenerated" into new idols. Alternatelyy, facimiles of the original idols may have been burned.

powerful Tsimahafotsy were able to build such houses which, on the surface, appeared to depart from traditional sensibility. However, because the dwellings were generally positioned on a north-south axis, in the family's original *tanindrazana*, often with a central post, they served their original function as a cog in the power dissemination machine.

Tombs and Ancestral Hierarchy

Tombs also continued to reflect ancestral hierarchy throughout the Colonial Phase, with the royal Merina ancestors firmly positioned at the top. Because the earth from the royal tombs was determined to hold such concentrated ancestral power, the tomb area within the Mahandry Rova became increasingly important as Merina hegemony was threatened by the French. The Merina believed that the sacred earth would assist them in chasing the French from Madagascar and regaining power, by rendering them invulnerable to French attack and assuring ancestral protection in battle. Despite Colonial efforts to the contrary, namely moving the royal remains to Antananarivo, the sacred power of the tombs remained fixed in the earth of the Mahandry Rova and the tombs retained their significance as the ultimate source of Merina ancestral power. Many Tsimahafotsy *ombiassy* illegally entered the *rova* complex to obtain the precious material so that they could create amulets in an attempt to resolve opposition, mediate the power to the people and regain order, a role they had begun to play during the Fiadanana Phase.

Even when the French built the cement-floored refectory on top of the tombs to prevent this action, the *zanadrano* were not thwarted from obtaining the substance crucial to their *imago mundi.* After the French covered the royal tombs, *zanadrano* simply turned to the gate of Ambavahadimasina, which Andrianampoinimerina had constructed using sacred earth taken from the royal tombs a century earlier, and which was utilised during the Fiadanana Phase. The earth was considered so important and powerful to the *menalamba* movement that the French eventually removed the gate. Despite this action, the earth, which would have fallen and mixed with the regular soil at Ambavahadimasina when the gate was removed, was deemed equally powerful and, most importantly, non-exhaustive. Thus, the Tsimahafotsy displayed their flexibility and resourcefulness and continued to collect the sacred material from the gate site as they had done previously, reinforcing the importance of the royal ancestors and using the substance to effect resolution.

Below the royal tombs, ancestral hierarchy remained clearly documented in the landscape by the Tsimahafotsy's tombs. Although their style changed to incorporate modern materials, the tombs continued to be located in *tanindrazana*, assigned to the family by Andrianampoinimerina and Ranavalona I. Also, they were situated in relation to dwellings according to *vintana*'s directional symbolism, placed to the east of the house on the side with no windows to mitigate their energy, thereby demonstrating the great force of ancestral power on the living. The tomb served as an increasingly important symbol of unity as citizens left Ambohimanga to work elsewhere during the Colonial Phase. Even if a Tsimahafotsy died outside Ambohimanga, it was endeavoured that all bodies be returned to the family tomb. Thus, the Colonial Phase showed the "male stones" placed at the heads of tombs evolving into exceptionally tall ones, thought to attract

a spirit back to its *tanindrazana* when the family member died far away, or perhaps could not be found. Also, *famadihana* was practised throughout the Colonial Phase to ensure the unity of the descent group. These actions involving features of the cultural landscape demonstrate the importance a unified tomb continued to hold for the Tsimahafotsy population.

It can be clearly seen from the above examples that domestic and funerary architecture served to build and maintain tradition and the ideal of family, thereby reinforcing the Merina's understanding of and commitment to the fundamental hierarchical socio-cosmic order (*hasina* system) their successful society was based upon. Although the *hasina* system was no longer effective in that it was only practised in one direction under French rule (inferior *hasina* being given to the French government without receiving superior *hasina* in return), the Tsimahafotsy perceived that ancestral blessing came to them from the central post of Mahandry and at ritual occasions via the sacred water and earth administered by *ombiassy* as blessing. Thus, the Tsimahafotsy were flexible and dynamic in adapting to changing circumstances while staying true to the principles and socio-cosmic hierarchy which drove their society.

Mediating Structures and Persons – the Role of Ombiassy *and* Duoany

As mentioned above, *ombiassy* demonstrated their increasingly privileged role in the socio-cosmic system through the establishment of shrines (*douany*) in Ambohimanga's cultural landscape, a task only monarchs were privileged to undertake previously. As a result, the significance of ancestrally important, yet relatively non-descript or missing, features were maintained throughout the Colonial Phase.

For example, Governor-General Gallieni outwardly changed the function of the sacred stone at Fidasiana as a place for ritual and sacrifice when he banned all public religious ceremony. Although the *ombiassy* and *zanadrano* didn't have access to the navel stone, or Ambatorangotina, during the Colonial Phase, they used other more private features in the cultural landscape (*douany*) to effect the resolution between chaos and order. They performed the *fandroana* rituals on the tombs of the Andriamasinavalona and at other ancestrally significant spots, just as they had done during the reigns of non-traditional monarchs in the Fiadanana Phase, using sacred water from Amparihy and earth collected from Ambavahadimasina as the resolved blessing mixture. It is important to note that after the *fandroana* ritual was performed at Ambohimanga, a fire (*herindrina*) was lit to signal the time for *fandroana* to commence on the other hills of Imerina. In this way, ritual power was disseminated as per tradition, from Ambohimanga to the twelve sacred hills of Imerina, and the kingdom's fundamental socio-cosmic order was considered restored.

Similarly, *alakaosy*, the ritual purification of the idols, was no longer allowed at Fidasiana. Instead, the national idols were worshipped and purified privately outside the gates of Ambohimanga in places like Mahazaza, Ambatondradama, Mangabe and Ankazomalaza. These actions demonstrated the Tsimahafotsy's creativity and resourcefulness in maintaining correct order and tradition throughout this unstable time of tremendous external influence.

Ambohimanga and Tsimahafotsy "Superiority"

Throughout the Colonial Phase, Ambohimanga's cultural landscape and the people who connected with it understood it and used it, served as a link to the old order in which the Merina and especially the Tsimahafotsy were dominant and powerful. Thus, despite being opened to foreign people, technology, and ideas, Ambohimanga adhered to tradition and retained its integrity. The Tsimahafotsy, led by *ombiassy*, used ancestrally significant features in the cultural landscape to communicate with the upper world, glean strength and guidance from the ancestors, and resolve chaos into order.

The Modern Phase (1960-Present)

Change and Continuity

In 1960 freedom of religion and religious practice was declared in Madagascar. *Zanadrano* were allowed to enter the *rova* complex, obtain soil directly from the royal tombs, water from Andrianampoinimerina's pool, and hold *tromba* ceremonies at nearly any sacred place they chose. These followers of tradition created "official" *douany* within the site, highlighting the most ancestrally important features, often enhancing them with red and white paint to symbolise the famous resolution of complimentary yet opposite attributes. This practice of establishing visible monuments has helped to keep the symbolic language and *fombandrazana*, "the ways of the ancestors," alive and relatively constant throughout the Modern Phase.

Because of the *douany* that were established throughout the Fidasiana and Colonial Phase outside the royal compound, and the Tsimahafotsy's strict adherence to tradition and *fombandrazana*, the *rova* complex and its cultural landscape still had great meaning for them when they were finally allowed inside the compound. Even though the area had disintegrated into a state of disrepair and the French had made over parts of Ambohimanga in their own image, the *zanadrano* were able to attach significance to features because of their knowledge of the symbolic language, built up by additive change over time, which originally assigned them with meaning. Thus, for the Tsimahafotsy who live in the sacred Merina capital, the landscape holds particular importance and their knowledge of it and its meaning is strong and deep. Even if they do not know the precise historical co-ordinates of a feature, they know that it was significant to their ancestors and are generally confident of its ideological function, as I discovered during my fieldwork. [274]

These culturally significant landscape features lend proof to the Tsimahafotsy's former elevated social and political status and therefore contribute to their perception that they still hold an exclusive and powerful position within Imerina and Madagascar as a whole. Because Ambohimanga's cultural landscape is so meaningful for

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274 It is interesting to note that Merina who do not live in Ambohimanga and who profess not to follow *fombandrazana*, but Christianity, could also point to the features that were important during the Merina monarchy. They knew by the arrangement of these features in the cultural landscape that they were significant, and often what significance they had held and hold. This suggests that the symbolic language spread far and wide in Imerina, and that this language which historically served to bind the Merina together is still ingrained in the population, still functioning to form and maintain broader Merina cultural identity.

the Tsimahafotsy, defining them as individuals and as a culture, they continue to view it conservatively with regard to change, respecting *fombandrazana*. Thus, it is clear that the "cult of the ancestors" has kept both history and knowledge of the cultural landscape and its symbolic language alive in the Merina population at large, especially for the Tsimahafotsy, who have direct and regular access to the centre of sacred Merina power. I argue, therefore, that the Tsimahafotsy Merina retain a cohesive self-image of superiority because they speak the same symbolic language, which is part of their everyday and ritual lives. The language has remained comprehensible over hundreds of years because it has been built up over time by additive change, mediated by the ancestors and tradition, and replicated over and over in the cultural landscape.

The Hill, Fortifications, and Royal Compound as Boundaries of Ethnic, Cultural and Social Separation

The height of Ambohimanga, and its northeastern location in relation to Imerina's other hills, still functions to separate the Merina from non-Merina and the Tsimahafotsy Merina from other Merina. Within the fortifications of Ambohimanga, it is interesting that many of the practical and ideological functions of the gates have been preserved, which illustrates the pervading social hierarchy within the Tsimahafotsy population. For example, although its function has changed slightly, in that everyone now uses Ambatomitsangana because of its proximity to the main road, it is still remembered as the monarch's gate and is the most impressive portal. Amboara, the second largest gate, is likewise the second most important, formerly used exclusively by the citizens of Ambohimanga. The fact that the general Tsimahafotsy population use the monarch's gate may demonstrate that the citizens of Ambohimanga have become empowered, assuming an active role in keeping the power hierarchy alive.

The internal gates have remained sacred because of their age and ancestral connections. The significance of both interior gates, Ambavahaditsiombiomby and Ambavahadimasina, has been maintained by the *ombiassy* and *zanadrano* who use them. Ambavahaditsiombiomby, the northern internal gate, also the oldest gate, is still off limits to the general population and now functions to separate certain *ombiassy* from the general Tsimahafotsy population, just as it had functioned to separate the monarch from the population in previous phases. The "royal" entrance is used only by privileged *ombiassy* and it is considered *fady* to enter the gate as a layperson without specific permission. Likewise, Ambavahadimasina, the western gate established by Andrianjaka, also retains sacred historical significance and is used as a shrine. Although the structure no longer exists, since it was removed in the Colonial Phase, *zanadrano* continue to collect earth from the site to manufacture amulets, even though sacred earth has been obtainable directly from the royal tombs since the 1960's. In return, inferior *hasina* in the form of sacrifices are left on a stone at the gate for the ancestors, marking the feature's significance in the landscape. Because of the importance lauded upon the internal gates by these semi-divine visitors, their original functional significance remains alive, thus demonstrating a certain continuity of knowledge and meaning.

At the top of the hill, although changing form significantly, the three *rovas* also maintain the same significance they were afforded during the Late Kaloy Phase. Bevato remains the place for supporters and "protectors," in that the *zanadrano* use the space to host *fandroana*, *alakaosy*, and other sacrificial ceremonies. The Mahandry Rova continues to serve as the seat of royal ancestral power, representing the resolution of opposition, housing Mahandry with its powerful central post, the area of the royal tombs and the sacred pools, along with several shrines (*douany*) that *ombiassy* have erected there. The Nanjakana Rova continues to be associated with progeny and the future, as evidenced by the shrine established on the hearth where Nanjakana, Andrianampoinimerina's childrens' home, once stood and another shrine that has been carved into Ambatomiantendro, which serves as a medium through which to pose questions to the upper world regarding one's destiny. Further, the place where Kelimalaza was once housed, to the northeast of the Mahandry Rova, is also considered sacred and sacrifices are left at the spot in hopes that the "sovereign of the idols" will continue to bless Imerina. When sacrifices are made by the *zanadrano* at any of the *douany* in the *rova* complex, portions are left at all the shrines mentioned above. This serves to reinforce the historical and sacred significance of all Ambohimanga's most important features and spaces.

Architecture and Tombs - Social and Ancestral Hierarchy, and Mahandry's Central Post as the Axis of Imerina

The area of the royal tombs was unanimously determined by my informants to be the most important part of the Mahandry Rova complex. This indicates that although the remains were removed in the Colonial Phase, the area continues to denote the awesome sacred power of the Merina royal ancestors, embodied in the earth that formerly covered their sepulchres. Today, the earth still denotes Ambohimanga as a *ville sainte*, and since the 1960's the *zanadrano* have been free to collect small amounts of earth from the area to use for ritual purposes and amulets. In exchange, offerings are left at Andrianampoinimerina's headstone and occasionally inside the Queen's *tranomasina*. Offerings donated by o*mbiassy* are sometimes cooked for the ancestors at the hearth structure to the east of the tombs, resembling the sacrificial ritual performed by Radama I for Andrianampoinimerina, described in Chapter Six. This demonstrates the *ombiassy*'s intimate connection with the ancestors in lieu of the monarch, as well as the power the Merina ancestors still hold over the Tsimahafotsy and other Merina. All the Tsimahafotsy I interviewed continue to associate the area with ancestral omnipotence and recognise the hierarchy of power disseminating from the tombs into Mahandry, and from Mahandry to their own dwellings, even though the royal corpses have been moved. Thus, the constant "power flow," so essential to identifying and preserving the Tsimahafotsy Merina's identity, remains mapped onto the modern cultural landscape.

Andrianampoinimerina's house has become the second most important *douany* in Mahandry after the royal tombs, and also serves to enable the flow of power.[275] Although objects have been added to and removed

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275 Although Filiminia is historically and culturally important, illustrating the queens as the newest link in the royal chain, the building is not considered sacred, as it contains no central post.

from the house during the Colonial and Modern Phases, the fixed-feature elements remain in *situ*, such as the central post, Andrianampoinimerina's bed, and the hearth. These features communicate a clear and strong message to their initiated observers, reinforcing the power hierarchy that is maintained through *fombandrazana*. Mahandry serves to exemplify tradition and the organisational system upon which the Merina *imago mundi* was based, with Andrianampoinimerina at the top of the hierarchy represented by the central post. Although Mahandry has changed in form by the addition and removal of objects, its post remains a depository for ancestral power flowing from the royal tombs to the east. The building thus continues to serve as a powerful symbol of the Merina *imago mundi*, its message being kept alive by its ideological significance as the sacred centre-point *(foibe)* of Imerina. Thus, via the cultural landscape, Andrianampoinimerina continues to serve as the true *andry* of Imerina, his power passed down the hill of Ambohimanga via central posts to privileged persons.

Below Mahandry the social and ancestral hierarchy is still apparent in the cultural landscape and residents continue to live (on their own accord) in *tanindrazana* which can usually be traced back to Andrianampoinimerina's original assignment, or even earlier. Great importance is still placed on living in close proximity to one's ancestors, preferably in one's ancestral home handed down through generations and built according to tradition.[276] Also, if a new house is built, it will generally adhere to *fombandrazana*, although building materials may have changed, which illustrates the importance of doing as one's ancestors did. Further, *vintana*, the strict cosmological ordering system introduced during the Late Kaloy Phase, is acknowledged and its symbolism continues to be built into the cultural landscape. As discussed in Chapter Eight, most new houses are still built on a north-south axis and contain a central post, and areas within layperson's houses and some interior furnishings continue to be arranged as they had been during the Late Kaloy Phase. This demonstrates the continued importance of spatial organisation based on direction and the *vintana* system for proper power dissemination.

The modern Tsimahafotsy is still considered only as powerful and important as his or her ancestors, and the Tsimahafotsy unanimously concur that they have the most important and powerful ancestors of any other Merina group. This became evident by my informant's recitation of their genealogy at every opportunity, and the fact that just about all Ambohimanga residents I interviewed claimed to be of noble descent. During my fieldwork, I was nearly always brought to the family tomb, which continues to be an important monument to the family's social status and is consequently revered. Unity within the tomb is a key concept for ensuring ancestral blessing and fertility, just as it has been since earliest times; and to ensure the approval of the ancestors, *famadihana* is widely practised. Further, large "male stones" continue to be erected to attract wandering spirits who may have died elsewhere back to the tomb. If descendants have moved away, the tombs are often revisited by the entire family annually on All Saints Day, demonstrating a certain syncretism

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276 Most residents of Ambohimanga that I interviewed would rather live in an ancient patched house that was built by their ancestors on ancestral land, than a new construction elsewhere.

with Christianity as well as a will to stay connected with one's ancestors and appeal for ancestral blessing. The above examples demonstrate the Tsimahafotsy's commitment to their ancestors and tradition, recognising the importance and tenuous nature of their blessing. In these ways, the family house and tomb encapsulate the pervasive ideals of unity and order only obtainable through maintaining traditional ancestral hierarchy.

Mediating Structures and Persons

Through the proper arrangement of features in the cultural landscape, the Merina monarchs buried at Ambohimanga, especially Andrianampoinimerina, continue to watch over Imerina. However, the monarch is no longer able to effect resolution between chaos and order in that s/he is now a divine ancestor. Therefore, living *ombiassy* have officially assumed the monarchs' role as mediators. Although *ombiassy* assumed the monarch's position in the Merina organisational system, they have never lived within the *rova* complex. However, when allowed entry in the 1960's, they did assume certain privileges within that space, as discussed in Chapter Three. *Ombiassy* are organised hierarchically, according to the number of spirits they possess and the power of these spirits. This system guides which shrines (*douany*) they are allowed to use and who hires them, the amount of inferior *hasina* paid to them, and the power of superior *hasina* they possess. For example, Madame Berthine, Andrianampoinimerina's "official" spirit guardian, is positioned at the top of the Tsimahafotsy *ombiassy* hierarchy and is probably the most famous *ombiassy* in Ambohimanga. She enjoys many privileges in the cultural landscape, such as using Ambavahaditsiombiomby (the monarch's exclusive and oldest entrance), holding *tromba* ceremonies in Andrianampoinimerina's residence, climbing onto Andrianampoinimerina's bed platform in the northeast corner of Mahandry, standing on the entrance to his tomb, and establishing *douany* within the complex.

In addition to administering *tromba* ceremonies in the *rova* compound, *ombiassy* also act to uphold tradition and mediate change regarding the royal space. For example, an *ombiassy* must be consulted before any renovation project takes place concerning Ambohimanga's *rova* complex. Thus, it is clear that in lieu of the monarch, *ombiassy* have taken on an active mediating role that has had manifestations in Ambohimanga's cultural landscape, ensuring continuity at a time of potentially dramatic change.

Finally, as mentioned above, several *douany* have been established within the *rova* complex by *ombiassy* since it was opened to the public in the 1960's (such as Kelimalaza's stone, the hearth shrine, pool shrine, Mahandry's central post, hearth and northeast corner, and the shrines at Nanjakana and Ambatomiantendro). These enhanced features have helped to keep tradition alive and the vocabulary of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape meaningful. *Douany* have been created in places deemed sacred by ancestral tradition (especially if used by Andrianampoinimerina), and are often enhanced with paint and protective structures, thus adding to the feature's significance. The *ombiassy* use these sacred cultural landscape features as media to communicate with the ancestors in the upper world.

The Navel Stone and Fig Tree as *Axis Mundi* of the Tsimahafotsy Universe

Although it is completely unmarked, just a worn rock in the soil, and the fig tree has disappeared, except for its root structure beneath the earth, the sacred stone at Fidasiana remains one of the most important *douany* of the *rova* complex, insignificant to the uninitiated but revered by those who understand its sacred history. Established by Ratompobe and Andriantsimitoviaminandriana, it is remembered as a place where the ancestors stood to be infused with the power to rule, as a place for sacrifice during the royal bath ritual, as a place where the idols were displayed, and most importantly, as the true *axis mundi* of the Merina universe. It is significant that the stone continues to serve all of these purposes today.

Firstly, *ombiassy* often undergo their spirit installations on the stone, assuming the semi-divine significance of a monarch, dressed in red and white, the colours that symbolise the complimentary opposites of chaos and order, the upper and lower worlds. The stone gives the *ombiassy* increased ancestral support and reaffirms his or her power to act as mediator between the ancestors and humans. Secondly, *ombiassy* often hold *tromba* ceremonies on the stone. These rituals resemble royal *kabary* in that the *ombiassy* speaks from the upper world, thus his or her words are considered to be sacrosanct and a blessing (superior *hasina*). Generalised *tromba* and sacrifice also takes place on the stone when an *ombiassy* assumes the spirit of one of the royal ancestors, delivering *kabary* to the *zanadrano* gathered. Afterwards, in lieu of the fig tree that used to serve as a permanent reminder of the King's mediating role, remnants of sacrifices, such as the zebu's skull and horns, are left in the nearby Jacaranda tree.

It is also interesting that the idols are once again honoured on the stone at Fidasiana during *alakaosy*. As discussed in Chapter Eight, this event follows the bathing procedure set out by tradition, utilising all of its symbolism. The idols are brought to Ambohimanga from their residences, placed in a basket on the idol keeper's head and washed with sacred water and honey, a procedure that reasserts the correct order of things: the idols providing power, top-down, through the sacred water mixture to their guardian, giving him or her the power to administer blessing on their behalf. Bathing purifies and renews the idols, much as it did the monarch, and therefore fortifies them. Idol worship has increased greatly in popularity since the 1960's. In addition to the well-attended *alakaosy* ceremonies, *zanadrano* make pilgrimages to the sacred sites in and near Ambohimanga, which were established during the Colonial Phase (Mahazaza, Ambatondradama, Mangabe and Ankazomalaza), in order to worship the idols (*sampy*) housed there and buy offshoots of the talismans (*ody*) from their guardians, thereby demonstrating that the idols have once again become a significant part of the *zanadrano*'s power base, centred in and around Ambohimanga.

In addition to spirit installation, *kabary*, worshipping the idols and generalised sacrifice, the stone is also significant in that it is once again used for *fandroana*, which was celebrated for the first time publicly since the nineteenth century in 1994. All the symbolism essential to the ritual was remembered. As outlined in Chapter Eight, the *zanadrano* wore no shoes and carried no objects deemed *fady* to the ancestors, they dressed in red and white, the zebu were made to walk from west to east, towards the ancestral world, water from Amparihy

was mixed with sacred earth from the royal tombs and offered as blessing, blood libations were left at ancestrally important areas in the *rova* complex and a benediction was given by a prestigious *ombiassy* standing upon the navel stone beneath the Jacaranda tree (in place of the fig, or *hasina* tree). It is significant that the event was presided over and mediated by o*mbiassy*, in place of the monarch, who entered the complex via Ambatomitsangana and Ambavahaditsiombiomby, the semi divine monarch's designated path of entrance, thereby demonstrating the *ombiassys'* escalating role as mediating figures.

The modern-day *fandroana* both brought together and divided the Merina population. The attempt at cultural revitalisation is anthropologically interesting in that it reaffirms the Merina's commitment to their cultural tradition, and illustrates the pervading divides between the central highlands and the surrounding areas of Madagascar due to the opposition of the non-highland cultural groups and the Christian church. Since 1994, the ritual has been scaled down to appease dissenters. Nevertheless, it is significant that the event takes place despite considerable opposition, thus demonstrating an increasing temerity on the part of the Tsimahafotsy, who are largely responsible for hosting the event, and their commitment to upholding the ways of their ancestors.

Thus, it is clear that despite an apparent hiatus in functional significance during the Colonial Phase, the sacred stone at Fidasiana has remained ritually important. All of its former functions have now been resurrected, despite a lapse of half a century. Although the Fidasiana area is now freely accessible to anyone who wishes to visit it, it remains a particularly sacred and exclusive place for the Merina, especially the Tsimahafotsy, and the stone is shown great respect. Essentially, the stone is still considered a feature from where order can be restored, now via an *ombiassy* in place of the monarch, and it continues to serve as the *axis mundi* of the Merina world.

Ambohimanga and Tsimahafotsy "Superiority"

Throughout the Modern Phase the cultural landscape has been altered to a significant extent, but the fundamental structure remains the same as a result of "additive change," discussed in Chapter One, whereby change is allowed as long as it does not threaten the underlying system and meaning remains consistent. *Ombiassy* actively mediate potential change and resolve opposition in lieu of the monarch, a more powerful and official role than they had held during the Colonial Phase. In turn, this system serves recursively to mediate the ever-increasing potential of contact-induced culture change (Deagann 1988:9). As with the Anahulu, when the political, economic and religious forces of other cultures converged on Madagascar's central highlands, the Tsimahafotsy Merina synthesised them on their own cultural terms. As a result, the Tsimahafotsy have been authors of their own history and not merely victims of external influence, which has enabled them to build and maintain a strong sense of cultural identity through time.

In this Chapter I have attempted to present and analyse the symbolic language of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape by considering the anthropological and archaeological evidence together. I have looked at both history and place to identify and trace structural and symbolic patterns through time, in an effort to demonstrate

that continuity in the cultural landscape has played an active reflexive role in Tsimahafotsy Merina identity formation and maintenance from the Early Phases to the Present. From the analysis of the features and spaces which comprise the language of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape, including the fortifications, royal compounds, architecture, tombs and other significant cultural landscape features within the fortifications, I have detected patterns that support the power hierarchy inherent in the socio-cosmic system and *imago mundi* outlined in Chapter Three. I have endeavoured to argue that the fundamental socio-cosmic system has effectively served to bind the Tsimahafotsy together in a common notion of identity because it has been widely and consistently comprehensible to them, communicated orally through *kabary* and storytelling, and visually through the cultural landscape of Ambohimanga, where the Tsimahafotsy have gone about their daily and ritual lives for generations. Thus, the cultural landscape served and still serves as a text, a widely understood visual language for those initiated to understand it, which has functioned recursively to maintain a fundamental cultural core, a common *imago mundi*, based on tradition.

From Ambatomiantendro, on November 5, 1995, the Rova of Antananarivo could be seen burning brightly in the night sky. Watching their secular capital, once conjoined with Ambohimanga as its twin, burn, reinforced the importance and significance of Ambohimanga in the minds of the Tsimahafotsy. Thus, since this fateful day the cradle of the Merina kingdom, its sacred capital and power source, has gained in strength and significance. Still standing as a sentinel guarding Merina tradition (*fombandrazana*) and ideologically uniting the corners of Imerina, Ambohimanga's cultural landscape serves as a lexicon of the Merina's symbolic language. It embodies their socio-cosmic foundations that have been maintained into the present by the process of "additive change." I argue that this process has been objectified in the cultural landscape, which has been "lived in and through...to create the people who are of that place" (Tilley 1994:26). Thus, the Tsimahafotsy, are united in great part because they speak the same symbolic language that has been built up additively through time and become part of their daily and ritual lives.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

In this thesis I set out to discover how the Tsimahafotsy Merina have built and maintained a strong and cohesive cultural identity in spite of significant and prolonged forces of change. Throughout the process, I have attempted to argue and demonstrate that identity is closely bound with both history – the group's approach to change and continuity – and place – the cultural landscape in which the group lives. I have suggested that there is an intimate reflexive relationship between history and place, whereby history (the Tsimahafotsy's approach to change and continuity in determining what change is acceptable, and what is not) creates place; and place, in turn, guides history as a meaningful (e.g. symbolic) visual language for the culturally initiated. Thus, I have argued that the cultural landscape of Ambohimanga has played and continues to play an active role in Tsimahafotsy Merina identity formation. Further, I have endeavored to prove that the cultural landscape can be used as a valuable tool with which to unlock cultural understanding, using the methods inherent in "archaeological anthropology."

This project necessitated a three-pronged approach, represented by Parts One, Two and Three of my thesis respectively:

In Part One I traced the historical trajectory of the Tsimahafotsy Merina from their immigration to Madagascar in the thirteenth century to the present, focusing on the external influences they have been exposed to and how they have managed change and continuity over time. I discovered that the Tsimahafotsy have been inherently conservative, yet flexible and creative, in their approach to change, transforming just enough on the surface so that they would not have to change foundationally. I have argued that the Tsimahafotsy accomplished this in large part because of the messages mapped onto their cultural landscape at Ambohimanga. Thus, in Part Two, I attempted to discover and present the language of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape, identifying significant features through "participatory mapping" and archival research, then describing their forms, functions and placement in space, through time. I focused on the cultural landscape's evolution, noting that beneath a veneer of change there was a great deal of continuity which echoed the historical trajectory presented in Part One.

Part Three comprised the analysis of the data presented in Parts One and Two. Through "archaeological anthropology," I endeavored to read the visual language of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape as accurately as possible, working back and forth between the historical and visual texts to trace redundant themes and symbolism. As a result, it became clear that Ambohimanga's cultural landscape has played a significant and active role in Tsimahafotsy Merina identity formation from earliest times to the present. Beneath the surface change evident in Ambohimanga's cultural landscape throughout history, there remained fundamental continuity based upon the Merina's socio-cosmic foundations outlined in Part One. I have argued that it is this fundamental, yet flexible, structure mapped onto the cultural landscape at Ambohimanga which has served recursively to create and maintain the Tsimahafotsy's strong and cohesive sense of collective cultural identity.

Essentially I have argued against historical assumption and surface appearance to show that in spite of significant and prolonged exposure to foreign influence, Ambohimanga, the Village-of-Long-Standing, was created and maintained by the Merina as their "*berceau* of tradition," the Luwuq of Madagascar. Its navel stone, tombs and Andrianampoinimerina's house post still function to bind the Merina to this sacred site. The area of the royal tombs continues to serve as the nucleus of ancestral power, pumping superior *hasina* into the central post of Andrianampoinimerina's house, Mahandry. This post serves multiple functions as the central axis of the socio-political entity of Imerina, attracting the superior *hasina* from the tombs into its core, and mediating that power to the rest of the region via the Tsimahafotsy, always in privileged position. The post, representative of the monarch, the conduit between the upper and middle worlds, binds the Merina together as a cultural group in a conceptually superior position, even during times when they do not hold political and economic power. Finally, the navel stone in Fidasiana, Ambohimanga's most ancient cultural feature, continues to serve as the ultimate *axis mundi* of the Merina's cosmic world, the place where the four corners of the earth and three levels of the vertical axis converge. Despite the long history of fluctuating political and economic circumstances and technological innovations which have affected Ambohimanga's people and landscape, the fundamental components of Ambohimanga's visual language remained unchanged, serving to create and maintain a tenacious sense of cultural identity for the Merina, and especially the Tsimahafotsy who are most intimately connected to that sacred space. Thus, through a mutual making of people and things, Ambohimanga is still the residence of "one of the boldest, proudest and most conservative tribes on the island" (LMS(R) 1880:46).

It is my primary goal that this thesis contributes to our knowledge and understanding of the Tsimahafotsy of Ambohimanga, and the symbolic language embedded in the landscape in which they live. Secondly, I hope my work contributes more generally to the study of cultural identity formation, additive change and the role of the cultural landscape, in this process. In addition, I trust this project supports the validation and development of "archaeological anthropology" as a method of inquiry, which utilises the cultural landscape as an effective framework and tool for unlocking cultural understanding.

I believe that the approaches and methods I used to gather and analyse information were effective for accomplishing my objectives. Firstly, Sahlins and Kirch's work on the Anahulu provided an excellent model for my study because both O'ahu and Madagascar are island communities heavily influenced by colonialism, microcosms in which one can productively study the processes of change and continuity. Also, Sahlins and Kirch focused on the concept of cultural recuperation, in which a culture evolves and creatively maintains itself instead of being consumed in the new global order, a similar scenario to that which occurred in Ambohimanga. Sahlins and Kirch's methods were also an inspiration in that a multidisciplinary and integrative approach was used for collecting and analysing data about Ambohimanga. I believe that by combining the strengths of archaeology and anthropology through archival research; participant observation; interviewing; mapping cultural features; analysing space, objects and the Tsimahafotsy's response to them; I was able to glean a broad understanding of Ambohimanga's cultural landscape and its people.

As with any project of this nature, research, and analysis, creates further questions. Time does not stand still, and the people of Ambohimanga continue to negotiate issues of change and identity. Since my fieldwork was completed a president, whose origins are firmly based on the high plateau, has come to power. Although he was never a resident of Ambohimanga, he will inevitably bring the Merina back into a position of social, political and economic dominance on the island. It will be interesting to trace the spirit and trajectory of Tsimahafotsy cultural identity as the Merina enjoy a sanctioned cultural revitalization.

Future academic work might further explore the connection between Imerina and Sulawesi by analysing the cultural landscapes of Luwuq and Ambohimanga simultaneously. Issues surrounding *fombandrazana* in the central highlands of Madagascar need to be investigated in more depth, focusing on *tromba*, idol worship, the role of *ombiassy*, and the symbolism inherent in these phenomena. Other Malagasy cultural groups, themselves with strong conceptions of identity and ethnic pride, such as the Sakalava, could be examined through the cultural landscapes in which they live, utilising the methods and sources intrinsic to "archaeological anthropology." New archaeological research in the central highlands needs to be undertaken, particularly to excavate the hill fortifications and *rova* complexes that once stood on top of every one of Imerina's twelve "sacred" hills. Finally, although knowledge and understanding of the language embedded in Ambohimanga's cultural landscape remains strong among the initiated, the features which comprise this powerful communication system are rapidly disappearing. Therefore, it is my strong conviction that the most important future work to be undertaken and supported as a result of this study, is that of restoration, conservation and preservation of Ambohimanga's unique cultural landscape.

Ambohimanga's *rova* complex is the last remaining one of its kind in Madagascar, indeed in the world, and therefore deserves to be conserved as "World Heritage". Projects to this end include "*Rova* Rescue" that I designed in 1997 (Appendix D), and which was implemented by the Mayor of Ambohimanga and a committee of Ambohimanga "elders". As a result, funding was obtained from the Japanese Exposition Corporation and the Toyota Foundation to effect emergency repairs at the *rova* complex in 1997-8. Also, a committee was formed in conjunction with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to promote Ambohimanga as a World Heritage site. In 2000 this committee was granted funds by UNESCO to aid them in preparing documentation to propose the Royal Hill of Ambohimanga as a World Heritage Site. The proposal, based on "*Rova* Rescue," was successful and on 14 December 2001 (Helsinki, Finland) the Royal Hill of Ambohimanga was admitted as one of UNESCO's 721 sites of "outstanding universal value" (identification number 950).[277]

The Committee inscribed the Royal Hill of Ambohimanga on the World Heritage List under criterion (iii), (iv), and (vi):

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277 www.whc.unesco.org/nwhc/pages/doc/mainfsearch.htm

Criterion (iii): The Royal Hill of Ambohimanga is the most significant symbol of the cultural identity of the people of Madagascar.
Criterion (iv): The traditional design, materials, and layout of the Royal Hill of Ambohimanga are representative of the social and political structure of Malagasy society from at least the 16th century.
Criterion (vi): The Royal Hill of Ambohimanga is an exceptional example of a place where, over centuries, common human experience has been focused in memory, ritual, and prayer.

The Committee emphasized that the site is a classic example of an associative cultural landscape,[278] which fully justifies the application of criterion (vi), linking the tangible and intangible values. They also recognized that the site is associated with strong feelings of national identity, and has maintained its spiritual and sacred character both in ritual practice and the popular mind for the past five hundred years, serving as a place of worship and pilgrimmage. The UNESCO Observer of Madagascar informed the Committee that the inscription of the first Malagasy cultural site on the World Heritage List would inspire the people of her country to protect their heritage island-wide. It is my hope that progress will continue to be made in the promotion of sustainable cultural tourism to Ambohimanga and other Malagasy cultural landscapes, and that this thesis will contribute to the actualization of this mission.

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278 An "associative cultural landscape" is defined by powerful religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural element rather than material cultural evidence, which may be insignificant or even absent.

Appendix

Appendix A: Maps

Ambohimanga

showing features outside the Rova complex

NORTH

Lower Miandravahiny

Amparihy

Amboara

Upper Miandravahiny

New Town Centre

Ambodiaviavy

Ambavahaditsiombiomby

Ambatomitsangana (Gate)

Upper Andakana

Ambavahadimasina

Fidasiana

Ambavahadiatandranomasina

Ambatorangotina

Old Town Centre

Andranomboahangy

Mahazaza

Ambatomiantendro

Lower Andakana

Andranomanento

Antsolatra

Ampitsaharana

Ambavahadikely

Andranomatsatso

To Alakamisy

Forest

Gates

Water Sources

Standing Stone

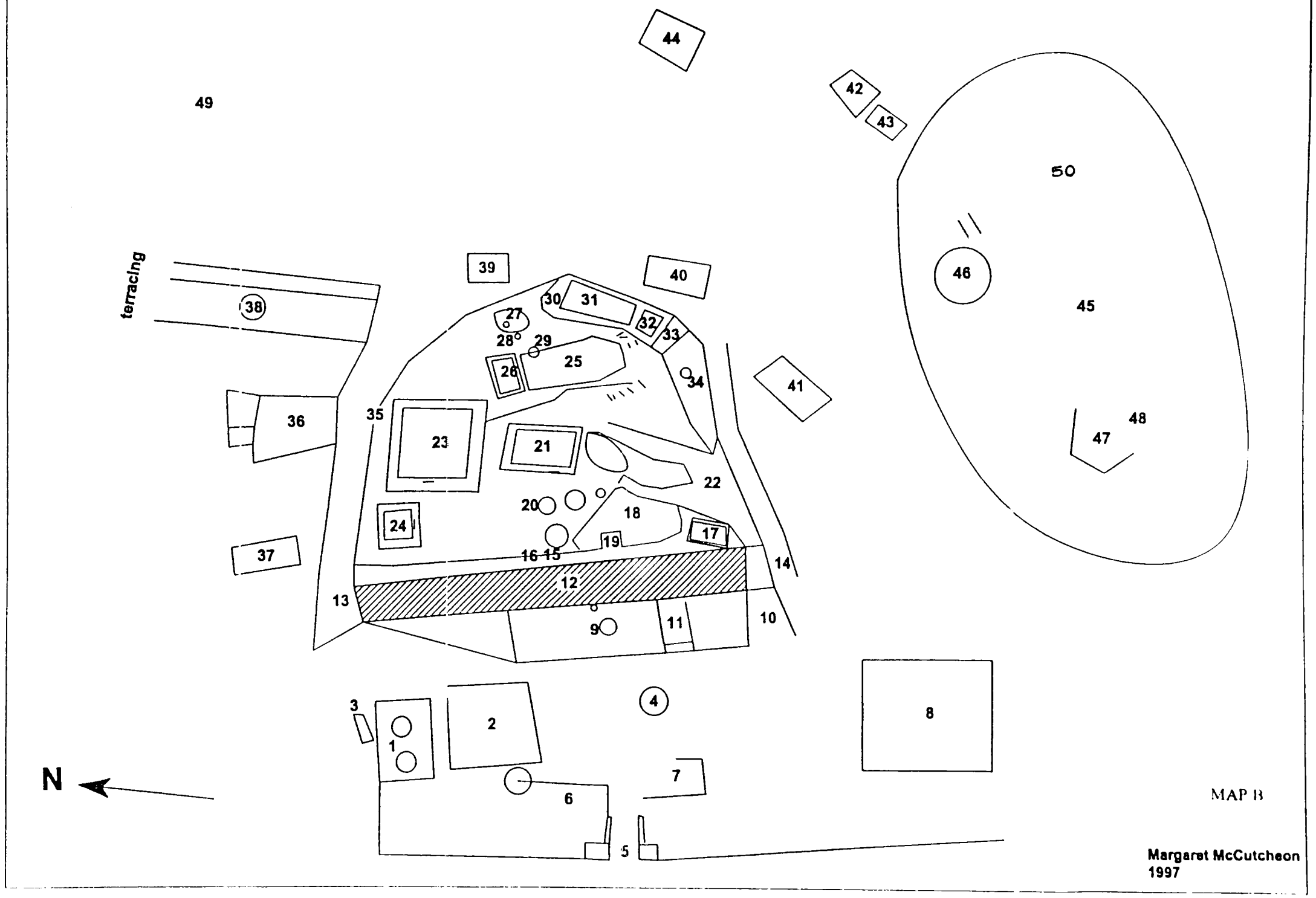
Sacred Stone

Fosses
Main Road
Foot Paths

Margaret McCutcheon
1997

MAP A

The Rova Complex of Ambohimanga, Madagascar



MAP B

Margaret McCutcheon
1997

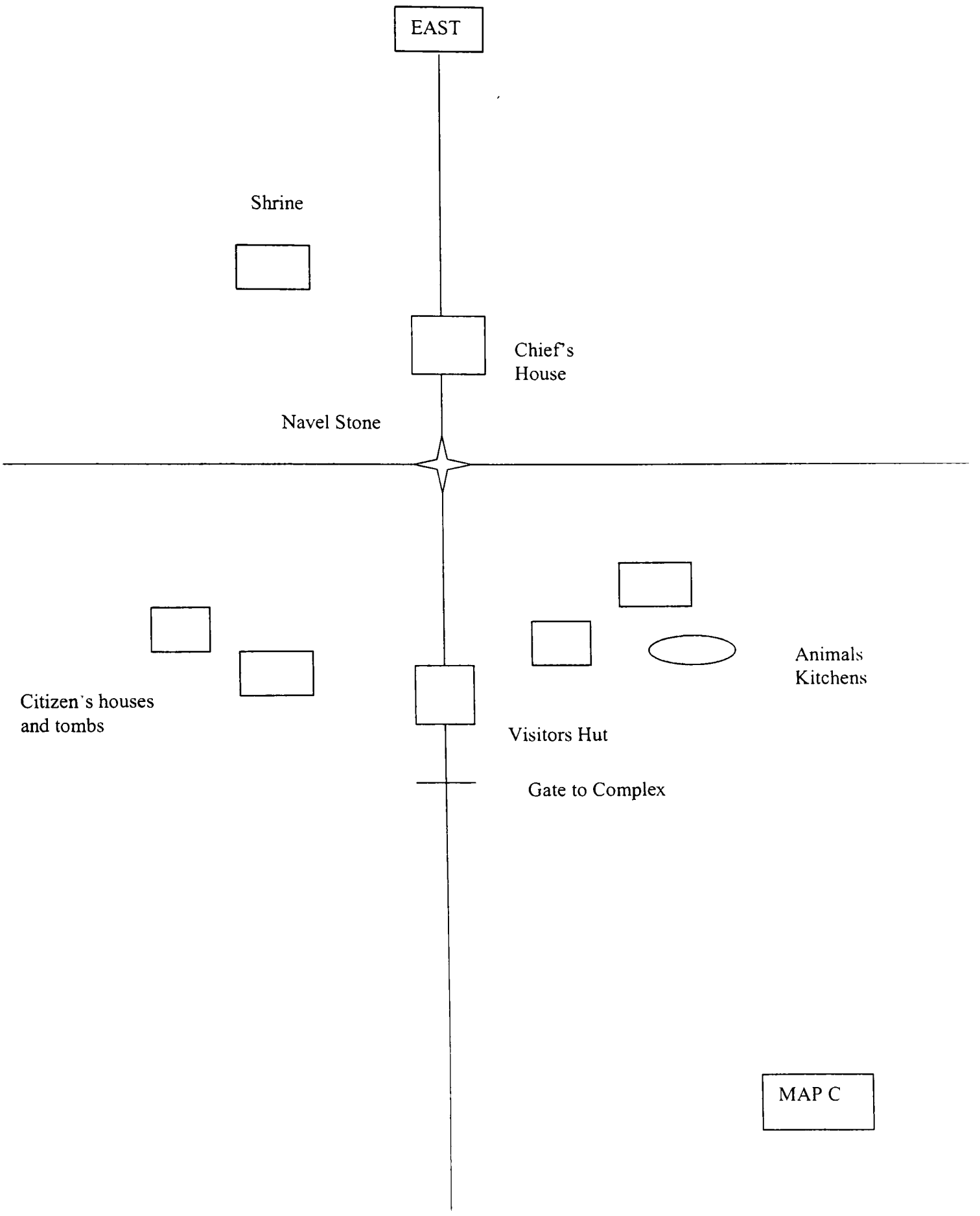
Key to Map B: The *Rova* Complex of Ambohimanga, Madagascar

1 The Low Stage
2 Flat Cement Area
3 Andrianjazanavalona's Tomb
4 The Sacred Navel Stone at Fidasiana
5 Entry to Fidasiana
6 Building or Wall Remains
7 Building Remains (Manatsaralehibe)
8 Le Jacqueranda (Restaurant) Formerly the site of Bevato's ox pen
9 The High Stage
10 Western Entry to Mahandry Rova
11 Stairway to High Stage
12 The Wall of Mahandry
13 Stairway to Mahandry's North Entrance
14 Stairway and Path
15 Small Iron Canon
16 Large Bronze Canon
17 Watchtower
18 Fahimasina
19 Crib for Feeding Zebu
20 Kianja (small plaza) in Mahandry
21 Mahandry
22 Pathway
23 Manjakamiadana/Filiminia
24 Tranofitaratra
25 Site of Royal Tombs
26 Ranavalona I and II's Tomb and Tranomasina
27 Sacred Sacrificial Stone (douany)
28 Hearth
29 Andrianampoinimerina's Headstone
30 Shrine (douany) at Pools
31 Ranavalona I's Pool
32 Andrianampoinimerina's Pool
33 Rice Pit Built by Madame Berthine
34 The Queen's Garden
35 Small Garden
36 Building Remains (Mananjara)
37 Guard's House
38 Place of Kelimalaza's former residence and rock
39 Building Remains (Miandrifanjakana)
40 Building Remains
41 Building Remains
42 Building Remains
43 Building Remains
44 Building Remains

Manambintana, Fohiloha, Manandraimanjaka, Kelisoa and Masoandro

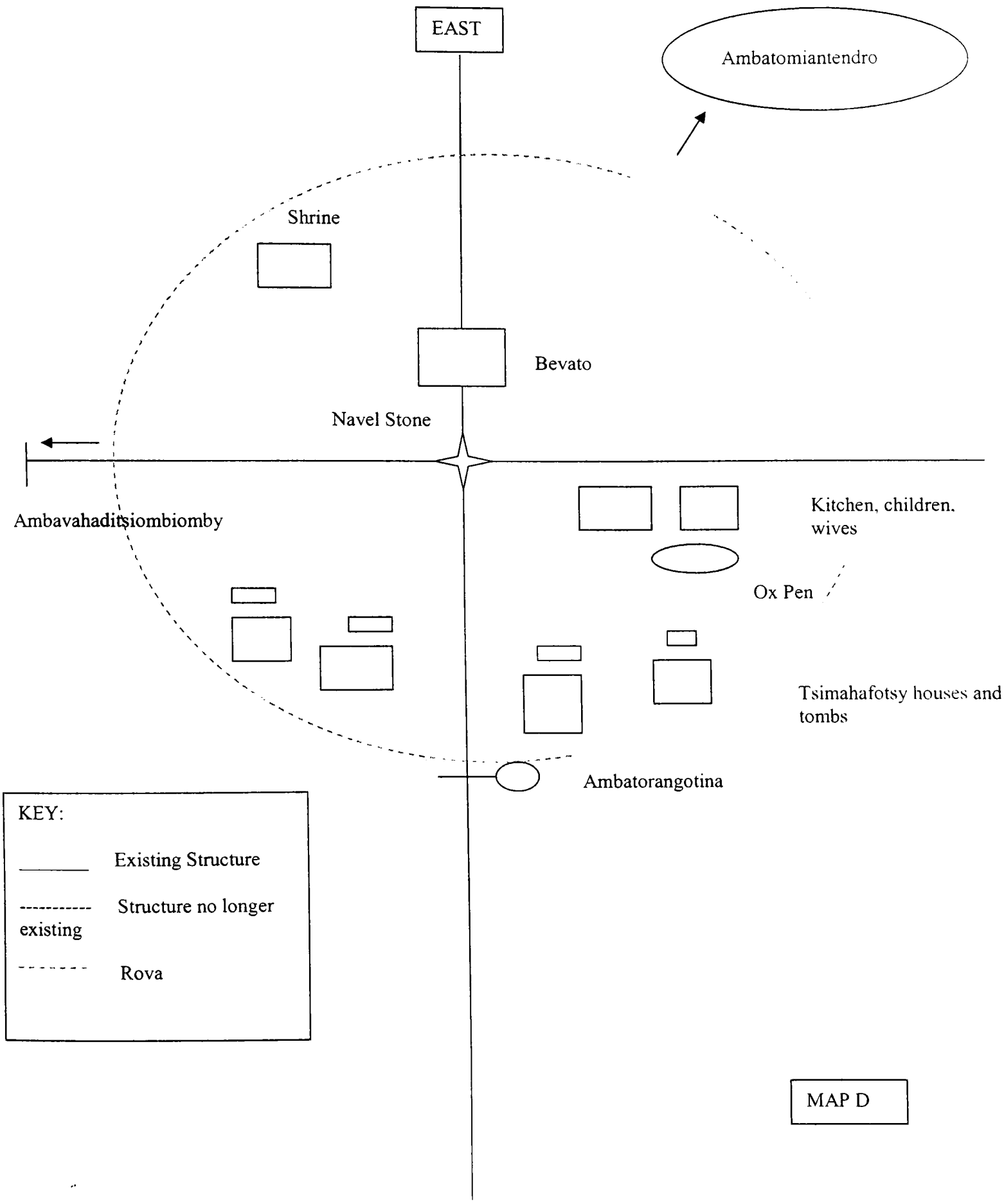
45 Ambatomiantendro
46 Remains of Late Kaloy Phase Shelter
47 Remains of Modern Phase Shelter
48 Fanorona Board
49 Building Remains and hearth (Nanjakana)
50 Ambatomiantendro

THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: TRADITIONAL BUGIS SETTLEMENT



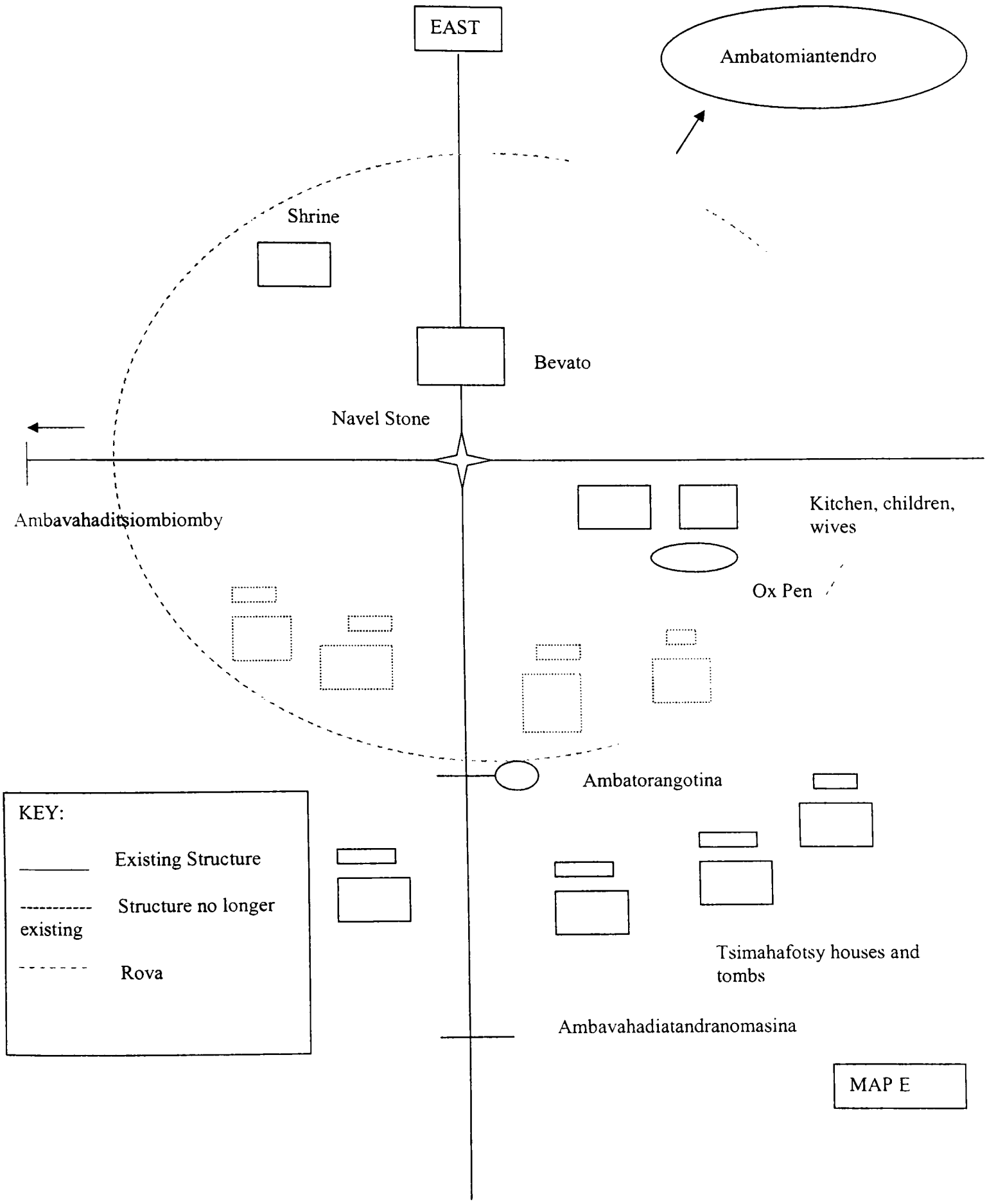
MAP C

THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: ANDRIANJAKA and ANDRIAMBORONA



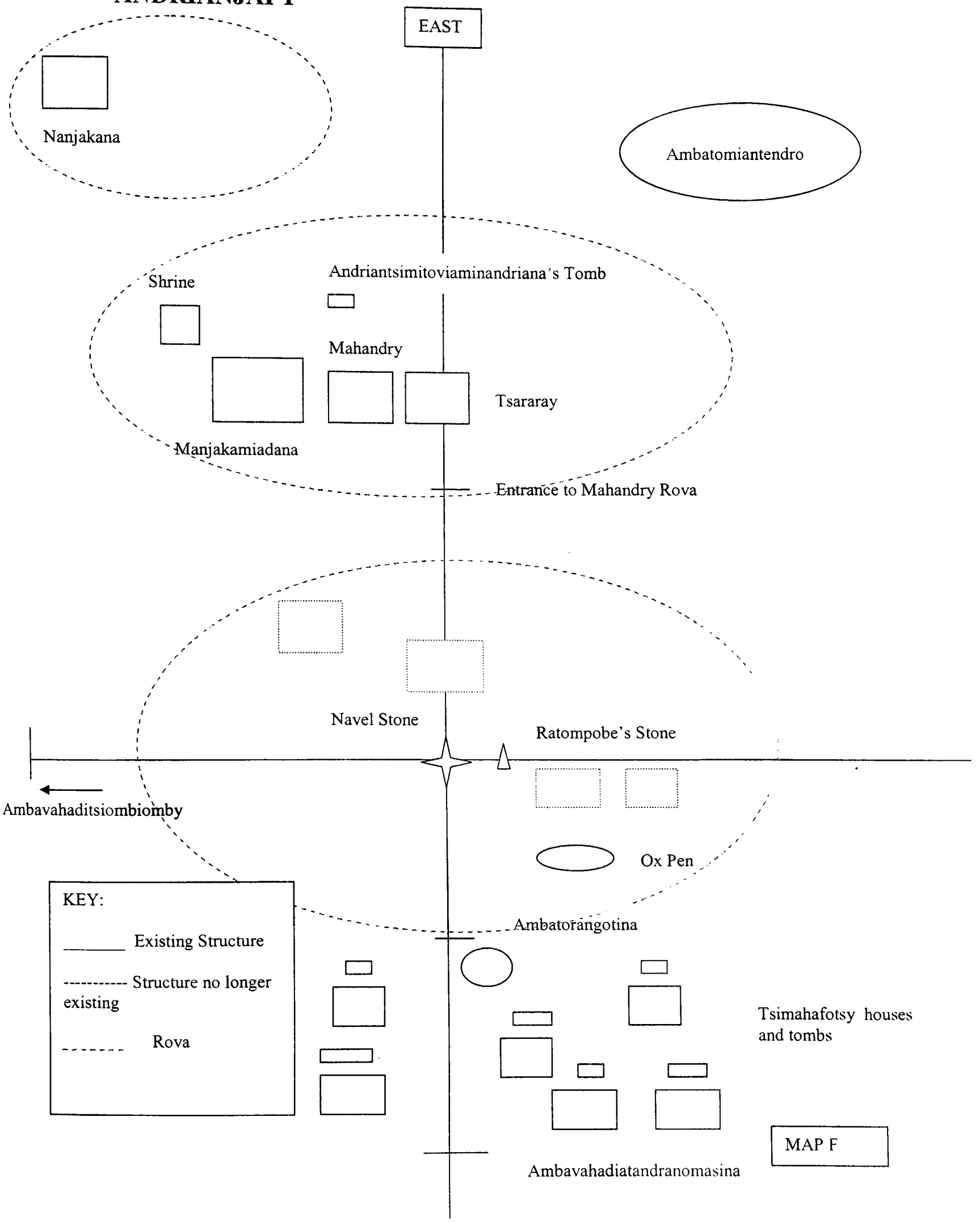
MAP D

THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: ANDRIANTSIMITOVIAMINANDRIANA

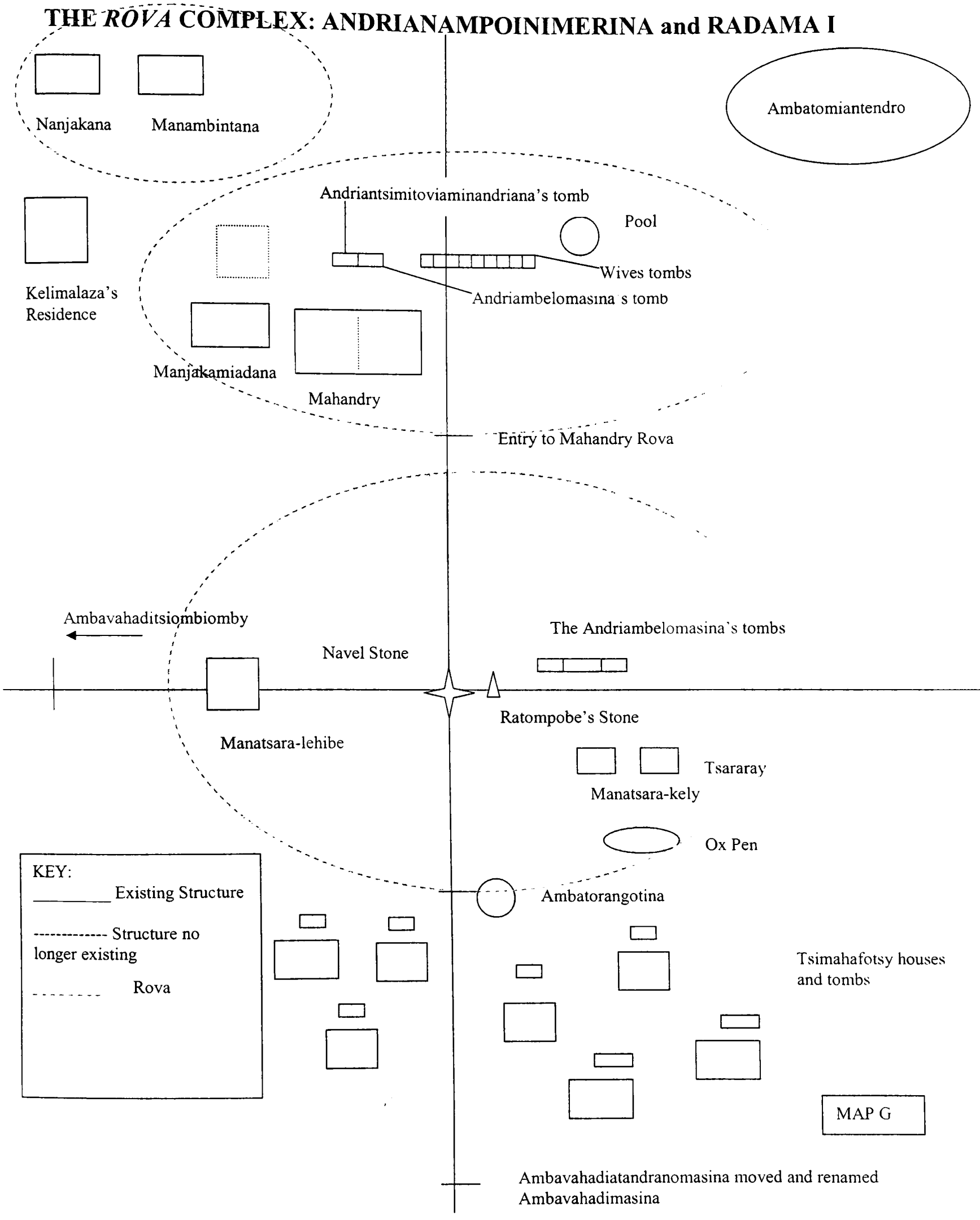


MAP E

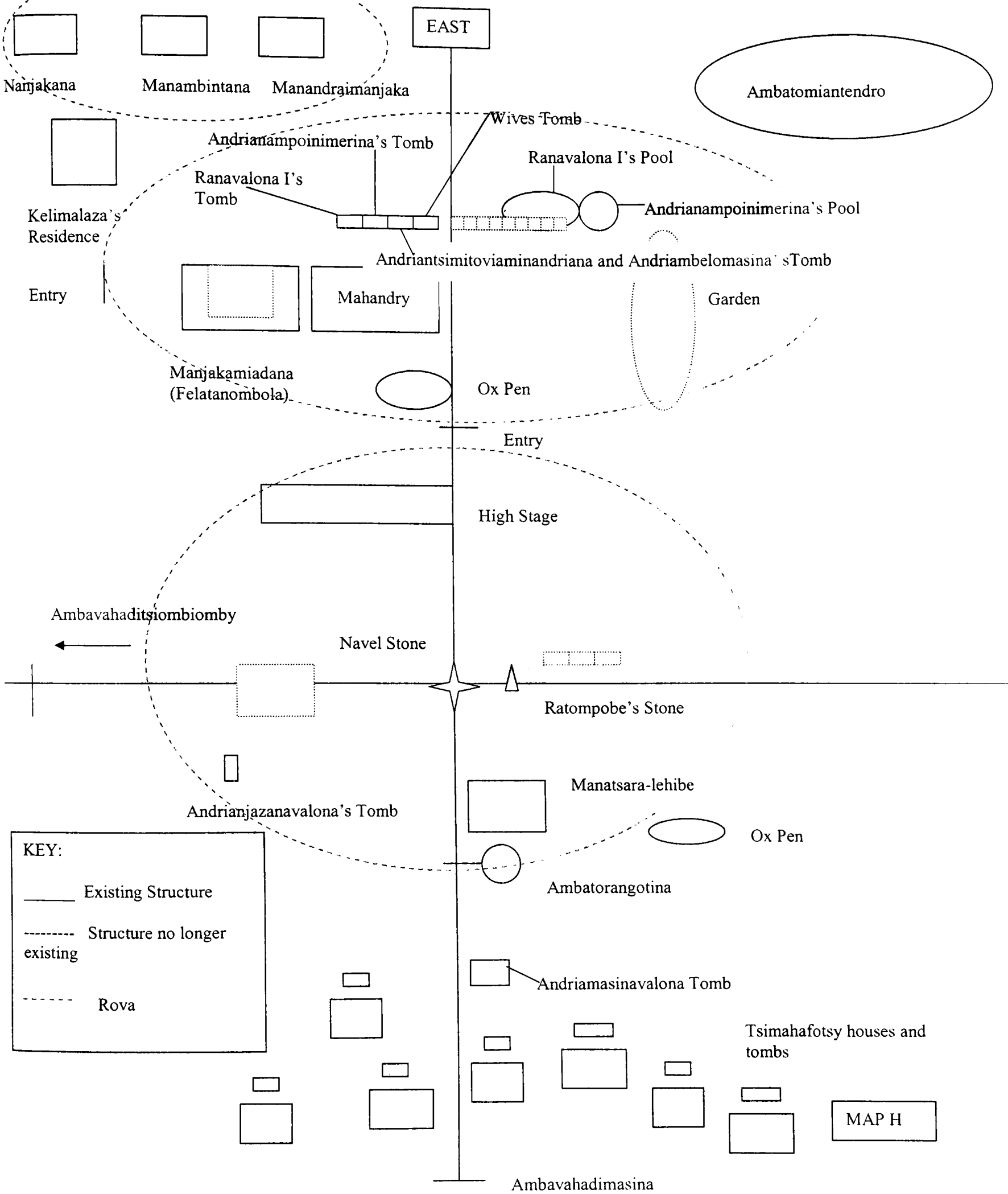
THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: ANDRIAMBELOMASINA and ANDRIANJAFY



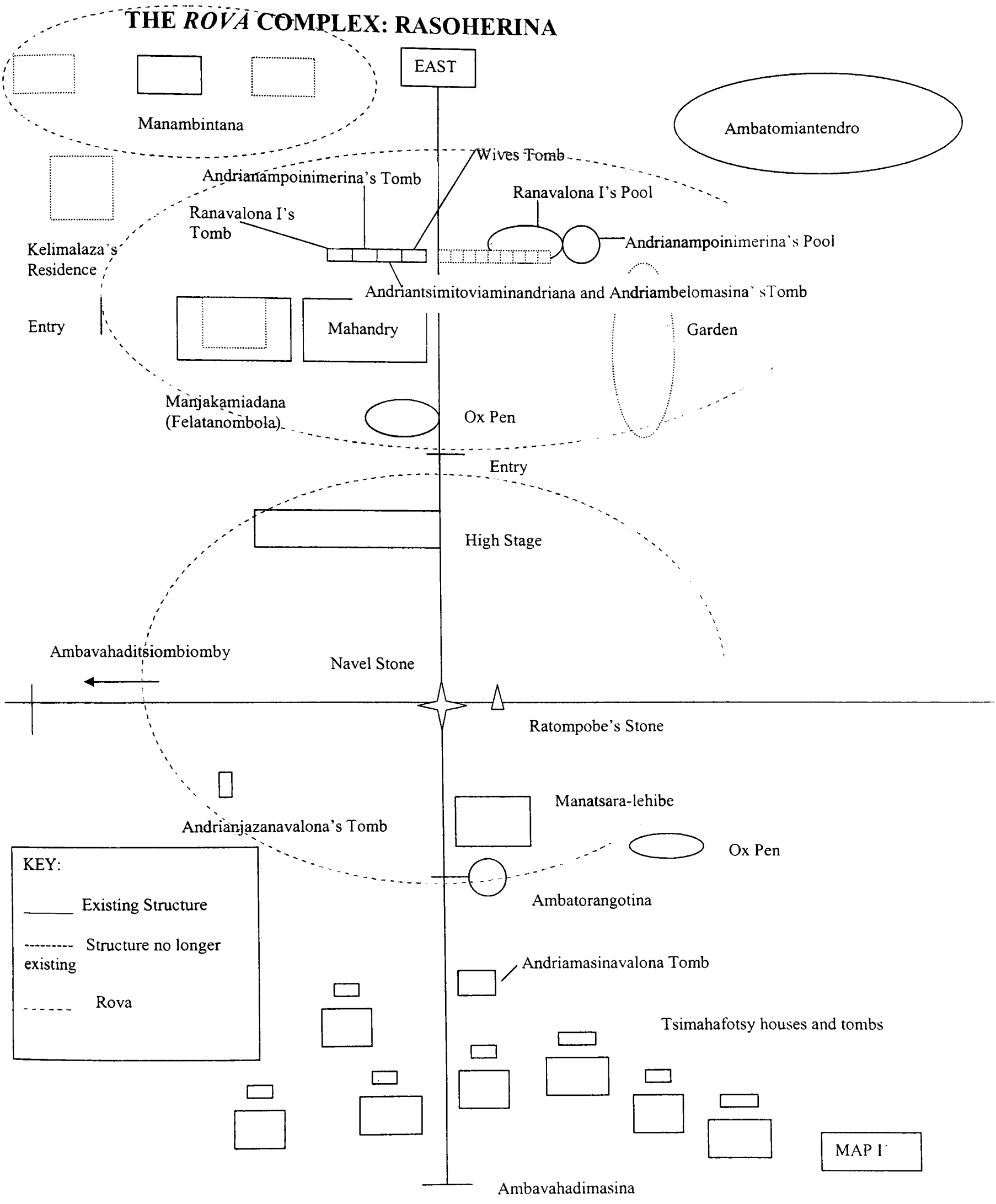
THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: ANDRIANAMPOINIMERINA and RADAMA I



THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: RANAVALONA I and RADAMA II

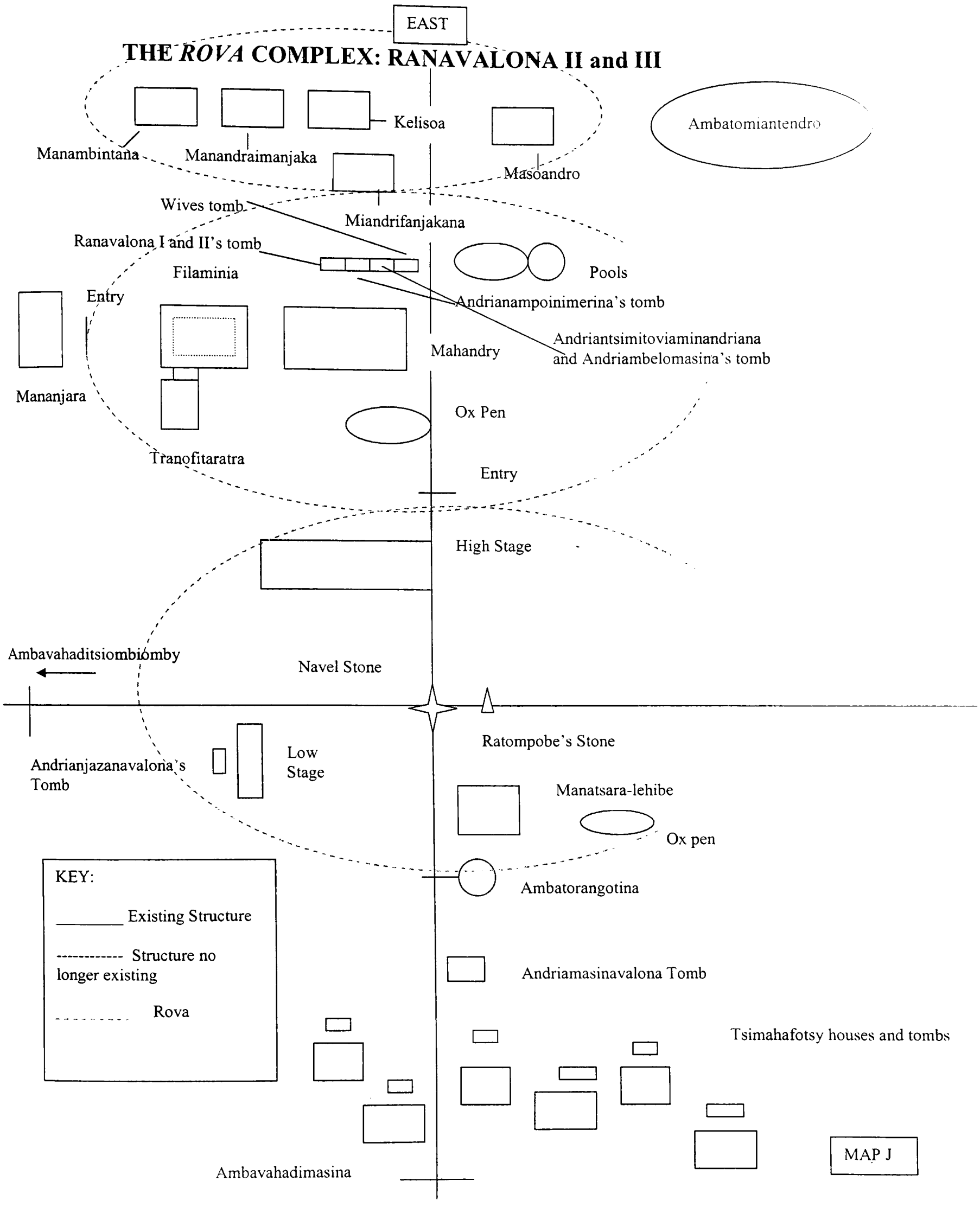


THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: RASOHERINA

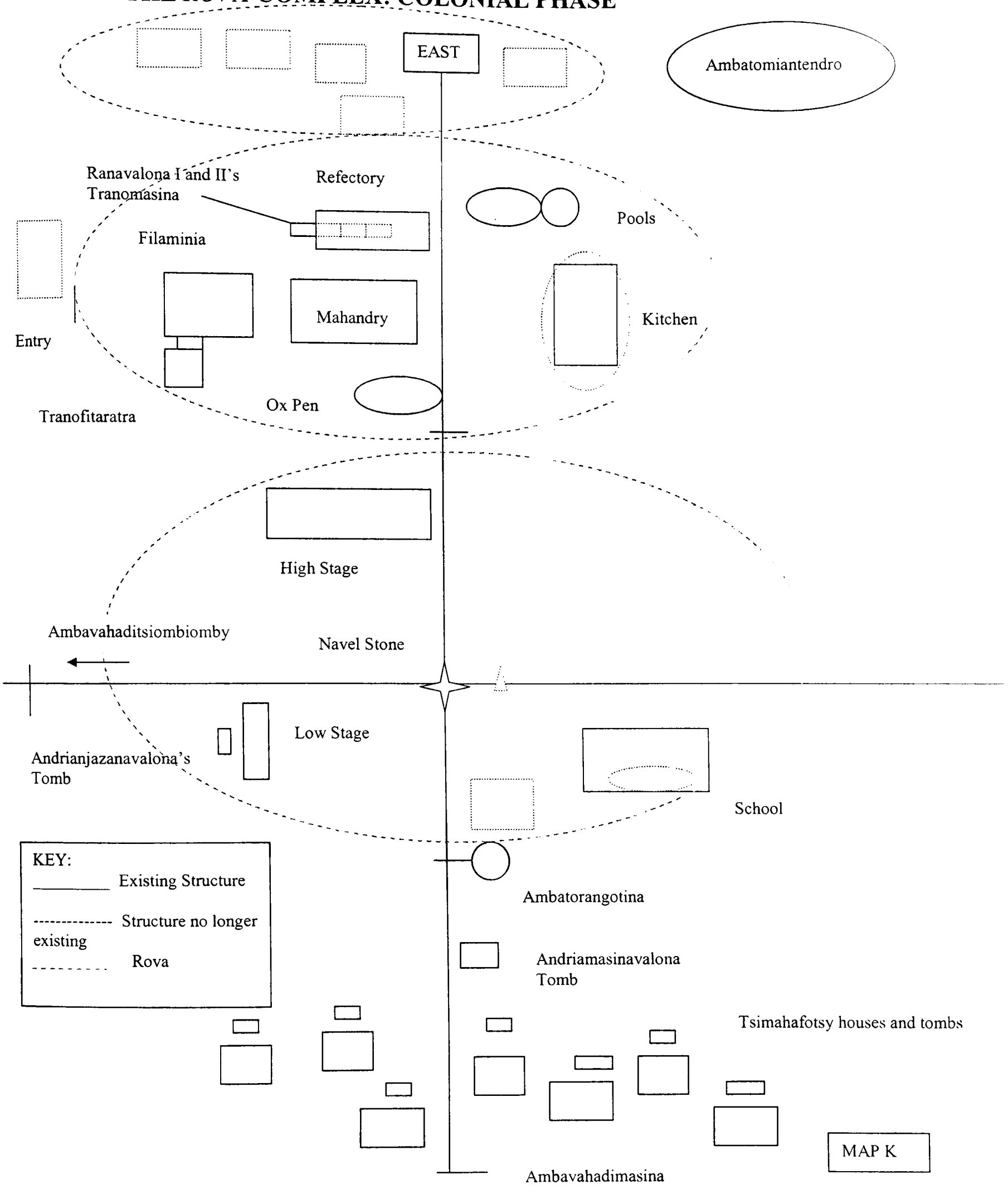


MAP I

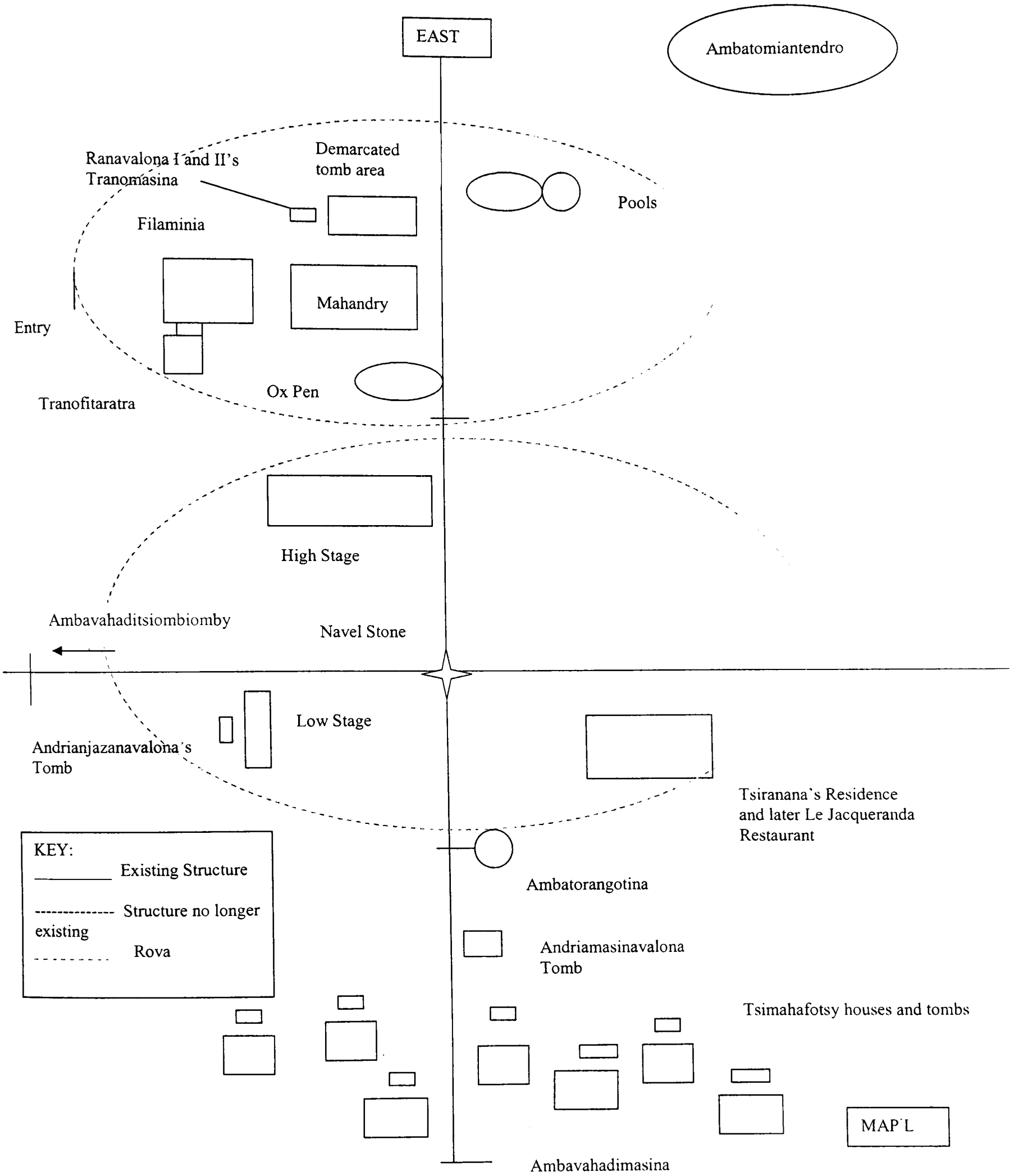
THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: RANAVALONA II and III



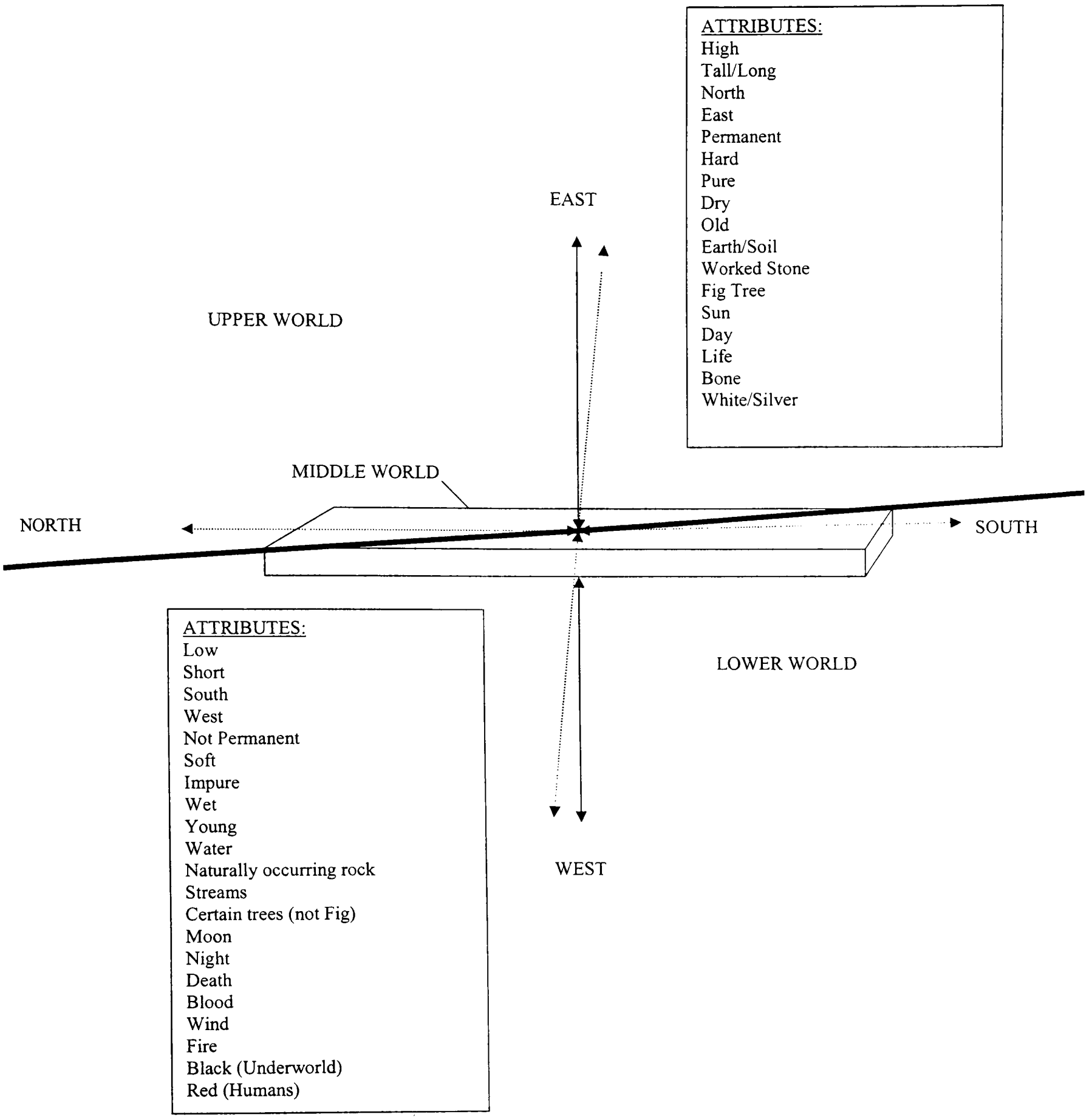
THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: COLONIAL PHASE



THE *ROVA* COMPLEX: MODERN PHASE



SOCIOCOSMIC MODEL: THE DIVISION OF SPACE, DIRECTIONAL ATTRIBUTES, AND FLOW OF POWER



MODEL 1

Appendix B: Interview Guides

Interiview Guide 1997

Background
What is your name?
What is your nationality?
What is your age?
What is your profession?
What is your religion?
What is your educational background?
Where is your place of residence?
Where were you born?
Where are your ancestors buried?

Participatory Mapping

Please walk with me and show me the "important places" within the fortifications

1 Which rituals or taboos were practised by your ancestors in this place? Do you practice the same?

2 Which people/things are forbidden in this place? Why?

3 What is the significance of this place to contemporary culture?

Additional Questions during or after Participatory Mapping Exercise

1 If you are a Christian, what is Christianity's relationship to the traditional religion?

2 Do you visit an astrologer/ombiassy? Why? Where? When?

3 Do you have a *tromba*? Which spirit? Since when?

4 What is the role of traditional religion in contemporary culture?

5 What sacred places (*douany*) do you visit? Why? When?

6 What is your opinion on the cultural revitalisation movement (Ex. *alahamady-be* (*fandroana*), *alakaosy-be*)

7 For you, what is the significance of the *rova* complex (Ambohimanga and Antananarivo)? What do you think about the burning of the *rova* at Antananarivo?

8 What do you think about tourism here in Ambohimanga?

Misc.
1 Who are the Vazimba? Do they exist today? Where? Are they sacred?

Interview Guide 1998

1-Biographical questions:
What is your name?
What is your nationality?
What is your age?
What is your profession?
What is your educational background?
Where is your place of residence?
Where were you born?
Where are your ancestors buried?

2-Is the forest at Ambohimanga important to you? Why? (forest use)

3-Is the forest sacred? Why?

4-What is the forest used for?
a) Why are people cutting trees in the forest?
b) What is the wood used for?

5-What types of trees would you like planted at Ambohimanga? (fruit trees, timber trees, crops trees)

6-Are there any medicinal plants in the forest?

7-Why is the west side of the forest so damaged?

8-How do you feel about using an entrance fee to aid in forest/Rova rehabilitation?

9-Do you use the medicinal plants of Ambohimanga? Which?

10-What are the *fady* of the forest?

Appendix C: "A Community-based Reforestation Program for the Conservation of Forest Culture in Madagascar"

Workshop Papers

A Community-based Reforestation Program for the Conservation of Forest Culture in Madagascar

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ABSTRACT

Among many forest rehabilitation programmes in Madagascar, community forestry is significant in having a strong local initiative for the restoration of the original forest. In this paper we report on the cultural heritage that protected the forest associated with the Merina rova (royal palace) at Ambohimanga. We describe the current impoverished state of the forest and municipal plans for its rehabilitation. Anthropological and sociological studies revealed the historical significance of the rova and its value for cultural tourism. The associated forest, once declared sacred, is now much disturbed by human activities. An area of only 6 ha on hill slopes remains covered with the canopy of indigenous species of rainforest trees, which are, however, regenerating well albeit in low diversity. A buffer zone plantation is proposed to protect the indigenous forest from the encroachment of exotic species while supplying firewood and fodder from the plantation of fast-growing native species in the buffer zone. For the rehabilitation of the rova forest a management plan is being developed to eliminate the trails inside the forest, to remove exotic plants from the protected forest, to plant in parts of forest to accelerate ecological succession and to control the harvesting of forest products.

Key words: forest culture, forest heritage, community forestry, reforestation, forest conservation, Madagascar

INTRODUCTION

Madagascar, the fourth largest island on earth with an area of 594,000 km^2, lies off the east coast of Africa, extending about 1,580 km from 11°57'S to 25°32'S. Its rainforest (closed forest) is of Gondwanaland origin and is best developed in the Eastern Domain up to an altitude of 800 m with a high rainfall of 2,000 to 4,000 mm (Koechlin 1972). The endemic and relict flora and fauna of rainforests are under threat of great reduction due to accelerated clearing of forests for various economic and subsistence activities of the country's rapidly increasing population. The closed forest now occupies less than 7% of the island (38,000 km^2), occurring in fragments along the east coast and slopes of the dividing range (Sussman *et al.* 1985). On the central plateau the native forests have been replaced by pasture, cultivated fields and patches of exotic trees planted for firewood and timber. In this region a small patch of indigenous forest remains at Ambohimanga (18°48'S, 47°29'E), 21 km-NNE of the capital of Madagascar (Antananarivo), associated with a rova, an enclosure of the past royal residences. Ambohimanga is situated on a granitic outcrop reaching an altitude of 1453 m. At Antananarivo the mean annual temperature is 18.1°C and the mean annual rainfall is 1424 mm (over 30 years to 1990) concentrated in the wet season from November to March (Madagascar Bureau de la Meteorologie).

This paper is an interim report of a multidisciplinary study to establish a reforestation programme at Ambohimanga for the conservation of forest culture. We believe the situation is similar to that of the hill region of Nepal where plantations are required to meet the local demand for a wide variety of forest products (Gilmour *et al.* 1990) and community participation in forest management for the sustainable use of forest products is wide spread (Amatya 1998). In presenting this study, we invite discussions from BIO-REFOR members as we believe their recent experiences in forest management in the tropics would be of great value to developing a community-based forestry in Madagascar. In this paper we describe the current status of the forest remnant at Ambohimanga and the cultural heritage that afforded its protection in the past, and propose methods of its rehabilitation for the future.

METHODS

We initiated a multidisciplinary study in 1997 to develop a rehabilitation programme for the rova forest of

Ambohimanga. An anthropological study contributes towards establishing a system of forest management by defining the heritage values of the forest and identifying the needs of dissonant user-groups. For this purpose the Merina culture as it applied to forest protection was studied in detail and a questionnaire survey was conducted among the villagers of Ambohimanga to obtain information on the attitude of people to the forest and the impact of traditional and current practices on the forest. Of about 2,000 inhabitants of Ambohimanga, 30 people living inside the exterior gates of the rova complex (see Fig. 1) were interviewed in March 1998 and 27 reliable replies were obtained concerning their perceptions of traditional, cultural and utilitarian values of the forest including its future use.

The rova complex occupies about 13 ha on the hill top and includes the remnant forest on higher slopes. The forest vegetation and flora were studied in three plots of 20 m x 20 m each, on eastern, southeastern and southwestern aspects (Fig. 1). Vegetation structure was studied in September 1998, using a rainforest *pro forma* (Kikkawa and Webb unpublished). In each plot, all trees with dbh 2.5 cm or greater were identified and counted and their basal areas estimated in October 1999. Plot 2 (on the southeastern aspect) was clear-felled before the floristic survey and a replacement plot of similar vegetation structure had to be located nearby for the survey.

A nursery of about 1 ha has been established for producing seedlings of pioneer and other fast-growing species for reforestation. Experimental planting of two native species (*Phyllarthron madagascariense* and *Craspidospermum verticillatum*) was conducted in the rova ground in March 1997 and January 1998. In 1997 40 seedlings each of the two species were planted under 20-30% shading whereas in 1998 50 seedlings each were planted with no shading. The seedlings were grown in the nursery to the age of 6 months from seeds obtained from an NPO-operated seed centre and planted 1 m apart in rows. Plantings were watered regularly for a month and protected from the herbivores. Their survival was measured after 12 months.

THE HISTORY OF AMBOHIMANGA

Ambohimanga is one of 12 hills scattered on the central highlands of Madagascar and supports a small remnant of the native forest surrounded by a sea of denuded landscapes. The hill served as the original capital of the Merina Kingdom which was established by King Andrianampoinimerina in the late 18th century. The king issued strict laws governing Ambohimanga's forest and declared its sacred nature, "Respectez la forêt..." (Callet 1974: 576). By his decree it was forbidden to cut the wood in the forest or to take dry wood without royal authorisation from the sovereign, which was known to be granted only when a woman was giving birth and requiring a large fire for warmth (*ibid*). The rova on the hill was strategically placed, guarded by several exterior and interior gates that spanned two concentric rings of fosses. The forest afforded further protection; the thorns of the Amiana trees, dense in the forest, were a deterrent to the invaders. During one attack against the first Merina king, some invading Sakalava were injured by these thorns and were said to have retreated, cursing "Cette terre est sacré, car les plantes même mordent" (Callet 1974: 580). Apart from being sacred to the ancestors and providing protection against invaders, the forest was also a source of medicinal plants, some of which are said to have been imported by the King from the rainforests of the Eastern Domain.

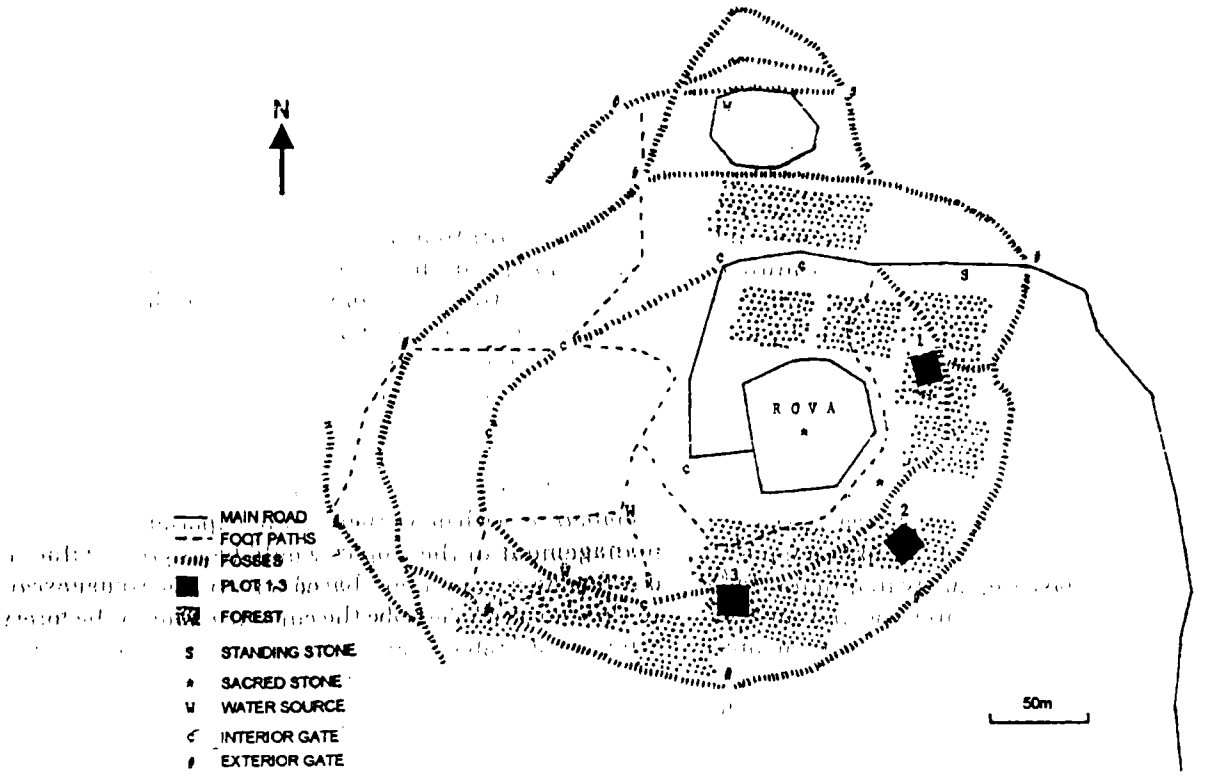

Fig. 1. A map of Ambohimanga rova complex, showing the extent of the remnant forest (from McCutcheon unpublished)

After the king moved his political centre to Antananarivo, Ambohimanga remained a sacred site and served as a retreat for succeeding Merina monarchs. When the Monarchy was abolished by the French in 1896, the rova retained its function as a retreat for the first governor general. At this time, exotic trees, notably jacarandas and eucalypts, were planted. The old jacaranda trees within the compound of the rova today represent the glory of that period as much as the indigenous fig trees growing alongside are part of the Merina culture. Unfortunately, over the years, these exotic trees have invaded the original forest and have replaced native trees in places.

Although it officially lost its sacred status during the Colonial period, the forest associated with the rova has, in part, been protected largely by the local people who observe the taboos decreed by the first Merina king surrounding cutting trees and burning in the forest. Despite this adherence to tradition, economic necessity caused much modification of the forest through the clearing for building, collecting of firewood and fodder, and harvesting of medicinal plants. The forest is now criss-crossed with trails. No government policy or assistance can be expected to restore the forest as the preservation of natural and cultural heritage is not a priority for the nation when the whole country is poverty-stricken and health, education and other social issues are the major concerns of the government. However, the municipality of Ambohimanga is restoring the rova area in an effort to develop cultural tourism with the help of international NGO's, an act which will benefit the local economy and contribute to the preservation of forest culture and the conservation of forest resources.

THE FOREST OF AMBOHIMANGA

The original forest associated with the rova of Ambohimanga is a small remnant of the closed forest on the high plateau (Chauvet 1972) within the wet-and-dry tropics (Koechlin 1972). The forest is much disturbed and impoverished today, only about 6 ha remaining covered with the canopy of indigenous trees. Figure 1 shows the extent of the existing forest in relation to the rova complex. The northwestern side of the rova was burnt in a fire during the 1980s, and subsequently invading shrubs contain exotic species.

The characteristics of the vegetation as observed in three 400 m^2-plots are summarised in Table 1. The structural type of the forest is semi-deciduous notophyll vine forest, which develops under wet subtropical climate with a dry season (Webb 1968). On the steep exposed slopes the soils are particularly shallow and permit growth of only a few species of deciduous and semi-deciduous shrubs and low trees. Even in the best developed forest on moderate slopes of sheltered sites, the canopy does not exceed 25 m in height and is formed by only three or four species. Although species diversity is much lower than in the rainforest of the Eastern Domain (Dumetz 1999), the flora is representative of the eastern Centre Domain (Koechlin 1972) and contains many endemic species of rainforest. The most frequently encountered and often the most dominant tree is *Phyllarthron madagascariense* (Bignoniaceae), which forms a low canopy of woodland type with a very high relative basal area (94.8%) in Plot 1 but grows tall and large in mature forest (Plot 3) occupying less than half the total basal area (Table 2). Both this species and *Craspidospermum verticillatum* (Apocynaceae) are regenerating well in Plots 1 and 2 where the canopy is low and has openings (Table 1). In addition to these species, the shrub layer is occupied by *Hypoestes* sp. (Acanthaceae), *Aphloia theiformis* (subcanopy species, Flacourtiaceae) and *Psychotria* sp. (subcanopy species, Rubiaceae) in the developing phase and *Tambourissa purpurea* (canopy-forming species, Monimiaceae), *Kaliphora madagascariensis* (Kaliphoraceae) and *Saldinia* sp. (Rubiaceae) among others in the mature phase. Species diversity of woody plants is generally low and woody lianes, characteristic of tropical rainforest, are not very common. However, the fact that a large number of seedlings (48% of seedlings of dbh < 5 cm) of *Tambourissa purpurea* (Monimiaceae), a species typical of the wet lowland rainforests of the Eastern Domain (Dumetz 1999), occurred in the mesic site (Plot 3) suggests that the forest can sustain the structure of a wet tropical rainforest. No dead stands or branches or sizeable logs remain in the forest (presumably removed by villagers for firewood). Although the fodder has been collected for the zebus, no grazing was permitted inside the forest and rainforest trees are regenerating well. In fact, the proportions of stems of all species belonging to the smallest category (dbh 2.5 - 5.0 cm) ranged from 85.3% (Plot 1) to 93.0% (Plot 2) of the total number of stems for the plot. The stem density of trees and shrubs combined (see Table 1) was remarkably similar between the plots (181 - 185, equivalent of 4525 - 4625/ha).

The results of experimental planting of two native species considered to be pioneer species of rainforest succession at Ambohimanga showed that both *P. madagascariense* and *C. verticillatum* can grow in unshaded conditions (survival 44% and 48%, respectively, P>0.05) and the survival rate of *P. madagascariense* under 20-30% shading was similar (45%, P>0,05). However, the survival rate of *C. verticillatum* in the same light shading was much greater (70%), suggesting that this species continues to regenerate and regenerate well when some shading is provided. The results of the floristic survey of seedlings (Table 3) indicate that both species regenerate well in shaded conditions but that their survival is very poor in mature forest.

In summary, although the rova forest is small and limited in plant species diversity, it contains a spectrum of rainforest vegetation ranging from seral stages of pyric succession (northwestern slopes), through exposed low-canopy semi-deciduous forest (eastern slopes), to closed mature forest on mesic sites (southern gullies).

The avifauna of the forest contained common pollinators (*e.g.* Madagascar Green Sunbird *Nectarinia notata*, Madagascar White-eye *Zosterops maderaspatanus*), a rare frugivore for the region (Madagascar Blue Pigeon *Alectroenas madagascariensis*), common insectivores (*e.g.* Common Jery *Neomixis tenella*, Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone mutata*), a predator/scavenger (Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius*) and a typical forest edge species (Madagascar Coucal *Centropus toulou*), suggesting a full complement of the community.

Table 1. Vegetation of Ambohimanga, showing a range of variation in 3 plots (20 m x 20 m each) from xeric to mesic (mature forest) sites in the disturbed semi-deciduous notophyll vine forest on granitic soil

Plot	1	2	3
Altitude	1430 m	1370 m	1320 m
Aspect	east	southeast	southwest
Slope	steep	moderate	moderate
Soil (all shallow)	poorly-structured	well-structured	well-structured
Leaf litter (dry season)	>1 layer deep, in small clumps	>1 layer deep, in large clumps	>1 layer deep, uniform
Logs	rare and small, little decomposed	nil	rare and small, little decomposed
Ground cover (all uniform)			
height (cover)	10 cm (5/10)	25 cm (8/10)	20 cm (4/10)
life forms	seedlings>grass	seedlings>ferns	seedlings>ferns
Canopy (all very uneven)			
mean height	12 m	18 m	20 m
no. of tree species (>8m)	2	4	4
no. of individuals (>8m)	27	19	9
no. of dead stands (>8m)	nil	nil	nil
foliage density	low-dense, clumped	mid-dense, uniform	dense, uniform
crown extension	1/2 tree height	1/3 tree height	1/2-1/3 tree height
dry season defoliation	total rare	partial common	total rare/ partial common
bark of tree	finely-fissured	finely-textured, fissured or flaky	coarsely-fissured, finely textured
clumps of epiphytes	nil	nil	nil
lichen cover	partially covered	mostly exposed	partially covered
base of tree	all non-buttressed	all non-buttressed	1 with aerial roots
Shrubs <8m (density varies)			
no. of woody species	8	13	12
no. of stems	157	166	172
no. of dead stands	nil	nil	nil
foliage density	mid-dense, clumped	mid-dense, clumped	low-dense, in small clumps
crown extension	>1/2 shrub height	1/2 shrub height	1/3 shrub height
dry season defoliation	partial common	partial rare	partial rare
Wiry lianes	common, clumped	rare	rare
Woody lianes	very rare	rare	rare
Disturbances			
openings in canopy	conspicuous	a few, natural	some, natural
insect damage	rare	rare	on ground cover
recent logging	nil	minor	minor
recent clearing and fire	nil	occurring	outside only
Trails within plot	many	many	many

Table 2. Variation in mean stem length, diameter at breast height (dbh) and relative basal area of the trees of the dominant species *Phyllarthron madagascariense* among the 3 plots

Plot	1	2	3
Stem length (m)	17.5 ± 4.0 b	16.5 ±3.0 b	21.0 ± 3.0 a
dbh (cm)	34.4 ± 21.5 ab	21.8 ± 10.5 b	42.3 ± 16.3 a
Relative basal area (% of total for the plot)	94.8	63.6	45.7

Differences between plots: a v. b : $P < 0.05$

The current status of the forest indicated that though much disturbed and impoverished the forest can be restored to its sustaining remnant state that once was.

REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

Careful planning is needed for the rehabilitation of Ambohimanga forest as the programme must satisfy not only the conservation requirements of the forest itself, but also be consistent with the cultural tradition, including sacred rituals and use of forest products by individuals, while promoting village economy in general. Although King Andrianampoinimerina's fady (the prophetic basis of a taboo) has remained dormant in the population, the public revival of the "cult of the ancestors" since the Colonial period has opened the question of taboos once again. The questionnaire survey showed the sacred nature of the forest as the resting place of the ancestors (78% of the replies) and in the presence of taboos (81%), with cutting of trees the highest (33%). However, dependence on the forest for firewood (86%) and timber (56%) is also great, and there is strong desire to rehabilitate the native forest for these and other (orchards, medicinal plants) purposes. Fortunately, the conservation of the forest and replanting with indigenous species were deemed not fady to the ancestors while sacred places in the forest are designated as shrines to the ancestors. Thus traditional fady are respected and the power of the sacred forest is remembered for future generations. For rehabilitating the forest and meeting the needs of the local population, the following options are being considered for implementation.

Buffer Zone Plantation

This has two purposes – First, to minimise the risk of disturbance to the protected forest by preventing the encroachment of invasive plants, and second, to provide timber, firewood and fodder for the local population. Many exotic shrubs, such as bamboos, lantana (*Lantana camara*) and wild tobacco (*Solanum mauritianum*), would be established in edges and openings if they are not controlled. This is apparent on northwestern slopes of the rova hill following the fire. Similarly, jacarandas and eucalypts, now established within the rova, would find their way into the forest as they have done, if there is no barrier. The buffer zone plantation, forming a peripheral altitudinal belt around the native forest, would greatly reduce the chances of invasion by these exotic plant species. The plantation of this type encourages recolonisation of native species in the understorey and supports local biodiversity (Keenan *et al.* 1999).

Planting in the buffer zone is also a preferred alternative to continued removal of firewood from the forest. Although pines and eucalypts have been planted elsewhere for this purpose, fast-growing native species, such as *Harungana madagascariensis* (Hypericaceae) are being considered now (Kawamata 1999). Our experiments also demonstrated the effectiveness of producing forest cover with *Phyllarthron madagascariense* and *Craspidospermum verticillatum*. The questionnaire survey supported unanimously the planting of native species for Ambohimanga. The demand for firewood is great only because most villagers cannot afford gas or electricity which is now available. If a separate plantation of eucalypts is to be established for coppicing, it should be located away from the rova. Agroforestry utilising exotic crops, such as fruit trees, is also possible. The buffer zone may be utilised for firewood and fodder, but planting of exotic trees in it should not be an option. The size and shape of the buffer zone may also be limited by the available land between the forest and dwellings or private land. We propose planting of native acacia (*e.g. Acacia photerophylla, A. xipheclade*) and other fast growing pioneer species on bare ground before planting useful mature forest species. *P. madagascariense* and *C. verticillatum* seedlings may be planted with a ratio of 4 to 6 for a desirable composition of the forest. The nursery with a capacity for 100,000 seedlings already exists in the village and 20,000 to 30,000 plants are retained even in the dry season. At present it is used for growing seedlings of acacia, eucalypts (*E. grandis, E. robusta, E. camaldulensis*), *Pinus patula, Cupressus, Araucaria, Phyllarthron madagascariense* and *Craspidospermum verticillatum*.

Rehabilitation of the Rova Forest

A management plan should be developed by the municipality of Ambohimanga in consultation with various user-groups of the forest. The sacred nature of the forest associated with the rova is paramount in observing the cultural heritage of the site. Because the villagers fear the fady they are reluctant to part with information regarding the forest products. However, the taboos often had a clear purpose (Rudd 1970), for example, in protecting the medicinal plants in the forest in the past. The fact that the clearing of parts of the forest was legitimised for providing construction timber and that the forest is riddled with well established trails today suggests that tradition is no longer observed strictly. While it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the forest is used by the villagers today, collecting of firewood, fodder and medicinal plants is practised,

Table 3. The numbers of seedlings (dbh < 2.5 - 5.0 cm) of *Phyllarthron madagascariense* and *Craspidospermum verticillatum* inside the 3 plots and their proportions (%) among the stems formed by the trees and shrubs of the same dbh range

Plot	1	2	3
P. madagascariense	13 (8.2%)	30 (17.1%)	1 (0.6%)
C. verticillatum	28 (17.8%)	44 (25.1%)	4 (2.4%)
Other species of trees and shrubs	116 (74.0%)	101 (57.7%)	161 (97.0%)
Total	157	175	166

and more than 80% of the villagers who answered the questionnaire wanted to have the rova forest preserved for these purposes. Thus the management plan should include the following:

Trails. To prevent further erosion and disturbance to the forest, most existing trails should be filled and vegetation cover restored. Depending on the aspect either *P. madagascriense* or *C. verticillatum* would be suitable for planting in the filled trails. Only the minimum necessary access to different parts of the forest for management purposes should be retained, and these trails should run along a contour or spiral path with proper drains.

Exotic Species. One eucalypt tree in the replaced Plot 2 exceeded a height of 25 m and the bare ground at the base of the tree measured 8.4 m^2, suggesting its allelopathic effects on native plants. *Eucalyptus* trees are known to cause reduction in the yield of various agricultural crops grown nearby (Rao and Reddy 1984, Basu *et al.* 1987) and such suppression is known to be associated variously with the extent of the tree canopy (del Moral *et al.* 1978) and the distribution of litter (del Moral and Muller 1970, Basu *et al.* 1987). *Eucalyptus* and other exotic plants within the forest should be eliminated as far as possible. As eucalypts have a habit of regenerating shoots from the stump they need to be completely eradicated. Exotic shrubs on northwestern slopes should also be eradicated before planting of native species can proceed. Some ornamental plants established within the rova may be retained, but must be confined within the compound and prevented from invading the forest. An assortment of exotic species growing in different parts of the village must be controlled so that none would become rampant. It would serve a useful purpose if representatives of those and other species (*e.g.* medicinal plants from other districts of Madagascar) may be brought together in one place as a small botanic garden.

Enrichment Planting. In parts of the forest where ecological succession is not producing suitable cover (*e.g.* on steep slopes, after a severe fire) regeneration may be accelerated by the planting of seedlings. Suitable indigenous species must be found for this purpose. Alternatively, improve the habitat for accelerated growth of regenerating trees, such as *P. madagascariense*.

Forest Products. The use of forest products must be controlled strictly. Collecting of fruits, seeds, mushrooms, medicinal plants (*e.g. Aphloia theiformis*), etc. should be regulated to minimise impact on the forest. The sustainable level of use should be established for other renewable resources or an interim measure should be put in place until the buffer zone vegetation can meet the needs of the local population.

As the area occupied by the forest is small, management should not be costly and such expenses as required may be met from the tourism income. Historical attraction that the rova deserves should be promoted as the buildings and treasures of the rova are restored. The forest of Ambohimanga is unique both naturally and culturally in Madagascar as its history reveals. In future the forest as a functioning ecosystem would itself be considered as a scientific and educational reserve while maintaining its sacred state.

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Appendix D: "*Rova* Rescue"

An Overview *of Rova* Rescue: Conserving, Preserving and Protecting Ambohimanga's Cultural Landscape

An interdisciplinary approach to heritage preservation

Although the Merina lost their most famous cultural icon with the destruction of the *rova* complex at Antananarivo in 1995, there is a second chance at cultural heritage preservation waiting at Ambohimanga, the original capital of the Merina kingdom. When the seat of government was shifted to Antananarivo in the late eighteenth century, Ambohimanga remained an important and sacred site. Over the years, the *rova* at Antananarivo usurped its sibling in grandeur and as a national icon whilst the *rova* at Ambohimanga, bereft of funds, quietly deteriorated. Now that the Merina have lost the primary symbol of their national pantheon, Ambohimanga's timely preservation is essential.

First, the *rova* complex at Ambohimanga is the only remaining site of its kind in the World. Second, it is an example of living tradition. The complex functions to preserve the Merina *imago mundi*, its cosmological harmony and socio-political order, through its feature's forms and functions. The site is presently used by *zanadrano* who supplicate to their royal ancestors, leaving sacrifices in return for superior *hasina*. It is used both for private and public ritual and as a venue for newly popularised "traditional" rituals that are being incorporated into the fabric of modern society in a spirit of cultural revitalisation, such as *fandroana* and *alakaosy*. Thus, the site is culturally important in Madagascar and internationally interesting as a literal and metaphorical meeting ground for tradition and innovation. Third, the site can be a unique self-sustaining development asset, which can be utilised for public benefit nationally and internationally, through carefully managed tourism.[1] Preserving the cultural landscape of Ambohimanga would provide much-needed employment and generate revenue for the local population and, hence, will have a very positive role to play in the economy. Finally, the site would serve as a precedent and prototype for preserving the many other sacred and historically important sites in Imerina and Madagascar at large, which are currently unprotected. This would establish a rich interconnecting matrix of cultural resources on the island. The *rova* complex is in a serious state of disrepair, owing to the impoverished state of the Malagasy economy and the fact that cultural heritage preservation in Ambohimanga has not been a priority for the Malagasy government. As cultural heritage cannot be replaced if lost, I feel that it is imperative that immediate action be taken towards its restoration and conservation.

Applying anthropology to restore and conserve Ambohimanga

Anthropology, as an essentially interdisciplinary discipline, encourages us to see an issue holistically from its theoretical as well as from its practical perspectives. Thus, anthropologists can and should use their broad-ranging skills to become solution-minded, actively involving themselves with problem solving in

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1 Cultural heritage is "multi-interpreted" by different "consumers." Thus, "community participation is often suggested as an essential ingredient in improving the quality of tourism's contribution to national development. It covers both the increased involvement of local people in decision making about new developments, as well as various attempts at introducing something adapted to local needs" (Lea 1988:78). Also, this method opens the necessary channels of communication between commercial and non commercial users, targeting intrinsic and extrinsic gains and minimising socio-cultural costs.

developing nations and breaking out of the "ivory tower" of purely academic anthropology. According to Sol Tax "we deal not with a distinction between pure and applied anthropology but rather an amalgam or continuum of the two, a differing mixture of models in all of us who are anthropologists" (Tax 1977:277). Following this notion, I believe that anthropologists should be encouraged to act as sensitive and tenacious change agents, action-oriented, directing their research towards purposive development programs. As Cernea (1995) has suggested, "the social scientist's key contribution is to be not only a data collector and offer passive 'assessments' of the existing situation: s/he must also actively design the content of induced change and chart the collective action path toward accomplishing it" (Cernea 1995:11). Towards this end, my mission has been to restore and conserve the *rova* complex at Ambohimanga, while preserving the integrity of this sacred site, through a project called "*Rova* Rescue."

Essentially, a broad-ranging holistic approach is required. Each project should be considered in three phases: (1) past, (2) present and (3) future. Phase one involves determining the site's meanings through time, and the cultural group's approach to change and continuity. Phase two concerns the present and focuses on emergency repairs, restoration and conservation of the site. Phase three concerns the future and focuses on sustaining the natural and cultural heritage site, dealing with funding, site-management issues, and the extension of the project.

The project - *Rova* Rescue

Phase one

Accurate information is lacking about the *rova* complex at Ambohimanga, as research has tended to focus on the more visual and dramatic site at Antananarivo, before the fire. Research that has been undertaken has been largely uni-discipinary, approached from either an *etic* or *emic* perspective. I have worked towards filling this gap by investigating the rich history and modern implications of Imerina's original capital and ritual centre using an interdisciplinary approach and considering multiple perspectives together.

"Phase one," comprised of the research undertaken towards my D.Phil. thesis, has aimed to move us towards a more complete understanding of Ambohimanga, by establishing the site's significance past and present. To do this, I have looked at the site as a whole, considering the natural environment and the built environment, as a joint cultural and natural heritage site, or cultural landscape.[2] The cultural landscape is comprised of cultural and natural features which comprises a visual language. But, in order to interpret signs accurately the features that make up the site were considered in their cultural context, spatial context, and temporal context.

Throughout this exercise, it was also important to understand how, despite apparently radical paradigm shifts, the Merina have managed change and maintained a strong cultural identity and cohesiveness. I

2This term refers to the complex interrelationships between man and nature in the construction, formation and evolution of an environment.

determined that change in Imerina was additive, not substitutive, in that the Merina tended to add, manipulate and copy, versus replace, destroy and invent. This has resulted in a cultural landscape layered with symbolism, seemingly entangled to the uninitiated. I have endeavoured to decode the metaphors and determine their meanings as accurately as possible.

Because of the vastness and complexity of the site, and its disparate user-groups over time, the resources I used were interdisciplinary and combined multiple perspectives, both *emic* and *etic*. This has been not only instrumental but indispensable in moving towards a more complete understanding of Ambohimanga. Also, I am convinced that this approach directly increases the probability of success of cultural heritage programs, such as *Rova* Rescue. When writing about 'high energy physics,' Fritjof Capra suggested that the whole universe appears as a dynamic web of inseparable energy patterns. "Theoretical models show that the properties of a particle can only be understood in terms of its activity - of its interaction with the surrounding environment - and that the particle, therefore, cannot be seen an isolated entity, but has to be understood as an integrated part of the whole" (Capra 1992:92). This holistic approach to physics can teach us a lesson in modern anthropology and in dealing with cultural heritage preservation issues. We must investigate an issue synergistically, from different disciplines and from different perspectives.

Interdisciplinary research provides more alternatives with which to view data. Awareness of different disciplines and viewpoints allows one to introduce novel approaches not considered before, to have access to different data-sets that may enhance a discipline's pre existing one, and to avoid repeating past mistakes. "We must bridge our traditional disciplinary divides and combine resources to mutually empower our bodies of knowledge and methods" (Cernea 1995:10). In addition to an interdisciplinary approach, multiple perspectives of Ambohimanga's user-groups through time must be acknowledged and understood. Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) have recognised the importance of cultivating a view of heritage that accepts and deals with pluralism - for all heritage is dissonant to someone, and all dissonance is someone's heritage (Tunbridge 1996). This is particularly relevant in Ambohimanga where residents, international and domestic tourists, Christians and *zanadrano*, and all social classes come together. Ambohimanga holds disparate meanings for these groups. Thus, the management of dissonance is a central condition for creating and maintaining the *rova* complex as an effective cultural heritage site.

In keeping with this approach I used various sources and methods of analysis from a wide range of disciplines in addition to anthropology, including archaeology, history, art and architectural history, sociology and ecology. Likewise, to gain an understanding of the multitude of meanings the site has held and holds for user-groups, I consulted diverse archival sources, the Merina's oral histories, archaeological evidence and undertook anthropological fieldwork, in which I employed participant observation, semi-structured interviewing, photo-elicitation techniques and participatory mapping. I studied the cultural landscape of Ambohimanga through the perspectives of its contemporary user-groups, which I identified through network sampling, including government elites, direct descendants of the Merina monarchy, members of the working class, descendants of the royal slaves, and domestic and international tourists. This revealed a cross-section of contemporary public attitudes to this sacred site and reinforced the

importance of consulting user-groups about the representation of their culture to determine disparate 'ways of seeing' both internally and externally.

Applied and development anthropologists require two categories of knowledge: 'knowledge for understanding' and 'knowledge for action' in order to explain and prescribe, see (Scott and Shore 1979). "Social analysis must be used to explain the social fabric, design the social goals, and chart the path of collective action" (Cernea 1995:9).[3] Thus, within Phase I also assessed the capacity of current staff. institutional resources and management systems in order to determine the best avenues for the projects effective execution.[4] I found it advantageous to investigate the current legislative framework for the protection of monuments in Madagascar, with particular reference to existing strengths and weaknesses, review the current management system for the protection and repair of buildings and sites, and determine the positive and negative impact of tourism and cultural revitalisation movements at the site.[5]

Phase two

"Phase two" of *Rova* Rescue concerns the actual conservation and restoration of the site. In this phase we have focused on the gates and defensive ditches surrounding Ambohimanga, the town and sacred forest within, and the three *rova* areas. We have aimed to curtail further damage to the site's historic buildings. rebuild and restore them to their original condition, landscape the area reconstructing paths circumnavigating the perimeter of Ambohimanga and the interior gates in an upward spiral towards the *rova* complex and construct a visitors' centre with a museum and archive. We aim to create a tourist and user-friendly site in keeping with the natural and cultural environment's carrying capacity, which I identified in Phase I.[6]

Restoration projects in Ambohimanga have taken place with sensitivity to the Merina belief system and tradition. *Ombiassy* have been employed in an advisory capacity during this restoration phase, making sure that all construction conforms to *vintana*, established *fady* and to *fombadrazana* generally. Also, a committee of concerned citizens has been formed, comprised of the "elders" of Ambohimanga and the town's former mayor, all of whom hold a vested interest in the site's preservation and development. This group plays a leading role in decision making and fund raising, and are responsible for nominating Ambohimanga to UNESCO for World Heritage status. The members of this group represent a cross-section Merina elite society. Most are well educated and relatively wealthy. The group would be improved with the addition of representatives from other user-groups, such as *zanadrano*, lower classes, non-Merina

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3 Thus, phase one also aimed to consolidate previous research, provide direction and assure congruent goals and objectives for *Rova* Rescue.

4 Cernea (1995) calls this the "social organisation of actors" model.

5 This includes the site's carrying capacity. See Lea (1988:7) for costs and benefits of tourism.

6 The site will be organised for multiple-use. Multiple-use is a strategy which recognises that a limited supply of recreational land often needs to be used for several purposes. Thus, we must be cognisant of the area's carrying capacity. a notion which recognises that both natural and built attractions have upper limits in their capacity to absorb visitors, above which a deterioration of the resource itself takes place (Lea 1988:61).

Malagasy, and an overseas representative, if possible. This would ensure that the dissonance of user-groups is adequately represented and addressed.

Phase three - sustainability and expansion

"Phase three" concerns the site's sustainability, its national and international promotion and the project's expansion. An effective plan for the *rova* complex's conservation, reconstruction and promotion will assist the rebuilding of the *rova* in Antananarivo by setting a precedent, providing a prototype and establishing the necessary information to implement reconstruction of this former treasure. Further, in phase three research must be undertaken into the potential of extending the project at Ambohimanga to other cultural heritage sites in Imerina, investigating the possibilities of an historic walking tour connecting Ambohimanga and surrounding fortified villages on the twelve sacred hills. Finally, *Rova* Rescue can serve as a model for preserving the many other sacred and historically important sites in Madagascar, which are currently unprotected. This would establish a rich interconnecting matrix of cultural resources on the island. These places could then be formally recognised and protected by community commitment and legislation.

Financing the project and fund management

First, we must establish fund-generating methods to ensure the site's sustainable management through admission fees, guide book sales, a gift shop and donation opportunities. All of these should be in place in Ambohimanga within the year (1998). Second, in order to accomplish phases two and three, more significant funding in the form of international aid is needed. So far, we have obtained enough funds, primarily from the Japanese Exposition Corporation, to complete emergency repairs and construct a visitor's centre. Further funds are being sought. But, issues of fund management must be addressed for the project to be effective and sustainable.

Capital is still largely in the hands of the Malagasy government and cultural heritage management is not yet a governmental priority. When enlisting foreign aid, project leaders and funders must be prudent as well as visionary; realistic as well as idealistic. Too many conservation and preservation projects have failed in developing countries, such as Madagascar, due to a lack of cultural understanding on behalf of the funders and project leaders, and a consequent mismanagement of funds. The burning of the *rova* complex at Antananarivo is a case in point. Funding bodies have taken a largely *etic* approach to heritage preservation and management. They have imposed first world cultural conceptions and economic expectations on developing countries without considering the latter's development priorities, legislative systems and socio-political/economic climate. Hence, projects are unsuccessful, credibility for future funding has been jeopardised or lost, and natural and cultural treasures continue to disappear.

"International aid is as much part of the problem as it is part of a solution and should be scrutinised for its own systemic flaws," (Museveni (1995), President of the Republic of Uganda). He has recognised the need to overhaul the foreign aid system thereby making aid a more effective development tool. He has asserted that aid to Africa should be directed to building independent institutions called "autonomous development

funds," which give Africans a greater choice and control over the incoming resources.[7] A more effective use of foreign aid provides incentives for local accountability. As Museveni writes, "instead of foreign aid being merely an outcome of political bargaining between donor and recipient institutions, it should be marketed through legally and politically independent funds incorporated in the recipient country These intermediaries would eliminate many of the structural bottlenecks that presently cause foreign aid to be ineffective or misused" (Musveni 1995).

Essentially, to be effective, financing must be directed from within. An *emic* approach should be employed in order to chart the most efficient route to sustainable preservation. Indigenous user-groups must be included in the equation because without involvement there is no commitment and without commitment the project inevitably fails. Goren Hyden has surmised that "foreign aid works best when prospective beneficiaries have a stake in the venture; when it is adapted to the particular circumstances of the situation in which it is being dispensed; and, when it makes people feel enthusiastic and ready to co-operate to achieve a common objective" (Hyden 1995:37). The "elders" of Ambohimanga may be made responsible for an autonomous development fund. It is hoped that this approach will encourage a renewed connection to culture and community identity at Ambohimanga, helping to ensure that this essential piece of Madagascar's cultural and natural heritage is not lost.

7An alternative to conventional development assistance is the idea of autonomous development funds. Goren Hyden (1995:34) characterises the autonomous development fund model as a "public but politically independent institution; it caters for both government and civil society; it is a funding, not an operational, entity; it aggregates finance from many sources; it brings donors and recipients together in new ways; and it is national in scope of operation." He goes on to say that the principle role of these funds is to mobilise external support for development by demonstrating that they are capable of doing a professional job and thus are worth investing in. Significantly, he recognises that development does not only require money and human expertise, it also needs the social capital that turns physical capital and human skills into something productive on a sustainable basis. Financial resources are thus converted into social capital (Hyden 1995:46)

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