



HAL
open science

Imperial rivalry in the western indian ocean and schemes in colonised Madagascar, 1769-1826

Gwyn Campbell

► **To cite this version:**

Gwyn Campbell. Imperial rivalry in the western indian ocean and schemes in colonised Madagascar, 1769-1826. *Revue historique des Mascareignes*, 1998, *Les Mascareignes et la France*, 01, pp.75-97. hal-03454012

HAL Id: hal-03454012

<https://hal.univ-reunion.fr/hal-03454012v1>

Submitted on 29 Nov 2021

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Imperial rivalry in the western indian ocean and schemes in colonised Madagascar, 1769-1826¹

Gwyn CAMPBELL

*Département Affaires et Commerce International
Université d'Avignon*

INTRODUCTION

From the start of the sixteenth century, following the opening of the Cape route to the Indies, Madagascar was intermittently subject of a European colonial interest that peaked during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815). However, not only were the imperial interests of governments in Europe frequently at variance with those of European forces in the Indian Ocean, but both had to contend with the dynamics of indigenous imperial interests. In Madagascar in the eighteenth century, the balance of power followed the shift in the gravity of foreign trade from the west to east coast, away from the Sakalava and towards the central plateau where the Merina dominated the supply of slaves and provisions to the burgeoning plantation economies on the Masacrenes. Foreign forces, notably the French and British, attempted to establish control over that trade through schemes to colonise Madagascar, whilst the Merina sought to use their commercial dominance to establish their own empire in the region. This paper examines the basis for this triple imperial interest in Madagascar, and analyses the development of different imperial policies in the period 1500-1826.

1 - This article is based on a paper given at the conference on Révolution française et océan Indien, Saint-Pierre, Réunion. October 1990. The following abbreviations are used throughout : AMM = Archives de l'Académie Malgache, Antananarivo. AAMM = Antananarivo Annual and Madagascar Magazine ; ANM = Archives Nationales de Madagascar. Antananarivo. BAM = Bulletin de l'Académie Malgache ; BM = British Museum ; CO = Colonial Office series in the Public Records Office, London ; RA and RH = Raombana "Annales" and "Histoire" (1853) in AAM; SOAS/LMS MIL = Madagascar Incoming Letters - Archives of the London Missionary Society, School of Oriental and African Studies. London.

I

Upon entering the Indian Ocean from the close of the fifteenth century, the Portuguese sought to supplant Muslim commercial influence throughout the region, including Madagascar. However, initial projects to colonise the latter were quickly abandoned when the Portuguese found scant evidence there of either precious metals or spices. Similarly, during the seventeenth century, the Dutch and English quickly abandoned plans to establish settlements in the island, but for different reasons. In 1638 when the Dutch occupied Mauritius, they intensified their trade with Madagascar from where, since 1623, they had shipped slaves to their East Indian possessions. However attempts from 1639-42 to found trading posts in Antongil Bay, in north east Madagascar failed due to the ravages of malaria and to local hostility. Short-lived English settlements on the west coast in 1645 and 1649 were abandoned for the same reasons. In 1647, the import into Batavia of Malagasy slaves - considered lazy and feeble - ended and after the Dutch seized the Cape of Good Hope in 1652, Mauritius declined in importance, eventually being abandoned in 1710. Thereafter, the British and Dutch valued Madagascar only as a provisioning base for their Indiamen².

Madagascar. In 1642 Richelieu granted the *Compagnie française de l'Orient* a charter and ten year monopoly to colonise and exploit Madagascar and the same year a settlement was founded in the south east of the island. However, in addition to malaria and local hostility, the colony suffered a rupture in supplies from France during the *Fronde* (1648-53) and in 1654 the fourteen remaining colonists were removed to Réunion (called *Mascarin* by the Dutch and *Bourbon* by the French until 1793 when it was renamed *Réunion*). In 1664, Colbert created the *Compagnie des Indes*, in emulation of the Dutch and English East India Companies. Granting it a monopoly of the French, excluded from large parts of the East by their European rivals, sustained a more durable interest in Madagascar and the Mascarenes. He envisaged transforming Madagascar, termed "*La France orientale*", into the centre for French imperial and commercial activity in the East : The seat of the "Supreme Council of Trade with India", it would supervise imperial expansion in India and China, and plantations both of cash crops and of food crops to provision French fleets. In 1665 a colony was established, again in south east Madagascar, but the last settlers abandoned it in January 1676 for Réunion. This time, internecine conflict was, along with malaria, local hostility and lack of metropolitan support, amongst the chief reasons for its collapse³.

2 - Bontekoe William, *Memorable Description of the East Indian Voyage 1618-1625*, London, 1929, pp 7-10 ; Davis Ralph, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Newton Abbot, 1972, pp 257-8 ; Hardy Georges, *Histoire de la colonisation française*, Paris, 1943, pp 45, 52,53 ; Haight Frank, *A History of French Commercial Policies*, New York, 1941, pp 3-5 ; Northcote Parkinson C., *Trade in the eastern Seas, 1793-1813*, Cambridge, 1937, pp 111, 258, 293 ; Newitt Malyn, *The Comoro Islands*, Colarado, 1984, pp 3, 17 ; Filliot J.M *La traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes au XVIIe siècle*, Paris, 1974, pp 19-20 ; Brown Mervyn, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, London, 1978, pp 39-48 ; Grosbart A.B, *Madagascar Two centuries Ago. A Proposal to Make it a British Plantation* AAMM 2 ,1876, pp 51-6.

3 - Deschamps Hubert, *Méthodes et doctrines coloniales de la France*, Paris, 1953, pp 35, 43 ; Hardy, *Histoire de la colonisation française*, pp 35-42, 45, 52-3, 62 ; Cornevin, *La France*, pp 92, 94, 137-9 ; Marcel de Coppet (éd), *Madagascar II*, Paris, 1947, p 288 ; Filliot, op. cité, pp 21-3, 25-6 ; Barnwell and Toussaint, *Short History of Mauritius*, p 41 ; André Scherer, *Histoire de La Réunion*, Paris, 1966, p 11 ; C. Keller, *Madagascar, Mauritius and the other East African Island*, London, 1901, p 104 ; Wastell, *British Imperial Policy*, p 32 ; Ellis, *History of Madagascar II*, p 44 ; Peltier, *La traite à Madagascar*, pp 105-6 ; Decary Raymond, *Contribution à l'histoire de la France à Madagascar* BAM XXXI, 1953, p 51.

Subsequently, French interest in the region waned due both to the unprofitability of the *Compagnie des Indes* and to French involvement in European conflicts from 1672-78, 1689-97 and 1703-13. In 1674, control over French colonies in the East passed back to the crown, but Madagascar was largely abandoned to the European slavers and pirates who, after being expelled from the West Indies, preyed off East Indiamen from bases on the north east coast, notably the offshore island of Nosy Boraha. In 1721/22 a combined Franco-British fleet forced most to abandon Madagascar, although Wastell claims that as late as 1730 some 300 pirates were still based there⁴.

TABLE 1
EUROPEAN SETTLEMENTS IN MADAGASCAR 1506-1820⁵

Date	Nation	Result
1506	Portugal	Constructed fort at “Fauzer” Lake, near Taolagnaro (Fort Dauphin) to exploit gold.
1510	Portugal	Crown expedition under Juan Serrano to found trading post - history unknown.
1540	Portugal	Provisioning fort built in “Galleon Bay” - abandoned in 1548 after massacre by Malagasy.
1639	Holland	Satellite trading posts established in Antongil Bay from Mauritius.
1642	Holland	Colony in Antongil Bay - quickly abandoned due to malaria and local hostility.
1645-6	England	Courteen Association colony in St Augustin Bay - abandoned due to malaria and local hostility.
1649-50	England	Colony on island [Nosy Komba?] near Nosy Be - abandoned due to disease and local hostility.
1642-54	France	Compagnie française de l’Orient (CFO) colony at Fort Dauphin - abandoned due to disease and local hostility.
1665-76	France	CFO colony at Fort Dauphin - failed due to metropolitan neglect, internecine conflict, malaria and local hostility.
163? -9	France	Trading post in Antongil Bay - abandoned following massacre by Malagasy.
1680-1720	Mixture	European pirates settle on east coast, notably Nosy Boraha - driven out by French and British navies.
1745-61	France	Compagnie des Indes colony, Fort Dauphin - abandoned due to malaria and local hostility.
1748	Portugal	Unsuccessful attempt to found religious settlement at Cape Sebastian from Goa.
1768-70	France	Colony at Fort Dauphin - abandoned due to lack of support from Mauritius and France.

4 - Fillot, op. cité, pp 24, 27-8, 31, Wastell, op. cité, p 34 ; Ellis, *History of Madagascar* II, p 49 ; Grandidier Guillaume. *Histoire physique, naturelle et politique de Madagascar* vol. 5. Tome III Fascicule I, Tananarive, 1958, pp 25-7 ; Newitt, op. cité pp 18-20 ; Copland Samuel, *A History of the Island of Madagascar*, London, 1822, pp 152-4
5 - Sonnerat, *Voyage aux Indes Orientales et à la Chine (1774-1781)* II, Paris, 1782, p 69 ; Oliver S.P, *Madagascar. An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Island and its Former Dependencies*, London, 1886.

1774-6	France	Colony in Angongil Bay - abandoned due to opposition from Mauritius and France.
1777-81	France	Morice's treaty with Kilwa establishing French pretensions to Madagascar - not ratified by Paris.
1784-6	USA	Colony in Antongil Bay - conquered and expelled by French forces from Mauritius.
1803	France	Plantation established by Michaux near Toamasina - abandoned after his death.
1804	France	Colony at Fort Dauphin - abandoned due to local hostility.
1806/7-11	France	Trading posts at Toamasina and Mahavelona - captured by British.
1811	Britain	Seized French trading posts at Toamasina and Mahavelona - abandoned due to malaria.
1814-15	Britain	Mauritian colony in Angongil Bay - massacred by Malagasy.
1815	Britain	Temporary occupation of Toamasina and Mahavelona.
1815-16	Britain	Unsuccessful attempt by Mauritian settlers to establish plantations near toamasina.
1816	Britain	Mauritian colony in Antongil Bay - abandoned due to malaria.
1817	Britain	Treaties establish British presence in Imerina - General Hall on Mauritius refuses ratification.
1818-	France	French posts on east coast : Tintingue & Fort Dauphin seized by Merina 1822-5 but Nosy Boraha retained by French.
1820	Britain	Treaty with Imerina grants right of settlement in Madagascar to British subjects.

II

Central to the Franco-British conflicts which characterised the eighteenth century was the battle for control over India and the sea routes to it, and it was in this light that Madagascar was viewed by the European power. At the close of the War of Spanish Succession (1701-13), France boasted an empire second in size only to that of Spain. However, financial exigencies and the failure of the *Compagnie des Indes* under the direction of émigré Scotsman John Lax in 1719-20, led the French court to limit the *Compagnie's* activities in the East to a handful of trading posts. This did not prevent French governors in India, notably Dumas (1736-41) and Dupleix (1741-54), from expanding French influence in the region, but most such gains were surrendered to Britain at the close of the Seven Years War (1756-63). Henceforth the premier world power, Britain maintained a heavy military presence in India and naval presence in the Indian Ocean to counter the resurgence of French imperial pretensions in the region⁶. Under Etienne-François de Choiseul, Minister of Foreign Affairs (1758-70), the French colonial administration and the *Compagnie des Indes* were overhauled, and the French navy rebuilt to the point where, during the American Wars of Independence, it was again capable of challenging British maritime power.

⁶ - Hardy, *op. cité*, pp 72-79-81 ; Cobban Alfred, *A History of Modern France* vol. I, 1715-1799, London, 1966, pp 73-4; Marshall P.J. *British Expansion in India in the Eighteenth Century. A Historical Revision*, History LX. 198 (1975), p 36; Parkinson, *Trade in the eastern Seas, 1793-1813*, pp 37-9.

French colonial interest shifted from trading to plantation colonies, notably the Caribbean and in the Indian Ocean, the Mascarenes whose economy prospered as the crown stimulated production of tropical produce for French industry, and promoted local defences and commerce. Moreover, the three years of free trade instituted from 1769 led to a transfer of metropolitan investment to the region; from 1769-85 a minimum of 349 French ships sailed past the Cape into the Indian Ocean and French-Indian trade trebled in value⁷.

The French Revolution and Revolutionary wars distracted metropolitan attention away from the Indian Ocean where French posts fell in quick succession to British forces. In 1798 Napoleon planned to seize first Egypt, then India, but was thwarted by Nelson at the Battle of the Nile. During the 1802 peace, Bonaparte again developed a grandiose project of imperial expansion, aimed at driving the British from India, in which the Mascarenes and Madagascar were to play a major role, but such plans were shattered by the destruction of the French fleet at Trafalgar in 1805 and the subsequent conquest of French colonies by the British. French occupation of Portugal in 1807 aroused British concern about the role of Portuguese possessions in India and East Africa, but such worries faded when, following the flight of the Portuguese royal family to Brazil, the traditional Britanno-Portuguese alliance was restored⁸.

III

Initially considered by France to be minor appendages to India, the Mascarenes and Madagascar grew steadily in importance during the eighteenth century. Réunion (Bourbon) and Mauritius (named Ile de France until 1810) were claimed by France in 1674 and 1712 respectively, but only started to flourish after governor Bernard-François Mahé de la Bourdonnais (1735-45) transformed the former into a granary to provision both Mauritius and passing ships, and the latter into a major Indian Ocean entrepôt. He also encouraged the plantation of a variety of cash crops on both islands⁹. By the mid 1750s, the Mascarenes were self-sufficient in wheat and meat and produced a surplus to provision the French Indian Ocean fleet. However, self sufficiency was jeopardised by a combination of cyclones and cash

7 - Hardy, op. cité, pp 89-92, 96-7, 100-102, 104 ; Hubert Dechamps op. cité, Paris, 1953, pp 48-50, 58-9 ; Cobban Alfred, op. cité, p 109, 123-5 ; Léon Pierre et Carrière Charles, "L'appel des marchés" in Fernand Braudel et Ernest Labrousse (éds), *Histoire économique et sociale de la France* Tome II 1660-1789, Paris, 1970, pp 196, 198-9.

8 - Jackson Michael V, *Powers and South east Africa (1796-1856)*, London, 1942, pp 51-2, 54-7, 66-7 ; Barnwell and Toussaint, *Short History of Mauritius*, pp 135-40.

9 - Deschamps Hubert, op. cité, p 43; Freeman-Brenville G.S.P, *The French at Kilwa Island*, Oxford, 1965, pp 8-10 ; Hollingworth Derek, *They Came to Mauritius*, London, 1965, pp 1-2.

10 - Hardy, op. cité, pp 80, 105 ; Buxtorf Marie-Claude, "Colonie. Comptoirs et Compagnie : Bourbon et l'Inde Française, 1720-1767" in *Les relations historiques et culturelles entre la France et l'Inde, XVIIe-XXe siècles*. Tome II , Sainte-Clotilde, 1987, pp 165-6, 170; Barnwell and Toussaint, op. cité, pp 55, 73, 89 ; Jully, "note", BAM IV, 1905-6, 15 ; Lombard Jacques, *La royauté Sakalava. Formation, développement et effondrement du XVIIe au XXe siècle. Essai d'analyse d'un système politique*, Tananarive, 1973, p 37 ; Lougnon Albert, "L'île Bourbon pendant la Régence Desforgues-Bouché - les débuts du café". *Recueil de documents et travaux inédits pour servir à l'histoire de La Réunion*, 1957, II, p 64 ; idem, "Esquisse partielle d'une histoire économique de l'île Bourbon" *Recueil de documents et travaux inédits pour servir à l'histoire de La Réunion*, 1935, II, pp 129-30, 132, 140-1, 143 ; North-Coombes A., "The First Hundred Years of the Mauritian Sugar Industry", *Bulletin annuel de la société de l'histoire de l'île Maurice* I, 1938-39, pp 53-4 ; Robequain Charles, "Une capitale montagnarde en pays tropical : Tananarive", *Revue de géographie alpine* n° 37, 1949, pp 285-6 ; Thomas, "Notice historique sur l'île Bourbon" *Annales maritimes et coloniales* lie partie, 1818, pp 554-6 ; de Chapelier, *Lettres adressées au citoyen préfet de l'île de France* (décembre 1803 à mai 1805), Jully (ed.), BAM 4, 1905-6, pp 15-16 ; Scherer André, op. cité, pp 9-31 ; P.R.O.S.I., *Industrie sucrière de l'île Maurice*, Maurice, 1972, pp 10-11 ; Durand J.P. et J., *L'île Maurice et ses populations*, Bruxelles, 1978, pp 31-5.

crops, which regularly hit the Mascarenes, and by competitions from cash crops, notably coffee and sugar cane, which were encouraged at the expense of food crops, even of manioc which could withstand storms. Thus by 1801, 4220 hectares on Mauritius were under sugar cane from which sixty refineries produced annually 3 000 tons of sugar, for local consumption and export in the form both of sugar and rum¹⁰.

Mauritius became the administrative, industrial and commercial centre of the Mascarenes. La Bourdonnais, mindful of the rôle of Bombay for the British, transformed its capital, Port-Louis, into a major port and dockyard that played a pivotal role in French imperial adventures in the Indian Ocean. For example, during the Wars of Austrian Succession (1740-8), the Mascarene fleet harassed British shipping, annexed the Seychelles in 1743, and in 1746 routed the British squadron under Peyton before relieving the siege of Pondicherry and capturing Madras, then Britain's most important Indian possession¹¹. Again, from 1780-83, over 100 French warships sailing to India called for provisions at Mauritius, which in 1781 also supplied recruits to fight the British in India. Indeed, from 1785, D'Entrecasteaux, former commander of the French navy in the Indian Ocean and governor of Mauritius (1787-89), successfully argued for the French regional headquarters in the Indian Ocean to be transferred from Pondicherry to Mauritius¹².

However, not only did the Mascarenes lose self-sufficiency but as the economy boomed it also suffered acute labour shortages. Both labour and provisions had to be met from external sources, notably Madagascar Compagnie and royal officials in the Mascarenes, which during the wars that characterised the epoch was largely cut-off from Paris, engaged in extensive regional trade on their private accounts¹³. Maritime commerce was further stimulated by the exemption La Bourdonnais obtained from 1742-46 from the Compagnie des Indes monopoly, by the latter's abolition in 1769 and the declaration in 1770 of Port Louis as a free port. By then, Mauritius was the destination of an estimated 31 per cent of French vessels sailing past the Cape of Good Hope. They carried manufactured goods from France to the Mascarenes, from where they generally made 2-3 round trips to Madagascar to buy slaves and provisions for the local market before returning to Europe with a cargo of Moka coffee¹⁴. Free trade and the local manufacture of ocean-going ships also encouraged the entry of private merchants into Malagazy trade. Thus 77 percent of the 739 regional maritime expeditions from the Mascarenes from 1773-1810 charged at Madagascar, most for rice, but 56 percent also unloaded slaves¹⁵.

11 - Cornevin, op. cité, 242.

12 - Herve's New System of Geography I, 351 ; Barnwell and Toussaint, op. cité, pp 58 62, 85-6, 91 ; Freeman-Grenville G.S.P., *The French at Kilwa Island*, Oxford, 1965, p 9 ; Hardy, op. cité, p 87-9 ; Buxtorf Marie-Claude, op. cité, pp170 2 ; Cornevin, op. cité, p 188.

13 - Buxtorf Marie-Claude, op. cité, p 173 ; Deschamps Hubert, op. cité, pp 66 7, 69 70 ; Toussaint Auguste, "Early American Trade with Mauritius" *The Mariner's Mirror* n° 39, 1953, p 46.

14 - Haudrère Philippe, "Les routes maritimes entre la France et les Indes Orientales au XVIIIe siècle, au temps de la Compagnie des Indes" in *Les relations historiques et culturelles entre la France et l'Inde, XVIIe-XXe siècles* Tome I, Sainte-Clotilde, 1987, p 51-2.

15 - Toussaint Auguste, "Le trafic commercial des Seychelles de 1773 à 1810" *Journal of the Seychelles Society*, 1965, p 20 ; Idem, "Le trafic commercial entre les Mascareignes et Madagascar de 1773 à 1810" *Annales de l'Université de Madagascar* série Lettres et Sciences Humaines, 1966, pp 99-101 ; Ellis, *History of Madagascar* II, 70 ; Lougnon Albert, "Vaisseaux et traites aux îles depuis 1741 jusqu'à 1746", *Recueil de documents et travaux inédits pour servir à l'histoire de La Réunion* 5, 1940, p 27.

The Compagnie monopoly enabled it to impose upon Malagasy suppliers, in fierce competition with each other terms advantageous to it; the Malagasy were obliged to trade at the Compagnie store on the coast, and to accept cloth and other goods in payment, despite the local preference for piastres. This advantage was removed with the onset of free trade and the resultant influx of non-company traders who ignored the rules governing previous commercial transactions. Competition on the demand side resulted in a sharp rise in the price of staple exports : in 1787 in Mahavelona, the price of a slave rose from 52 to 77 piastres. Moreover, the suppliers' demand for payment in piastres and arms was generally satisfied, to the disgruntlement of officials on the specie starved Mascarenes and placed Madagascar alongside India as one of the few regions in the world to which specie was exported -contravening a basic tenet of mercantilist theory- that specie should flow in the direction only of the colonial power¹⁶. Rising prices and changing conditions of trade accentuated the contest on the supply side for control over Madagascar for the French government (1758-87).

“Il n’y a guère de rois dans ce pays et qui ne vous doivent leur autorité, leurs richesses, leur force, puisque par vous nous avons des hommes pour nous défendre, des fusils, des munitions, des armes tranchantes dont nous manquons.”¹⁷

Commercial rivalry undermined the political stability created on the north east coast during the early eighteenth century through the creation of a federation of Betsimisaraka clans. From the 1780s, trade routes were regularly disrupted and coastal chiefs proving incapable of imposing peace on their hinterland counterparts. internecine rivalry and, from the 1780s, the pillaging of trade caravans reached such a pitch that trade routes from the interior to the main ports of the north east coast were regularly blocked. In an attempt to maintain the flow of trade goods treaties were negotiated with coastal chiefs, but the latter lacked sufficient power to impose peace upon the chiefs of the interior. Masacarene traders attempted to bypass Malagasy middlemen and deal directly with slave suppliers, notably in the high central plateau. However, the Betsileo were unable to guarantee a regular supply of slaves whilst the Merina not only failed to stop brigand attacks on trade caravans to the coast, but in addition demanded exorbitant prices. As was commented in 1806 :

“De Tamatave on voit partir continuellement pendant près de huit mois de l’année des expéditions pour le pays des Ovas [ie. Merina]. Ce peuple... est sans cesse en guerre et tout prisonnier est esclave. Autrefois, ils les envoyaient à Tamatave où ils étaient vendus. Aujourd’hui, on va chez eux établir une concurrence qui est toute à notre désavantage car le chef ova qui a une quantité d’esclaves à vendre les expédiant pour Tamatave y seraient vendus à un prix raisonnable que lui fixeraient les traitants, tandis qu’étant chez ce peuple, chez lequel on arrive après un long

16 - Clark John G. *La Rochelle and the Atlantic Economy during the Eighteenth Century*, Baltimore and London, 1981, p 114 ; Mayeur Nicolas, *Voyage dans le nord de Madagascar, 1775*, pp 60-3, Add. 18128 - BM ; idem, *Voyage au pays d’ancove, autrement dit des hovas ou Anboilamba dans l’intérieur des terres. Isles de Madagascar, 1777*, p 22, Add. 18128 - BM .

17 - Idem.

*pénible et dispendieux voyage que l'on ne veut pas faire infructueusement, fait que l'on est obligé d'accéder à ce qu'il demande*¹⁸.”

The economic plight of Mascarene traders was further accentuated by events in France and by natural disasters. Firstly, they were threatened by the 1794 declaration abolishing slavery throughout French dominions. That year, two commissioners sent to implement the measure were expelled from the islands and governor Malartic (1791-1800) barely managed to prevent outright secession, some colonists even petitioning the Colonial Assembly to declare independence and request British protection¹⁹. In addition, cyclones in 1806 and 1807 devastated both coffee and girofle plantations, and food crops - causing famine on Mauritius²⁰.

Insecurity in east and central Madagascar caused Mascarene traders to turn to the north west coast where, however, the Boina Sakalava court prohibited them from landing and dictated that they trade through the intermediary of the Antalaotra, a community of Muslim traders with Arab antecedents who, under the Sakalava crown, monopolised to foreign trade of the area²¹. Rather than pay the high prices demanded by the latter, Mascarene merchants turned to East Africa, a move reflected in a sharp decline in the percentage of Malagasy amongst the slave population of Réunion, from 42 per cent in 1765 to 26.4 per cent by 1808, by which year the percentage of East Africans in the omnipresence on the East African coast of Indian and Arab-Swahili middlemen who, like their Antalaotra counterparts, demanded high prices -between 1777 and 1808 the price of slaves at Kilwa/Zanzibar rose from \$2 to \$12 a head -ensured that Madagascar remained central to the commercial concerns of the Mascarenes²². For example, following the decisions by Napoleon, in 1802 that slavery be maintained in colonies where it still existed, and in 1803 that the French slave trade be legalised, it is estimated that 10-12 Mascarene ships, each carrying on average 100 slaves, made several return trips each year to Madagascar²⁴

18 - Jouette, *Mémoire sur Madagascar*, 1 juin 1806, p 157. Add.18135 - BL ; see also Mayeur, *Voyage (1777)*. 161-2.167.180.186 ; idem. *Voyage au pays d'ancove par le pays d'ancave autrement dit des Baizangouzangoux, 1785* - related by Dumaine, 20465, pp 207 8, pp 212 6. Add.18128 - BM; idem. *Réflexions, 1802*, p 42 ; Morice, *Mémoire, 1777*, p 114 ; Dumaine, *Voyage, 1790*, pp 254 5, pp 257 9 ; Hugon, *Aperçu, 1808*, pp 15 20 ; Délivré l'histoire, p 217 ; Deschamps, *Histoire*, pp 105 8 ; Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, pp 97.99 ; Grandidier, *Histoire V* Tome. III Fascicule I, Tanananarive, 1958, p 27.

19 - Deschamps, op. cité, p 88 ; Barnwell and Toussaint, op cité, p 97.100 ; Comevin, op. cité, p 328.

20 - Comevin, op cité, p 330.

21 - Nicolas Mayeur, *Voyage au pays des Séclaves, côte ouest de Madagascar, 1774*, Add. 18128 - BM ; idem. *Voyage, 1775* ; for the Antalaotra see Rasoamiaramanana, *Aspects économiques et sociaux de la vie à Majunga entre 1862 et 1881*, thesis, Université de Madagascar, 1974, pp 10 11,35, 54, Noël Vincent, "Ile de Madagascar : recherches sur les Sakalava". *Bulletin de la société de géographie*, 1843, pp 19, 27 38, 93, 99 ; Grandidier Alfred, "Souvenirs de Voyages, 1865-70" (text dated 1916) in Pierre Vérin (ed.) *Documents anciens sur Madagascar VI*, Antananarivo, n.d., p 28.

22 - Mayeur, *Voyage, 1774*, pp 101-5, 115 22 ; idem, *Voyage, 1775*, p 48 ; Benyowski (1774) in Grandidier, *Histoire Vol. IV T. IV, 1928*, p 263 ; Morice, *Mémoire, 1777*, p 106 ; idem, *Memoir concerning the East coast of Africa (June 15 and September 26, 1777)* in Freeman Grenville G.S.P. op. cité, pp 58.93 ; Anon, *Mémoire historique et politique sur l'Isle de Madagascar, 1790*, pp 95 6. Add. 18126 - BM ; Dumaine, *Voyage, 1790*, pp 270 1, 281 ; idem, *Voyage à la côte de l'ouest autrement dite pays des Séclaves*, janvier. 1793, p 308, Add. 18128 - BM ; Scherer, op. cité, p 27 ;

24 - Barnwell and Toussaint, op. cité, pp 112, 133 ; Deschamps, op. cité, p 95.

Year	Voyages	% of Total	Year	Voyages	% of Total
1773	8	100.00	1792	12	52.17
1786	6	50.00	1805	21	72.41
1799	3	23.08	1780	3	42.86
1774	13	59.09	1793	35	83.33
1787	9	81.82	1806	16	64.56
1800	6	42.86	1781	-	00.00
1775	5	38.48	1794	25	83.33
1788	18	100.00	1807	46	71.88
1801	16	76.19	1782	2	66.67
1776	-	00.00	1795	17	68.00
1789	25	83.33	1808	21	42.86
1802	30	69.77	1783	10	58.82
1777	4	57.14	1796	6	28.57
1790	42	80.77	1809	3	20.00
1803	38	63.33	1784	10	66.67
1778	5	100.00	1797	15	65.22
1791	38	71.70	1810	-	00.00
1804	31	67.39	1785	7	87.50
1779	4	33.33	1798	20	71.43

IV

Plans periodically hatched by Paris to colonise Madagascar were generally opposed by the population of Réunion and Mauritius lest Paris come to consider Madagascar to be more important. Likewise, Mascarene projects to colonise Madagascar were generally blocked in Paris on the grounds of expense and the alleged harshness of Mascarene settlers towards indigenous peoples. Following the collapse of the Fort Dauphin colony in 1676, French claims to Madagascar were maintained in a series of royal edicts, no serious efforts being made to resuscitate interest in founding a colony there until 1725 when Robert, who had spent seven years in Madagascar, presented a proposal to the French court for its colonisation²⁵. The project failed to obtain sufficient support, and it fell to local agents of the Compagnie des Indes to initiate imperial ventures in the region. In 1732, a Compagnie captain, d'Hermitte, obtained from the Sakalava king Ramahasarika ("Andrian Baba") the cession of Mangabe (Maroc/Marosy) island in Antongil Bay. A trading post was established there, but was abandoned in 1739 following the massacre of its French agents by local Malagasy²⁶. The following year, the Compagnie seized the island of Nosy Boraha (Sainte-Marie), in 1745 establishing

25 - Rochon Alexis, *An Account of the Island of Madagascar*, 1768, in Oliver, *Madagascar*, 1890, p 397 ; Grandidier, *Histoire V Tome. III Fascicule I, Tananarive*, 1958, p 103 ; Wastell, *British Imperial Policy*, p 33 ; Hardy, op. cité, p 92-3.
26 - Olivier, *Madagascar I*, 1886, pp 15-16 ; Grandidier, op. cité, p 35 ; anon, "Les Mascareignes vues par l'abbé Gaudon en 1732 *Recueil de documents et travaux inédits pour servir à l'histoire de La Réunion* 5, 1940, p 79 ; Lougnon, *Vaisseaux et traites*, p 31.

there a settlement. There was no response to La Bourdonnais' proposal that the Compagnie establish on the east coast of Madagascar sail cloth and rope factories, as well as iron forges and foundries, and the Nosy Boraha colony was finally disbanded in 1761, depleted by ravages of malaria and attacks by local Malagasy²⁷.

During the Seven Years War, there was an upsurge of metropolitan interest in Madagascar due to its strategic value on the route to India, and from 1761-3 Gentil explored the region for the crown. Madagascar came to be viewed by the French navy and by elements at court, including Choiseul, minister for Foreign Affairs, as a possible substitute for their lost Indian possessions. They thus backed the comte de Maudive who, inspired by the history of the illfated French settlement at Fort Dauphin in the seventeenth century, advocated the colonisation of the island through establishing a series of unimposing settlements and forming political and marital alliances with, instead of seeking to militarily dominate, the Malagasy. In 1768, he and 60 colonists landed at Fort Dauphin and established peaceful relations with indigenous chiefs, but Desroches, governor of Mauritius, fearful that Madagascar might come to supercede the Mascarenes in importance, successfully agitated for the withdrawal of the Maudave in 1770, and the colony quickly collapsed²⁸.

Despite this set-back Pierre Poivre, Intendant of Mauritius, wrote such glowing reports about the resources of Madagascar that in 1772 Paris again approved plans to found a trading colony there, this time under Benyowsky, a Hungarian count and adventurer who, following a visit to Mauritius, became obsessed by the idea of colonising Madagascar. In 1774, Benyowsky founded a large colony in Antongil Bay where within three years he had constructed a capital, Louisbourg (Port Choiseul), laid a basic infrastructure of roads and canals, and established plantations and cottage industries (tanning and weaving). Through alliances with Ankara and Sihanaka chiefs and military victories over the dominant Boina Sakalava, he made the colony a major political force in north Madagascar. However, the colony suffered constant attrition due to malaria and Kakalava hostility, and despite offering ready supplies of cattle and rice, was refused critical supplies and finance by de Tournay, governor fo Mauritius : both because Benyowsky, allegedly on principle, refused to supply slaves, and because like Desroches, de Tournay feared that Madagascar might supplant Mauritius in the eyes of the French court. When the French government following a commission of enquiry in 1776, ordered Benyowsky to limit his activities to trade, he resigned and the colony disbanded. In 1784, backed by merchants in the United States, he returned to Antongil Bay to establish an American colony. This venture proved unacceptable to the governor of Mauritius who in 1786 dispatched troops who killed Benyowsky and expelled the settlers²⁹.

27 - Wastell, op. cité, p 36 ; Rochon, op. cité, p 357 ; Grandidier, op. cité, p 35 ; Hardy, op. cité, p 94 ; Ellis, op. cité, pp 56-8 ; Copland Samuel, op. cité, pp 158-62.

28 - Decary Raymond, *Les voyages de l'astronome le Gentil dans les mers des Indes et à Madagascar au XVIIIe siècle* BAM n°18, 1935, pp 25-40 ; Copland, op. cité, pp 176-8 ; Wastell, op. cité, pp 36-7 ; Comevin, op. cité, p 239 ; Grandidier, op. cité, pp 104-7 ; Cobban Alfred, *A History of Modern France* vol. I, 1715-1799, London, 1966, p 95.

29 - Mayeur to Forberville, 25 mai 1805, in Jean Valette. *Documents pour servir à l'étude des relations entre Forberville et Mayeur*, BAM XLVI-I-XLVI-II, 1968, p 90 ; Guillaïn M, *Histoire politique du Peuple Sakalava*, Paris, 1845, p 39 ; Copland, op. cité, pp 184-214, 240-3 ; Hardy, op. cité, pp 94, 105 ; Deschamps, op. cité, p 61 ; Barnwell et Toussaint, op. cité, pp 81-2 ; Grandidier, op. cité, pp 46-7 ; Freeman-Grenville, op. cité, pp 10, 15-16 ; Olivier, *Madagascar I*, 1886, pp 19-20 ; Deschamps, *Histoire de Madagascar*, Paris, 1972, pp 81-3 ; Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, p 103 ; Comevin, op. cité, pp 240-1.

From 1776 Paris was preoccupied first by the American War and subsequently by revolution at home but in 1792 the French National Assembly deputed Lescallier to investigate the economic potential of Madagascar with a view to establishing a colony there. Lescallier's recommendation to found a settlement around the French trading post at Fort Dauphin was shelved as France became embroiled in war in Europe³⁰. Interest in the Indian Ocean revived during the short peace of 1801-2 when Paris despatched Decaen to repossess Indian possessions in India and Bory de St. Vincent to Madagascar. St. Vincent, who described the Mascarenes as "*two burdensome isles which are not worth the expense of governing, and of the protection they demand*"³¹, reported that Madagascar might form a suitable substitute for St Domingue, which France had lost in 1791, and also rove the seat of French power in the Indian Ocean to buttress their position in the Indian Ocean. However, the resumption of war once again thwarted such colonial projects³².

Mascarene projects for colonisation in the region had a different emphasis. In one of the first, Ternay, governor of Mauritius in 1773 advocated establishing a protectorate over Mombassa, only to veto the plan two years later on financial grounds³³. In 1777, after obtaining from a sultan a monopoly of slaves exported from Kilwa, and the cession of Kilwa fort, Morice, a former Compagnie surgeon turned trader in slaves to the Mascarenes, proposed to Paris the formation of a French empire in the Western Indian Ocean stretching from Surat to Mozambique.

Madagascar would occupy a central place in this empire for its foreign trade was "*tellement lié à celui de la côte d'Afrique, que nous croyons qu'on ne peut pas l'en séparer*". It was a major supplier of slaves and provisions, could form an outlet for the surplus sugar and excess population of the Mascarenes, and prove an impregnable base from which to rival Dutch and especially British interests in the Indian Ocean. Ternay opposed the scheme on financial grounds, but his successor, La Brillane, supported it out of fear of a possible Dutch takeover of the Swahili coast. Joseph-François Charpentier de Cossigny, a close friend of Morice's and a distinguished military engineer and planter, forwarded the scheme to Paris, but the Dutch threat evaporated and in 1779 the French government rejected the proposals, arguing that French possession of the Mascarenes and friendship with Kilwa was sufficient to counter Dutch and British influence in the region.³⁴

After Morice's death in circa 1781, another Mauritius based slave trader, Joseph Crassons de Medevil, took up the mantle. He concluded a commercial treaty with the Sultan of Kilwa, simultaneously proposing to the Ministry of the Marine that it established a post at Kilwa with de Medevil as the resident "government inspector". De Medevil founded a trading station there in circa 1784 and the following year the coast was explored by lieutenant Saulnier de Montdévité who recommended that a French post be established at "Mongalo" (Mungoya) in present day Tanzania. When

30 Copland, op. cité, pp 249-51 ; Barnwell et Toussaint, op. cité, pp117 8 ; Cornevin, op. cité, p 232.

31 - Quoted in Copland, *History of the Island of Madagascar*, pp 253-4.

32 - Barnwell et Toussaint, op. cité, p 140.

33 - Freeman-Grenville, op. cité, p 68.

34 - Morice, *Mémoire*, 1777, pp 99-107, 114, 117, 127; Dumaine, *Voyage*, 1793, p 293 ; Freeman-Grenville, op. cité, pp 7-27, 55-6, 100 ; Sheriff Abdul. *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar*. London. 1987. pp 42-5 ; Jackson. *European Powers*. p 14.

the government hesitated, Nicolas-Hilaire Comarond, a Breton shipowner with commercial interests in the region, in 1787 offered to establish the "Mongalo" post at his own expense. Nothing came of this, or of the efforts of de Cossigny in 1790 (as a deputy for the Mascarenes at the National Assembly) and again in 1803 to promote the idea of a French protectorate embracing Madagascar and the Swahili coast. French forces did briefly occupy Kilwa in 1797 but the resultant souring of relations with the sultan, and the exigencies of the war in Europe led the French government to abandon any idea of establishing a colony in East Africa³⁵.

As a result, Mascarene interest switched back to Madagascar, but with little success: In 1799, abortive trade negotiations were held between representatives of Mauritian merchants and the Sakalava queen Ravahiny: in 1803 the naturalist Michaux established plantations of tea, coffee and fruit (mango, guavas, avocado and lecthi) near Toamasina, but they were abandoned almost immediately due to his death; and the following year, Grégoire Avine, a French naval surgeon representing Decaen, failed to obtain from the local chief "Resacé" a cession of land near Taolagnaro³⁶. It was probably in the face of this lack of success that Mayeur, a trader with 26 years of experience in Madagascar that included serving Benyowski, was in 1805 asked to submit a report on the best means of establishing a colony. Mayeur noted that French colonising efforts in Madagascar had always failed.

*"Parce qu'on n'a jamais su concilier la politique française et les intérêts de notre commerce avec ceux des naturels qu'il fallait étudier et bien connaître auparavant, ensuite parce qu'on a porté dans ce pays des bayonnettes au lieu de charrues et qu'on s'est follement imaginé qu'il ne s'agissait que de s'en faire craindre. Ce n'était pas le moyen d'avancer beaucoup les affaires chez le peuple le plus hospitalier de la terre, le plus ami des étrangers, le plus disposé à la bienveillance et le plus facile à mener par les voyes [sic] de la douceur et de la persuasion. Croyez-vous, Monsieur, ces notions inutiles quand on songe à former des établissements dans des pays qu'on ne connaît pas."*³⁷

The destruction of Mascarene crops by hurricanes in 1806 and 1807 added the weight of necessity to Mayeur's arguments and a more conciliatory attitude was adopted in relations with Malagasy chiefs. Trading posts were re-established on the north east coast at Toamasina (under Roux). Nosy Boraha, Tintingue, Pointe-à-Larée, Mahavelona and Fenoarivo. In 1809, Decaen, commissioned Rondeaux to explore the possibility of forming colonies in the hinterland, declared the plateau interior to be healthy and fertile and advised the establishment of a colony there. In line with the new conciliatory line, he advocated using imported African, Indian or Chinese instead of local Malagasy labour and forming an alliance with the Merina, with whom

35 De Cossigny, *Réflexions sur l'Isle de Madagascar*, 1800, pp 148-62, Add. 18126 - BM, Freeman Grenville, op. cité, pp 17-18, 54-9, 100-102; Jackson, op. cité, pp 43-4; Auguste Toussaint, *Les Lyonnais à l'île de France (île Maurice) 1721-1810* Cahiers d'histoire XX, 1975, pp 44-5; Cornevin, op. cité, pp 137, 239.

36 - Woulkoff Wolf et Ralaivola Clovis, *Une visite à la reine de Bombetoc: présentation d'un texte de 1799* BAM L1-2, 1973 pp 13-14 32-3; Chapelier, *Lettres adressées au citoyen Préfet de l'île de France de décembre 1803 à mai 1805* (M. Jully éd.), BAM IV, 1905-6, pp 3-6; Avine Grégoire, *Voyage à Madagascar (1804)* (Raymond Decary éd.), BAM XLVI-I-XLVI-II, 1968, pp 83-4.

37 - Quoted in Jean Valette (ed.), *Documents pour servir à l'étude des relations entre Froberville et Mayeur* BAM XI-VI-I - XLVI-II, 1968, pp 83-4.

Mayeur had in the 1780s established friendly relations and who during the first decade of the nineteenth century had rapidly expanded their dominion in the interior of the island.³⁸

In the event, French plans for imperial expansion in the western Indian Ocean were thwarted by the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars which focused the attention of the British on the region. In 1793, the disorganised French navy could spare no ships for the Indian Ocean and the British quickly captured French posts in India but were deterred from the Mascarenes by the strength of Mauritian defences. In 1796 the British destroyed French trading posts on the north east coast of Madagascar, and first occupied the Cape of Good Hope (1796), then declared it a British colony (1806) in order to prevent the French from using it, as they had in 1778, to supply the Mascarenes. It was also used as a base to counter Mascarene attacks on British shipping. The Mascarenes reacted firstly by attempting to forge a trade route to the Suez (via East Africa) where Arabs were increasingly shipping Mascarene rather than British Indian goods. The British responded in 1809 by sending trade missions from India To Abyssinia and from the Cape to Mozambique.³⁹ More seriously, Mascarene corsairs succeeded in inflicting enormous damage on British East Indiamen and in consequence on British trade to the East : For instance, from 1807-9, the East India Company lost a minimum of 40 ships to Mascarene privateers who, between 1793 and 1810 seized from British Indiamen an estimated £2.5 million worth of booty. In consequence, Port Louis was transformed into a major international emporium, and the Mascarenes recognised as the maritime “key to the East”. Given the Russian presence on India’s northern frontier, the British considered it vital to secure mastery of the Cape route to India. In a prolonged campaign from 1809-11, they captured successively Mauritius, Réunion, and the French posts in Madagascar. Under the Treaty of Paris in 1814 Réunion was returned to France, but Mauritius was retained by the British who subsequently attempted to extend their influence over the region.⁴⁰

In 1810, Robert Farquhar, an experienced East India Company official, was appointed governor of Mauritius. Later termed “a second raffle in a minor key”, Farquhar, and from 1823 his successor Telfair, considered that Madagascar had a major role to play in the British empire. Farquhar argued that possession of Madagascar was essential to secure.

The safety of intercourse, and facility of trade, with a country on which this island (Mauritius) depends for its subsistence, and which has arrived at that point of

38 - Valette (éd.), *Documents pour servir à l'étude des relations entre Froberville et Mayeur*, pp 83-4 ; Decary Raymond, *La reddition de Tamatave à l'Angleterre en 1811* BAM XV, 1932, p 48 ; Shaw George, *Madagascar and France*, London, 1885, p 22 ; Ellis, op. cité, pp 109-256 ; Mayeur Nicolas, *Imerina and Antananarivo* (James Sibree éd) AAMM XX, 1896, pp 394-5 ; Jully, *Mission en extrême-Orient* BAM II.2, 1903, p 84 ; Rondeaux, *Mémoire sur Madagascar (1809)* (Jean Valette ed.) BAM XLIV.2, 1966, pp 113-29.

39 - Barnwell and Toussaint, op. cité, pp 102, 123-4 ; Wastell, op. cité, p 40 ; Deschamps Hubert, *Tradition and Change in Madagascar, 1790-1870* Cambridge History of Africa V, 1976, p 398 ; Graham Gerald S., *Great Britain in the Indian ocean (1810-1850)*, Oxford, 1967, p 24 ; Jackson, *European Powers*, pp 74, 77, 94-5.

40 - Scherer André, op. cité, pp 9-31 ; P.R.O.S.I., *Industrie sucrière de l'île Maurice*, Maurice, 1972, p 10 ; Durand J.P. et J., *L'île Maurice et ses populations*, Bruxelles, 1978, pp 31-3, 36-9 ; Decary, *La reddition de Tamatave*, p 489 ; Valette, *Documents pour servir à l'étude des relations entre Froberville et Mayeur*, p 84 ; Sédillot René, *Histoire des colonisations*, Paris, 1958, pp 490, 519 ; Jackson, op. cité, pp 78 9 ; Graham, *Great Britain*, pp 18, 42-3, 46 ; Barnwell and Toussaint, op. cité, pp 102-7, 111.

civilisation that affords a growing and extensive market for bartering its valuable produce, the richest articles of tropical growth, for the manufactures of England and British India⁴¹.

Although the British government, aware of the sensibility of the French government who continued to press their traditional claims to Madagascar, and satisfied that possession of the Cape and Mauritius guaranteed them control over the route to India, rejected these arguments, Farquhar was undeterred. As a plantation owner, he realised the importance of securing Madagascar as the major supply centre for the Mascarenes, arguing further that any damage to the Mauritian economy resulting from the French seizure of Madagascar would again imperil British mastery of the maritime route eastward. At the same time, Farquhar endorsed the local conviction that possession of Madagascar would open up new land and employment for the surplus population of Mauritius :

*“I have no doubt that a British settlement in Madagascar, judiciously managed, would prove healthy, and as it is the most fruitful country in the world it would afford ease and plenty to a variety of poor colonists, in a very short period of time under British protection.”*⁴²

Since London had ruled out formal rule, Farquhar promoted British informal influence over Madagascar. He first planned to establish Mauritian settlements in the north east of the island. Lislet Geoffrey, a former French official from Réunion was despatched to survey the north east coast. Toamasina was the main port and access point to the interior, but British soldiers and commercial agents there quickly succumbed to malaria. Farquhar therefore chose to work through a local chief. Jean René, whom he appointed “governor” of Toamasina, and René’s half brother, Fisatra. With British support they conquered all Betsimisaraka and Betanimena territory, thus restoring a tenuous commercial security to the region for the first time since 1769. However, all attempts at colonisation in the area proved fruitless : Colonies of Mauritian settlers on a 100 square mile concession in Antongil Bay in 1814-15 and 1816 collapsed due to malaria and local hostility, while cotton and silk plantations established in 1815-16 in the Toamasina region by Malagasy chiefs and créole settlers supervised by Le Sage, a British army captain who had participated in the Antongil Bay venture, failed due to the ravages of Betsimisaraka war bands, the humid climate, and what Le Sage termed the lack of native husbandry. In 1815 a treaty was negotiated with the Boina Sakalava, but the west coast was also affected by malaria, whilst Sakalava power was in rapid decline.⁴³

41 - Quoted in Ellis, *History of Madagascar* II, p 193 ; see also Wastell, *British Imperial Policy*, p 69 ; Brown, op. cité, pp 132-3 ; Barnwell and Toussaint, op. cité, pp 124 ; The Missionary Register, 1821, p 345.

42 - Quoted in Wastell, *British Imperial Policy*, p 58 ; see also *ibid*, p 50 ; Thompson to Telfair, 31 oct. 1814, Archives de Port Louis in G.S. Chapus (ed.), *Nouveaux documents sur l'époque de Radama I et Ranavalona I*, 323 - AAM ; Chazal, *Réflexions résultant de la lecture... sur Madagascar et autres mémoires*, p 31, Add. 18135 BM ; Jean Valette (ed.), *Le préfet Léger à Madagascar*, Tananarive, 1966, pp 7-17 ; S.P. Oliver, *Sir Robert Farquhar and the Malagasy Slave Trade* AAMM 15, 1891, p 319.

43 - Le Sage, *Mission*, 1816, pp 3-5, 8, 48, 114, 121 ; Hastie, *Diary*, 1817, pp 160, 162, 173-4, 176 ; Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, Port Louis, 29 July 1822, COI.167/63 ; Ellis, *History of Madagascar* II, pp 146, 256-7 ; Grandidier, op. cité, pp 48, 51-2 ; Wastell, op. cité, pp 59, 84, 89, 94 ; Olivier, *Madagascar* I, 1886, p 137 ; Aujas L., *Notes sur l'histoire des Betsimisaraka*, BAM IV, 1905-6, p 109.

Farquhar thus transferred his attention from the littoral to the centre of the island, notably to Imerina which research commissioned from Huet de Froberville indicated was the chief economic power in Madagascar, possessed a temperate non-malarial climate, and a fair-skinned and civilised population⁴⁴. Moreover, Farquhar was aware of the arguments of Rondeaux that a successful colonisation of Madagascar required an alliance with the Merina. As Chazal [probably a Mauritian trader] commented on any future British colony in the island :

*“Le centre du gouvernement doit être dans un endroit sain d’où on puisse communiquer partout et où on puisse ramener les malades des parties malsains. On doit vouloir la paix, mais être capable de faire la guerre d’une manière prompte et décisive. La civilisation des peuples sauvages a toujours occasionné des émeutes et des petites guerres.”*⁴⁵

In 1816, two Mauritian embassies to Imerina, the first under Jacques Chardenoux, a trader long resident on the east coast and familiar with Imerina, and the second by Le Sage, confirmed earlier reports. It was noted that the Merina ‘paraissent devoir offrir le commerce le plus avantageux aux nouveaux colons’, with the possibility of expanding for export the cultivation of cotton, silk, hemp and spices, as well as iron manufacturing. Imerina’s temperate climate was conducive to European settlement, whilst its central position made it the local point of long-distance communications and offered it the potential to dominate other regions of the island. Finally, Imerina possessed large labour reserves upon which the colonists could draw, although Chazal re-iterated Rondeaux’s suggestion of using imported labour.

*“La nouvelle colonie qu’on voudrait établir à Malgache [sic] est impossible à former sans esclaves. Ceux de caste ou origine Mozambique [existant] dans l’isle seraient les meilleurs par les ouvrages de force, ceux de caste ova [ie. Hova] plus industrieux profiteraient des lois favorables à leur pécule et leur rachat joints aux indiens convaincus et aux indiens de bonne volonté formeraient une souche d’habitants libres utiles, point dangereux, qui rapprocheraient à l’avenir cette colonie d’Inde et lorsque cette population serait suffisante, diminuerait et ferait enfin cesser le besoin inévitable des esclaves dans l’état des choses actuelles.”*⁴⁶

Farquhar also considered the possibility of importing Chinese labour, or convicts. Colonists should in the first instance comprise créole males whose “mixed blood” guaranteed them some protection against malaria. Once the agricultural techniques introduced by Indians had proved both sustainable and profitable, white males, as well as women and children of all colours, might join the pioneers. Mauritian “soldats colons” would assume the dual responsibility of cultivating export crops and of ensuring security of property and commerce. Meanwhile, officers would

44 - F. Hooper to LMS, Port Louis, Mauritius, 7 Feb. 1815, B.8 no.1, SOAS/LMS MIL ; see also Jean Valette, *Etudes sur le règne de Radama Ier*, Tananarive, 1962, p 8.

45 - Chazal, *Réflexions*, p 30 ; see also Rondeaux, *Mémoire sur Madagascar*, pp 113-29.

46 - Chazal, *Réflexions*, p 31 ; see also idem , notes, 1816 ; Hooper to LMS, Port Louis, Mauritius, 7 Feb. 1815 ; Chardenoux, *Journal*, 1816 ; Le Sage, *Mission*, 1816 ; RH, p 81 ; Hastie James, *Journal*, in James Sibree et A. Jully (eds.), *Le voyage de Tananarive en 1817-18 - manuscrits de James Hastie*, BAM XLIV.2, 1966, pp 113-29 ; Wastell, op. cité, pp 89, 94.

be trained on Mauritius to assume administration not only of the British colony in Imerina but also of Merina controlled territory - albeit in the name of the Merina crown.⁴⁷

In 1817, Irishman James Hastie, an army sergeant, negotiated for Farquhar the terms of two treaties that firmly incorporated Imerina into an informal British empire in the region. The first, in February, established reciprocal free trade, and empowered British subjects to settle in Merina territory whilst obliging all other foreigners to seek official British authorisation. As Radama I of Imerina possessed “no Ports, or any influence in any part of Madagascar except His Hova Dominion”⁴⁸, the agreement was decidedly to the advantage of the British. Whilst Radama I would retain his title, real power would rest with the governor of Mauritius who clearly intended the systematic colonisation of Imerina along the lines outlined by Chazal.

VIII

By contrast, the Merina hoped to use the British alliance to create an island empire that would eventually dominate the entire western Indian Ocean. Imerina, a small land-locked kingdom in the central highland had by 1800 both achieved agricultural self-sufficiency through state promotion of irrigated riziculture and become the major source of slaves for the Mascarenes. The unification of the country in circa 1806 -following a period of internecine conflict- the generation of grain surpluses, and the influx of armaments and foreign currency in exchange for slave exports, laid the basis for the emergence of Imerina as the major power in Madagascar. King Andrianampoinimerina conquered and enslaved neighbouring peoples to maintain his dominance over slave supplies, but failed to wrest control of trade routes (from the Bezanozano and Betsimisaraka) to the east and (from the Sakalava and Antalaotra) to the west coasts. indeed, the Antalaotra threatened to supplant his position by marching Mozambique slaves imported into north west Madagascar across the northern interior to the ports of the north east for export to the Mascarenes.⁴⁹

The Franco-British dispute of 1809-11 combined with the uprisings by newly conquered territories that followed the death of the Merina king in 1810, completed the disruption of east coast trade to Imerina.

Radama I, Andrianampoinimerina's son and heir, aware that Imerina's future rested on its ability to capture both new sources of slaves and main trade routes to the coast, accelerated the policy of military expansion initiated by his father. By 1814 he had quadrupled the extent of territory under Merina rule, forcibly annexing Imamo. Valalafotsy and the cattle-rich province of Vonizongo, as well as settling Merina soldier-colonists on the fertile lands of north Betsilco and the Laka Alaotra region of Antsihanaka. These conquests and the slave raids launched deep into other areas of the island confirmed Imerina's status as chief slave mart. However, although

47 - Wastell, op. cité, p 62 ; RH. Pp 87-8 ; Chazal, *Réflexions*, pp 30-2.

48 - RH, p 86.

49 - Mayeur, *Voyage, 1777*, p 171 ; idem, *Imerina and Antananarivo* (James Sibree ed.) AAMM 20,1896, p 392, Dumaine, *Voyage, 1790*, pp 279, 285 ; idem, *Voyage, 1793*, pp 298, 308 ; Hastie James, *Diary*, 1817, p 147, CO.167/34 ; idem, *Diary*, 1822, CO.167/63 ; Grandidier, *Histoire IV Tome IV*, p 297.

attacks by Radama I on the Bezanozano had by 1816 left their country “*entièrement détruit*”, he failed to gain control of the trade route through Betsimisaraka country and therefore failed in his aim to “*d’avoir pas d’intermédiaire entre lui et les commerçants européens*” on the east coast.⁵⁰

The British alliance promised to transform Merina aspirations into reality. Radama I had no intention of becoming a vassal and not only refused to accede to the British request to ban the slave export trade, his principal means of revenue, but followed up the 1817 treaty by that year dispatching a 40.000 strong army to Toamasina, thus forging a direct trade outlet to the major east coast port. The presence there of a British naval ship deterred him from seizing the port, which was under British protection, but Pye, the resident British agent, was hurriedly pushed into negotiating a “*Treaty of Amity and Alliance offensive and defensive between His Majesty RADAMA King of OVA and dependencies on the one part and His Elder Brother JOHN RENE King of TAMATAVE and Dependencies on the other part*”⁵¹. The Merina move also forced Farquhar to re-assess the role of Radama I, “*a most powerful and intelligent*” albeit “*semibarbarous and superstitious Monarch*”. It strengthened Farquhar’s chances of obtaining ratification of a Merina treaty with London, to whom he reported of Radama I that he held “*the destinies of the vast, populous, and fertile, but ill-treated Island of Madagascar entirely in his hands*”⁵². Subsequently, Farquhar negotiated a second treaty with Radama I in which he offered the sovereign financial and material compensation for a ban on slave exports, technical assistance to develop legitimate exports, and the title of king of all Madagascar -a claim that was to be substantiated with British military aid. The five Bengali cultivators and two British soldiers, Brady and Craven, left behind by the 1816 embassy, added credibility to Farquhar’s promise and Radama I accepted the terms of the treaty. Before leaving for Britain to ratify the treaty, Farquhar reminded the Merina monarch of his inferior status, advising him that :

“*This happy and powerful and flourishing island of Mauritius is but as one drop of rain compared with the great ocean, when considered as a part of the wealth and power and glory of my Sovereign, whose friendship I will obtain for you*”⁵³.

Farquhar’s interim successor, General Hall, repudiated the Merina alliance, seriously embarrassing Radama I and permitting the French to renew their historical claim to Madagascar. Radama I appointed a Frenchman, Robin, whom René had in 1816 recommended to the Merina court, both teacher at a royal school and royal treasurer. René openly switched allegiances : He sent his two sons to Paris to be educated, invited the French to colonise Madagascar, and in 1818-19, in alliance with

50 - Chazal, *Notes*, 1816, p 24, Add. 18135 - BM ; see also Chardenoux, *Journal du voyage fait dans l’intérieur* (Tamatave, 17 août 1816), 163, Add. 18129 - BM ; RH, p 21 ; Savaron C., *Contribution à l’histoire de l’Imérina* in “notes d’histoire malgache”, BAM XIV, 1931 ; Olivier, *Madagascar* I, 1886, pp 221-2, 252-3 ; Grandidier, *Histoire IV* Tome I, 1908, pp 113, 233, 235, 249-52, 268, 372 and IV Tome. IV, 1928, p 113, p 297 ; Hastie, *Diary*, 1817, pp 211.147 ; Callet, *Histoire des rois*, Tananarive, 1974, I, pp 441-2, II, p 658, III, p 120.

51 - RH, 89 ; see also Pye, *Summary*, 1817, pp 90-95 ; Le Sage, *Mission*, 1816, pp 33, 121-2 ; Hastie, *Diary*, 1817, p 150. 52 - Farquhar to Stanfell, Port Louis, 7 & 22 Aug. 1817, CO FO/34, pp 97-9, 103-4.

53 - Farquhar to Radama I, Port Louis, 9 Aug. 1817, CO, 167/34, 85 ; see also *ibid* , 97-8 ; “Treaty between Radama and Governor Farquhar, Tamatave, 23 October 1817” in *Papers Relating to the Abolition of the Slave Trade in the Mauritius : 1817-1820 XVIII* (House of Commons, 1821), pp 356-7 ; Ellis, *History of Madagascar* II, pp 140-2, 158-9, 163-5, 183-4, 243, 280-2.

Antalaotra and French slave traders, opposed Bevan and Jones, the first British missionary teachers to Madagascar. Meanwhile, arms gained through slave exports enabled René to gain control over the hinterland region of Ancay, again rupturing the trade outlet from Imerina to the east coast.⁵⁴

IX

From 1815, at which time their only Ocean possessions were five entrepôts in India and Réunion, “*île sans port*”, the French government decided upon a programme of “peaceful” imperial expansion. A plan was contemplated to establish a French colony at Zanzibar, only to be rejected lest it offend Portuguese and British sentiment, and attention subsequently concentrated upon Madagascar which the ultra-royalist party, intent upon regaining colonial status, viewed as a provisioning and naval base and a possible substitute for St. Domingue and Mauritius. Ministerial commissions recommended in the first instance the establishment of agricultural colonies on Nosy Boraha, abandoned by France in 1761, and at Tintingue on the Malagasy mainland where the French laid claim to a coastal area approximately 100 kilometres wide. From these bases French settlers could progressively penetrate the interior of Madagascar through alliances and intermarriage with the Malagasy. An expedition planned for 1816 was postponed on financial grounds, but in 1818 Sylvain Roux, who from 1804-11 had served as a French agent in the island, led a French expedition that occupied both sites, and the same year a force dispatched by governor Pierre Milius of Réunion occupied Fort Dauphin.

On the recommendation of Milius and of Portal, Minister of the Marine, the French Parliament in 1820 voted to fund a second expedition to Nosy Boraha and Roux was named “*commandant particulier des établissements français à Madagascar*”⁵⁵. Roux was optimistic that, given the abrogation of the 1817 britanno-Merina treaty by Hall, French could supplant British influence in Madagascar :

“*C'est justement parce que la France n'a pas beaucoup d'alliance dans les mers de l'Inde qu'il serait avantageux pour Radama de contracter avec elle des liaisons de commerce. Les Anglais ne le caressent en ce moment que pour nous nuire, en s'efforçant de nous priver de celui de Madagascar. S'ils y parviennent, ils négligeront cette île qui ne peut d'ailleurs que leur être d'une utilité fort secondaire. Ils tirent avec plus de commodité de beaucoup d'autres points ce que Madagascar pourrait leur offrir.*”⁵⁶

54 - Decary Raymond, *Documents historiques relatifs à l'établissement français de Sainte-Marie sous la Restauration* BAMXIII, 1930, p 59 ; idem. *La reddition de Tamatave*” pp 59-60 ; Oliver S.P. *General Hall and the export slave trade from Madagascar. A statement and a vindication* AAMM 12,1888 ; idem, *Madagascar I*, 1886, p 150 ; Le Sage, *Mission*, 1816, pp 26-7 ; Hastie, *Diary*, 1817, p 130 ; idem, *Diary*, 1820, pp 466-7 ; Aujas L, *Notes sur l'histoire des Betsimisaraka* BAM 4, 1925-6, pp 108-11.

55 - Hastie, *Diary*, 1824-5, CO.167/78 II ; RH, 80, 88, 93-4 ; RA, 356 ; Ellis. *History of Madagascar II*, p 350 ; Thiriot, *L'île Maurice, La Réunion et les productions de l'Inde* (1785), E. Génin ed., Douai, 1882, p 41 ; Deschamps, op. cité, pp 96-7 ; Barnwell and Toussaint, op. cité, p 125 ; Wastell, op. cité, pp 75-6, 126, 128-31 ; Hardy, *Histoire de la colonisation française*, pp 153-4 ; A. de Contessouze. *Etablissements français à Madagascar* Correspondant 31 mai 1860, pp 220-1 ; Gourraigne M.L.G. *Les relations de la France avec Madagascar pendant la première moitié du XIXe siècle*” Conférence de l'Ecole Coloniale, 28 janvier 1909, pp 18-19 ; Grandidier, *Histoire IV* Tome I, p 450 and V Tome. III fascicule I, 1958, pp 107-8 ; Oliver, *Madagascar I*, 1886, pp 32-5, 142, 148 ; Decary Raymond, *Documents historiques relatifs à l'établissement français de Sainte-Marie sous la Restauration* BAM XIII, 1930, p 57.

56 - Quoted in Decary, *Documents historiques relatifs à l'établissement français de Sainte-Marie*, p 65.

However, by mid 1822, 20 percent of French settlers on Nosy Boraha had died of Malaria, and the newly established plantations were in desperate need of fresh labour. Moreover, the fall of Portal in France in 1821 led to a change in colonial policy. Imperial expansion was curtailed, the role of Nosy Boraha was restricted to that of supplying provisions to Réunion, and plans for colonisation of Madagascar reduced in scale :

*“Nous ne voulons pas coloniser Madagascar ni même y coloniser les points dont la propriété serait rendue. Notre but est d’établir avec les naturels... des relations d’amitié et de commerce et de préparer à Tintingue la formation d’un établissement maritime.”*⁵⁷

As French agents in the region were aware, Nosy Boraha was too small and infertile to fulfill the role assigned to it by Paris of provisioning Réunion. Therefore Roux, backed by governor de Freycinet of Réunion, planned to establish an agricultural colony on the Malagasy mainland. He prepared Arnoux, a French trader in Madagascar, to negotiate with Radama I to grant the French an 80- year concession of the territory on the north east coast claimed by them, 500 young Malagasy engagés for Nosy Boraha, and the appointment of a French agent at the Merina court. To back French claims, Roux entered into an alliance with 12 “Tanibey” [Tanibe] chiefs on the east coast between Fenoarivo and Antongil Bay. However, his hopes were dashed by the renewal of the britanno-Merina military support to Roux’s Malagasy allies who in 1823 were crushed by British backed Merina forces⁵⁸. Roux, who died of malaria in 1823, was succeeded by Blévec who rejected negotiations with the Merina in favour of a continued alliance with the Betsimisaraka, notably king “Tsifanina of Tintingue”. Blévec supported the 1825 Betsimisaraka uprising in the hope that it would enable the French to seize the chief east coast ports of Toamasina, Mahavelona and Fenoarivo, thus guaranteeing supplies of rice and cattle to Réunion. However, the Merina army routed the rebels before capturing Fort Dauphin, the last French post on mainland Madagascar. Thus although the French government continued to refer to its “Malagasy dependencies” the latter in 1825 comprised only Nosy Boraha, a colony of 73 surviving whites and 182 engagés⁵⁹.

X

British agents overestimated the French threat in the region. In order to restrict French expansion, Commander Nourse of the British Cape squadron backed the call for the establishment of a British colony in Delagoa Bay made by captain Owen following his 1821 survey of east African waters, but the proposal was rejected

57 - Royal Report quoted in Hardy, *Histoire de la colonisation française*, p 160 ; see also Grandidier, *Histoire V* Tome III, p 108 ; Aujas L., *Notes sur l’histoire des Betsimisaraka* BAM IV, 1905-6, p 109.

58 - Duhaut-Cilly, *Notice sur le royaume d’Emirne, sur la capitale Tananarivou et sur le gouvernement de Rhadama* (1825) BAM XLVI.1-2, 1968, p 243 ; Decary, *Documents historiques relatifs à l’établissement français de Sainte-Marie*, pp 59-62, 67, 69, 72, 77 9 ; Wastell, *British Imperial Policy*, p 157 ; Oliver, op. cité, p 151.

59 - Frère Louis Armand, *Situation politique et morale de Madagascar* (1826) BAM XLVI. 1-2, 1968, pp 253-6 ; Decary, *Documents historiques relatifs à l’établissement français de Sainte-Maire*, pp 83-4 ; idem, *Le voyage du lieutenant de vaisseau de Sémerville à l’île Sainte Marie en 1824* BAM XVI, 1933, p 20 ; Gourraigne, *Les relations de la France avec Madagascar*, p 20 ; Hardy, *Histoire de la colonisation française*, p 154.

by London on the grounds that British informal influence over Portugal was a sufficient guarantee of their interests in south east Africa. However, Farquhar acted independently of London. The Britanno-Merina treaty of 1820, in addition to reiterating most of the clauses of the 1817 treaty, gained for the British navy the right to patrol Malagasy waters. Farquhar dispatched warships, to Nosy Boraha in 1821 with the message that Madagascar was an independent British ally, to Iboina in 1822 and 1824 to warn the Sakalava king Andirantsoly not to entertain a French alliance, and to assist the Merina expedition that crushed the “Tanibey” in 1823.⁶⁰

Indeed, central to Farquhar’s plans to secure British influence in Madagascar was the rapid promotion -under British tutelage- of Merina paramountcy in the island. Hastie, the British political agent appointed to the Merina court would advise the king and oversee the establishment of a British colony in Imerina and the first British settlers would comprise the technical and educational experts envisaged in the 1817 treaty. In this, Farquhar’s ambitions were facilitated by the London Missionary Society (LMS) who had financed a mission to the island. Whilst impressing upon Radama I that missionaries should be “*perfectly free, and masters of their own actions*”⁶¹. Farquhar left the missionaries in no doubt about their status as British agents, supplementing their salaries from Mauritian funds and supplying them with as much material assistance as he could. He considered that the clerical missionaries would assist Hastie and educate the children of the Merina élite, although Jones, the pioneer missionary, was instructed to return to Mauritius after mastering Malagasy in order to teach the language to future British agents to Madagascar.⁶²

The LMS responded to Radama I’s request for artisan missionaries, but a royal proclamation published in the Mauritius Gazette of March 3, 1821 inviting planters, traders and craftsmen of British nationality to settle in Madagascar drew little response. By the end of 1822 the British community in Imerina numbered approximately 20, including two missionary clerics and their wives and 11 artisans. Although larger than the French community there, it was considered too small to counter French aspirations in the island :

*“The establishment [ie, of a British colony] in Madagascar is yet comparatively small and in its infancy. It is but the seed and germ that time will develop and extend, and it is necessary to look forward and provide against contingencies, so liable to occur and which, unless prudently met, might prove highly disadvantageous if not fatal to the British interests in the island.”*⁶³

In an attempt to enlarge the British community in Imerina, Farquhar commissioned studies on Malagasy resources from two German botanists, Hilsenberg and Boyer, and persuaded Radama I to issue a second proclamation, emphasizing that

60 - Gourraigne. *Les relations de la France avec Madagascar*, p 20 ; Wastell, op. cité, pp 150-1, 154, 187 ; Oliver, *Madagascar I*, 1886, pp 150-1 ; Decary, *Documents historiques relatifs à l’établissement français de Sainte-Marie*, pp 70, 73-85 ; Valette, *Etudes sur le règne de Radama I*, 52 ; Jackson Mabel V, *European Powers and South East Africa* (1796-1856), London, 1942, pp 122-45.

61 - Farquhar to Hastie, Mauritius, 30 April 1822, CO.167/63.

62 - Ellis, *History of Madagascar II*, p 355 ; Munthe Ludvig, *La Bible à Madagascar*, Oslo, 1969, p 71 ; Oliver, *Madagascar I* (1886), p 36.

63 - Farquhar to Hastie, Mauritius, 30 April 1822, CO.167/63.

British settlers would enjoy full royal protection and possess complete freedom to travel, build and cultivate within his territories.⁶⁴

In addition, as the malarial climate of the lowlands precluded European settlement, Farquhar, promoted the idea of Merina colonisation of the coasts in order both to counter the French threat and to encourage sedentary agriculture and establish the principle of free trade amongst non-Merina peoples of Madagascar. Such schemes of “internal colonisation” with the aim of producing industrial crops for Europe and food crops for Mauritius were first broached at the time of the 1817 treaty. From 1817-20, harvest failures on Mauritius, caused by an extraordinarily harsh series of hurricanes, gave added impetus to this project and in July 1822, 2,000 Merina colonists settled at Mahavelona, a premier north eastern plot that possessed a fertile hinterland, and there established cotton and sugar plantations and started cultivating wheat, oat, maize, corn and Bengal rice. Rafaralahy, governor of the colony, who had spent four months on Mauritius in 1821 learning British agricultural and commercial techniques, proclaimed a regime of “liberal commerce”, promising that, contrary to established custom, “*no monopoly of trade of any description would be sanctioned - that the market for internal produce, for export, and for imported goods should be free to every class on their paying the established dues*”.⁶⁵ The Mahavelona model was imitated elsewhere in the expanding Merina empire : In 1822, 2,000 Merina settlers under Rakizoarivo were dispatched to Ambohidony garrison, on the Betsileo-Sakalava border; in 1825, 1,000 Merina colonists left for Iboina in north west Madagascar; Hastie, the same year, supervised the establishment of mulberry bush plantations at Mahela and Andevoranto, on the north east coast, and in 1826 helped found agricultural colonies in Betanimena and Betsimisaraka : and finally, in 1828, Sihanaka colonists were settled in Iboina, at Bealanana, in the Sofia valley, and at Beafandriana⁶⁶. It appeared that the fruit of the Britanno-Merina alliance were at last beginning to show.

XI

Although the French threat was effectively countered by Merina military expansion, for reasons analysed elsewhere⁶⁷, the British alliance did not bring

64 - “Proclamation de RADAMA Ier relative au commerce avec l’extérieur” (Mahajanga, 28 juillet 1824) in Jean Valette ed. “Un plan de développement de Madagascar : Le projet Bergsten (1825)” BAM XL.2, 1966, p 24 ; Barry to Hastie, Port Louis, 28 March and 27 April 1822, CO.167/77, p 51 2 ; Hastie to Farquhar, Port Louis, 19 May 1823, CO.167/66 ; Farquhar to Wilmott, Madagascar, 6 June 1823, CO.167/66 ; Hastie, Diary (1824-5); David Griffiths. Hanes Madagascar, Machynlleth, 1843, pp 26, 28 9, 30 1 ; Callet, Histoire des rois V, 1978, p 1074 ; Resident A, Madagascar Past and Present, London, 1847, pp 196-8 ; Wastell, op. cité, p 200.

65 - RA. 195-9 ; RH, 112 ; Farquhar to Bathurst, Port Louis, 29 July 1822, CO.167/63 ; idem to Wilmott, Madagascar. 6 June 1823, CO.167/66 ; Hastie, Diary, (1822). CO.167/63 ; idem, Diary, (1822-3), CO.167/66; Valette Jean, “Le voyage de Rafaralahy-Andriantiana à Maurice (1821-1822)” BAM XLII.1, 1964 ; Jones to Burder, Antananarivo, 29 March 1822. B1 F3 JB SOAS/LMS ; Ellis. History of Madagascar II, pp 280-2,295-7, 327-9 ; idem, Three Visits to Madagascar, London, 1859, pp 180-3 ; Callet, Histoire des rois V, 1978, p 1063.

66 - Ellis, History of Madagascar II, pp 280-9, 301, 316, 327-9, 358 ; Guillain. Documents sur l’histoire, la géographie et le commerce de la partie occidentale de Madagascar I, Paris, 1945, pp 91-100 ; Callet, op. cité, V, 1978, pp 1087-91, 1095-6 ; Hastie, Journal, in Jean Valette (ed.), “Le journal d’Hastie du 14 novembre 1824 au 17 mai 1825” BAM XLVI. 1-2, 1968, p 121 ; Oliver, Madagascar I, 1886, p 265.

67 - Gwyn Campbell, “The Adoption of Autarky in Imperial Madagascar. 1820-1835” Journal of African History 28 ,1987, pp 395-409 ; idem, “The State and Pre-Colonial Demographic History : The Case of Nineteenth Century, Madagascar” Journal of African History 32.3, 1991, pp 415-45 ; idem, “Crisis of Faith and Colonial Conquest. The Impact of Famine and Disease in Late Nineteenth Century Madagascar” Cahiers d’Etudes africaines 127.XXXII-3, 1992, pp 409-53.

Radama I its anticipated benefits. Firstly, attempts on the plateau to improve silk cultivation and introduce crops such as wheat were unsuccessful, despite the temperate climate and Indian expertise, whilst the crops and techniques used in Merina colonies in the lowlands were inappropriate to its tropical climate and soils. Secondly, the incidence of sickness amongst the Merina was far lower than in coastal populations, with the result that they proved almost as prone to the ravages of Malaria as Europeans. By 1824, the signs of failure were evident. Sémerville describing the pilot project of Mahavelona in the following terms : “*quelques cases abandonnées, des défrichements sans cultures nous parlèrent encore là d'une gloire déçue*”⁶⁸. No legitimate export base had developed to replace slaves while the socio-economic costs of military expansionism had pushed the Merina court to the brink of bankruptcy and had started to undermine political security. Moreover, the role of an inferior to Farquhar was ultimately unacceptable to the Merina king who, since the first British embassy to Imerina in 1816, had dreamed of becoming a Malagasy Napoleon, autocratic ruler of an empire that would eventually incorporate the Mascarenes, Seychelles and Comoros. He had at first envisaged using British aid to realise this ambition, but by the mid 1820s it had become clear that Merina interests were being subordinated to those of Mauritius. It is probable that Radama I had already decided to break with the British by 1824, but it was not until the death of Hastie, the resident British agent at the Merina court, in 1826, that he publicly attacked the alliance and declared his intent to create an independent island empire that would promote autarchic economic development⁶⁹. This put an effective end to the imperial designs of Farquhar, leading Wastell to comment that Madagascar offers a typical example of British imperialism; it represents a lost opportunity, a reluctance to adopt a co-ordinated scheme of colonial expansion⁷⁰. By contrast, French imperial interest in Madagascar was maintained and, when the Merina empire crumbled in the late nineteenth century, it was France that finally realised a dream three centuries old, to colonise the island.⁷¹

SUMMARY

With the opening of maritime routes to the East from the end of the fifteenth century, the main western, European powers at various times entertained the

68 - Sémerville, *Souvenirs de Sainte-Marie (1824)* BAM XVI, 1933, pp 50-1 ; see also Le Sage, *Mission* (1816), pp 3, 5, 8, 48, 114, 121 ; Hastie, *Diary*, (1817), pp 160, 162, 173-4, 176; Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, Port-Louis, 29 July 1822, CO.167/63.

69 - Gwyn Campbell, *The Monetary and Financial Crisis of the Merina Empire, 1810-1826* South African Journal of Economic History I, 1986, pp 99-118 ; idem, *The Adoption of Autarky*; for Radama I's imperial ambitions, see : Tyerman Daniel and Bennet James, *Journal of Voyages and Travels, 1821-1829*, James Montgomery ed, II London, 1831, p 531 ; RH. pp 79-95, 120 ; Munthe Ludvig et al., *Radama I et les Anglais : les négociations de 1817 d'après les sources malgaches ("sorabe" inédits)* Omaly sy Anio 3-4, 1976, pp 9-104 ; Deschamps Hubert, *Histoire de Madagascar*, Paris, 1972, p 151.

70 - Wastell, *British Imperial Policy*, p 393.

71 - For the history of the Merina economy at the end of the nineteenth century see Gwyn Campbell, *The Role of the Merina State in the Decline of the Imperial Merina Economy, 1875-1895* in Clive Dewey (ed.), *The State and the Market : Studies in the Economic and Social History of the Third World*, New Delhi, 1987, pp 2-23 ; idem *Currency Crisis, Missionaries, and the French Takeover in Madagascar, 1861-1895* International Journal of African Historical Studies 21.2, 1988, pp 273-89 ; idem, *Gold Mining and the French Takeover of Madagascar, 1883-1914* African Economic History 17, 1988, pp 99-126 ; idem, *Missionaries. Fanompoana and the Menalamba Revolt in late nineteenth century Madagascar* Journal of Southern African Studies 15.1, 1988, pp 54-73.

idea of colonising Madagascar. However, the prevalence of malaria, the hostility of the Malagasy, the lack of precious minerals or spices, and the difficulty of cultivating cash crops, led the Portuguese, British and Dutch to quickly abandon attempted settlements and relegate the island to the status of occasional reprovisioning base for ships sailing between Europe and the Far East. Only the French, excluded from the most lucrative regions of the East by their European rivals, maintained an intermittent interest in colonising Madagascar. This state of affairs changed in the first decade of the nineteenth century when three important powers developed a strong imperial interest in the island; the French, the British and the Merina. However, not only did the interests of the respective parties conflict, but there also existed factions within each party. Of paramount importance to the French and British governments was the position of Madagascar relative to their respective empires. For the British, Madagascar's importance lay in its strategic value on the "route to India", while for the French it was periodically considered as potentially their base of imperial operations in the Indian Ocean. The Mascarenes had an immediate material stake in Madagascar which constituted the closest and cheapest source of provisions and labour. The Merina crown, on the other hand, wished to transform its small kingdom in the highland interior into an island-wide empire that might achieve the status of an Indian Ocean power. For a short period, between 1816 and 1824, Merina and British interests converged, with the result that Imerina was absorbed into the British informal empire in return for technical and military assistance which enabled the Merina to expand the extent of territory under their control and to expel French influence from the island. However, by the mid 1820s the political and economic cost of the British alliance led the Merina to reject it in favour of political independence and autarchic economic policies. These in turn proved unsuccessful and ultimately undermined the Merina economy, thus preparing the way for the French conquest of the island in 1895.