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WOMEN, POLITICS, AND ECONOMICS : CASE STUDIES FROM THE ANKARANA REGION

Lisa L. GEZON
State University of West Georgia

"Woman" is neither a fixed nor a homogeneous category. Rather, scholars have shown that gender is cross-cut by a wide range of different interests, including income, age, and ethnicity (Fernandez-Kelly, 1983, Ginsburg and Tsing, 1990, Harding, 1986, Harper, 1994). Even in a rather isolated agricultural community, for example, where social stratification is at a minimum, women have different types of political and economic involvements. Women in the Ankarana region of northern Madagascar differ from each other primarily according to : 1) connection to an extended family ; 2) marital status and residence ; and 3) age. Those who have a close tie to their patrilineal extended family; who are married, and, despite a virilocal residency tendency, live near their patrilineal kin; and finally, who are old enough to have grown children, especially married sons, tend to have the greatest political clout and economic opportunities in this region. Other women, however, are not powerless but have different ways of achieving their political and economic goals.

This article will explore the processes of establishing and negotiating access to political authority and economic resources such as land, labor, and cash. The first section will explore the various ways that women participate in village-level decision-making processes, and the second section will focus on economic strategies and constraints, examining how marital status and connection to extended family are important differentiating factors.

Ethnographic Background

Many of the people in the Ankarana region identify with the ethnic label, "Antankarana", which is at once a regional designation, an ethnic identity and a mark of allegiance to the royal leader, the Ampanjaka (can be translated as "king" or "prince"). The word Ankarana, as in the Ankarana massif, comes from the Malagasy word

"*harana*", which refers to the rocks of the massif. Ankarana means "the place of the *harana*"; "Antankarana", then, means "place of the people of the *harana*". The local people recognize the boundaries of the Ankarana to be a triangular region extending from Bobaomby in the north, to Vohemar in the east, and to just south of Ambilobe in the south, including the island of Nosy Mitsio, which is about 35 kilometers off the western shore (see Figure 1).

The people living west of the Ankarana massif today have varied backgrounds. Many of the founders of the current villages arrived at the turn of the century from the rather nearby areas of the Tsimihety (north central) and Betsimisaraka (north east). They came in search of land for grazing their cattle and to escape threats from the Merina invaders. Some people have no historical memory of migration. Their ancestors may have lived there for many generations. Others identify a Makoa heritage, which suggests that they have ancestors from the east coast of Africa who were brought over as slaves, most likely for the Sakalava and Antankarana royalty. Some have moved in more recently from the extreme south of Madagascar to answer a colonial call for labor in Antsiranana and at the sugar refinery near Ambilobe (just south of the massif) and to escape harsh drought conditions in other parts of the island. Although immigrants have tended to integrate into Antankarana culture through intermarriage and the adoption of local customs, many of the most recent arrivals from the south retain their own cultural affiliations.

Despite their diverse backgrounds, the Antankarana-identifying people west of the massif have come to recognize many of the same sociocultural forms, including the rights and obligations associated with living in a royal polity. Most self-identifying Antankarana, for example, respect royal taboos called "*fady ny Ampanjaka*", especially the taboo forbidding the labor of the land on Tuesdays. They perform many of the same rituals, and respect many of the same political and social forms and processes. Their material forms--huts, household and farm implements, dress and hair styles--also resemble each other. As this article will attempt to demonstrate, however, the cultural similarities that can be observed do not imply that the local populations are homogenous in terms of their perceptions and interests. Instead, the sociocultural referents provide a framework for contextualizing the expression of this difference.

In the villages on the western side of the Ankarana massif in the north of the country, most people are subsistence rice farmers and herders. People grow rice in many regions of Madagascar and it is considered the preferred staple throughout the island. Statistics, as well as ethnographic accounts, indicate that the majority of people throughout the island farm small holdings : according to the 1985 census, only 0.05 per cent of the population farmed more than 10 hectares, had more than five full time workers, or used mechanized

Fig. 1 Liza Gezon

NORTHERN MADAGASCAR

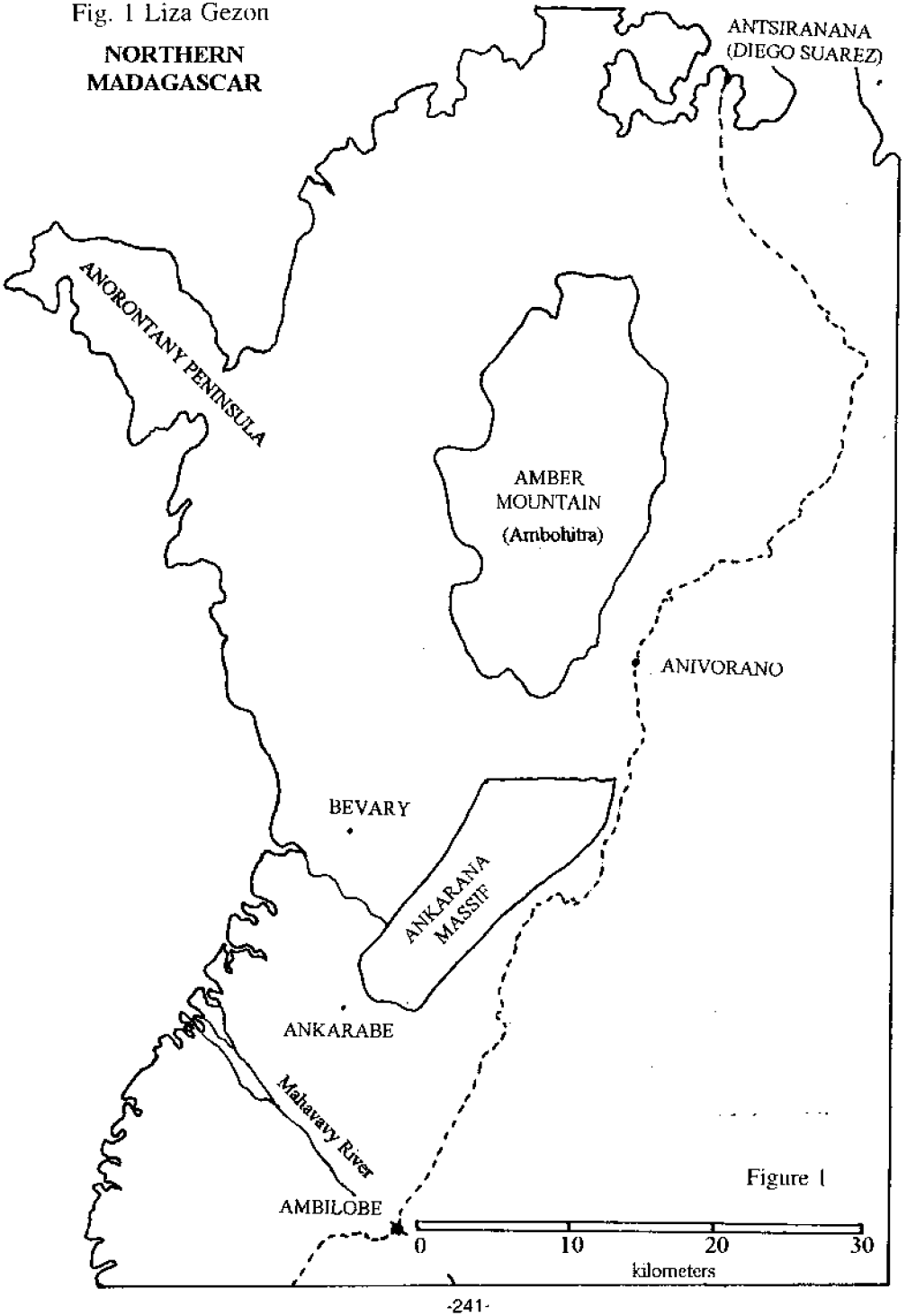


Figure 1

technology. The average plot is 1.2 hectares (Barrett, 1994) with 76 % of the population owning .75 hectares or less (Hewitt, 1992). These figures are also representative of Bevary, the village which is the focus of this study, and of the Ankarana region in general in the early 1990's.

The village of Bevary, on the western side of the Ankarana massif, and other villages in this rich agricultural belt participate in the regional economic system by supplying rice to the less productive rural areas as well as to nearby cities, including Ambilobe to the south and the provincial capital of Antsiranana to the north. Unlike many peasant producers, who are tied into the international financial system of credit through loans for supposed agricultural 'improvements', the farmers of Bevary use no mechanized technology, no pesticides, and they do not buy seed each year. For the most part, they are indebted to no one outside of the community. Although ecological crisis is common throughout Madagascar, the farmers in this region do not complain of loss of topsoil through erosion, of unmanageable pests, nor of decreasing crop yields.

Disparities in socioeconomic status and wealth in Bevary, though minimal, are detectable in the amount of cattle and land people own. Some have no land and few cattle and others have abundant amounts of both. Land owners tend to be older men and women who have lived in the region for much if not all of their lives and had either cleared the land themselves or inherited it from those who did. In this region, land can be inherited by all children--male and female – of a deceased parent. If there is not enough land for each sibling to have an entire field, they may inherit only shared rights to farm a certain piece of land, thereby avoiding parceling land into ever-smaller portions. Married couples or single males who do not own land often farm as tenants, usually giving the owner one third to one half of the harvest. Single women with no land, on the other hand, generally only engage in low paying seasonal day labor on others' fields. Because population has increased with each generation, many of those in extended families do not all own land and farm as tenants. Many immigrants to the region (*vahiny*) are also landless and tenant farm, but some bought or cleared the land they live and work on.

Women in Politics and Decision-Making

The family constitutes an important form of political organization for many rural Antankarana. Many aspects of political dynamics in the village setting resemble Fortes' kinship polity (1969), where kin relations are the basis for all social interactions. In the Antankarana context, kin rights and responsibilities form general parameters for interaction in both the family – and village-level political settings. If people are not known to be related by blood, then they often create

kin alliances called *fatidra*, which may be instated either through a formal ceremony or just by presenting the new kin as such. In Antankarana kinship, as among the Tsimihety (Wilson, 1992), patrilineal descent is predominant, although the importance of the mother's line is undeniable in both theory and practice. Within a patriline, women are often vocal and influential in family politics.

The patrilineal family unit does not handle all concerns, however. Some matters are in the jurisdiction of the village as a whole or of higher level state authorities. The *fokonolona* is the village council, where family, village, and state politics intersect. Technically, any issue that cannot be resolved at the family level must go to the *fokonolona*, which is required to act on all local issues before they can go to higher authorities. In exchange for the right to self-government, the *fokonolona* have the responsibility to be the first to intervene in all local issues. Cases which the *fokonolona* cannot resolve may then go to the tribunal at the state level.

All members of the *fokonolona*, or, all adults living within the smallest state-recognized geopolitical unit called the *fokontany*, are invited to participate in village meetings. The most active participants in the decision-making processes are often male *rey amin-dreny*[1] (elders), who also tend to be leaders within their extended families; and the elected state-sanctioned officers (the president, secretary and the members of the *Comite du Fokontany*, or, *Fokontany Committee*), who may also be *rey amin-dreny*. Younger men and women may also contribute their opinions in this consensus-based decision-making system. In the meetings I attended, women occasionally took part in village deliberations, but they avoided claiming the official term and decision-making responsibilities of "*rey amin-dreny*" in this political context. While women do not often become involved in formal decision-making, particularly in cases about land and water management, they frequently bring cases both to the *fokonolona* and the state tribunals.

Axes of Differentiation

Because women tend to derive most authority from the family political setting, those who have a large extended family have the most significant access to the decision-making arenas. However, since residential patterns in the Ankarana region are patrilocal for men and virilocal for women, women often leave their extended family when they get married, thus losing a considerable amount of influence

[1] Literally, this word means "mothers and fathers" in certain dialects of Malagasy. Although the Antankarana refer to their mothers and fathers differently (mother is *nindry* or, more commonly, *mama*; father is *baba*), they recognize the meaning of the word.

within family politics. In addition to residence in relation to extended family, age and status as a parent are other axes of differentiation among women. The most influential women tend to have adult children, especially sons, who tend to defer to their mothers when making decisions, particularly if they live in the same village. Certain women, therefore, indirectly influence decisions through their position in a kinship network as the mother of adult children.

Older women who have adult male children and who live near their extended patrilineal family or near their affinal kin tend to be the most powerful women. This power translates into access to resources, decision-making ability and a general net of security. Women who have the least authority and security are single and have no family in the region. In the latter case, age actually seems to be a detriment, since younger women have the strength and stamina to make a living on their own.

Process : Social Categories in Action

The above descriptions are only general guidelines for mapping the distinctions between women in the Ankarana region within a given historical context. Even more interesting than naming axes of differentiation, however, is exploring the processes by which these categories are created, reinforced and negotiated. Generalizations about relative social status are based on observable patterns of social interaction. For example, having observed multiple cases of conflict, I detected that litigants with extended family ties had certain distinct advantages. Nevertheless, one could not predict the outcome of a given dispute based on this tendency alone, since generalizations about social advantage are neither static nor do they have fixed rules. They disguise multi-faceted social identities, as well as people's ever-transforming strategies for establishing and contesting social position.

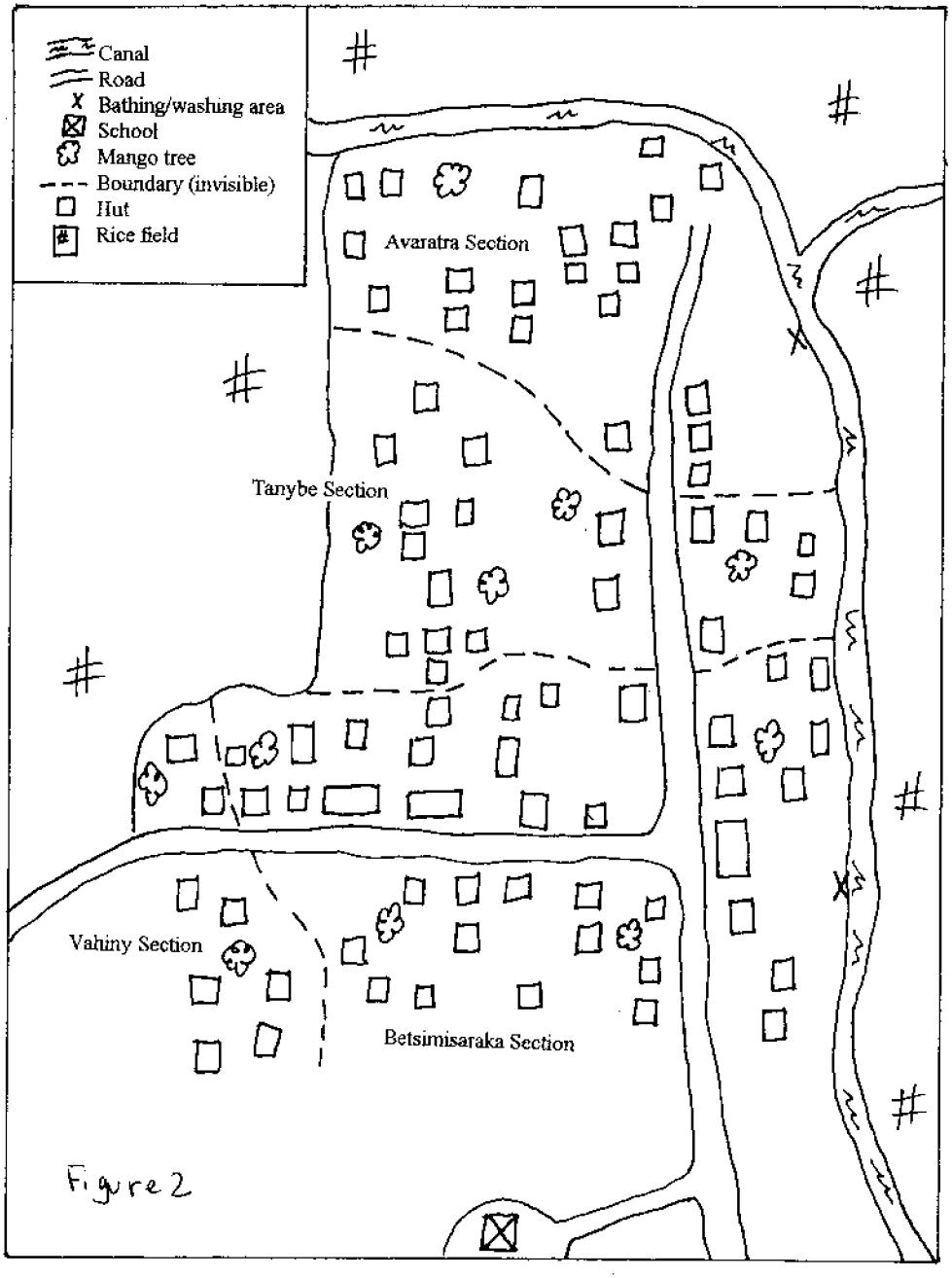
Case from Bevary

Background : Introduction to the Characters

I lived for the majority of my field stay from 1992-93 in the commoner village of Bevary on the western side of the Ankarana massif. According to many residents, the village could be broken down into three main sections and a smaller fourth section for the *vahiny*, or the outsiders/newcomers/guests. These sections were not detectable merely through visual observation, since the huts on the border between sections were as close to each other as any huts within a section (see village map, Figure 2). At the time of my fieldwork, each of the three main sections was a patrilineal grouping with its own family-based political organization. I lived with the Betsimisaraka

Fig. 2 Liza Gezon

Bevary Village



family in the southern section, and so it is with that family that I am most familiar.

According to village *rey amin-dreny*, the village was founded in the 1920's by five men who moved there to be close to good farm land. Much of the land was covered with forest when they arrived. Each man claimed a section of land for his family, cleared it, and dug canals to turn it into permanent farm land. Two of the five men were brothers who founded the Betsimisaraka section. They came from a village several kilometers north, to which their father had moved as a young man to escape the Hova (Merina) war. The younger of them, named Olobe, was the highest-ranking man in the Betsimisaraka section until he died in his 80s in September, 1993. Olobe moved to Bevary after a failed marriage and one son. He then married an Antankarana woman, Tombo, from a nearby village. They lived together in Bevary and had ten children, nine of whom were still living while I was there (see kinship chart Figure 3) and ranged in age from mid-60's to 32 years. Although they had been divorced for over fifteen years in 1992-3, Tombo still lived in Bevary in a house that her children had built for her. Olobe's descendants still farm the land he cleared. While the amount of land was sufficient for Olobe, it is not extensive enough to provide for his many children and grandchildren, and so many tenant farm for other local land owners.

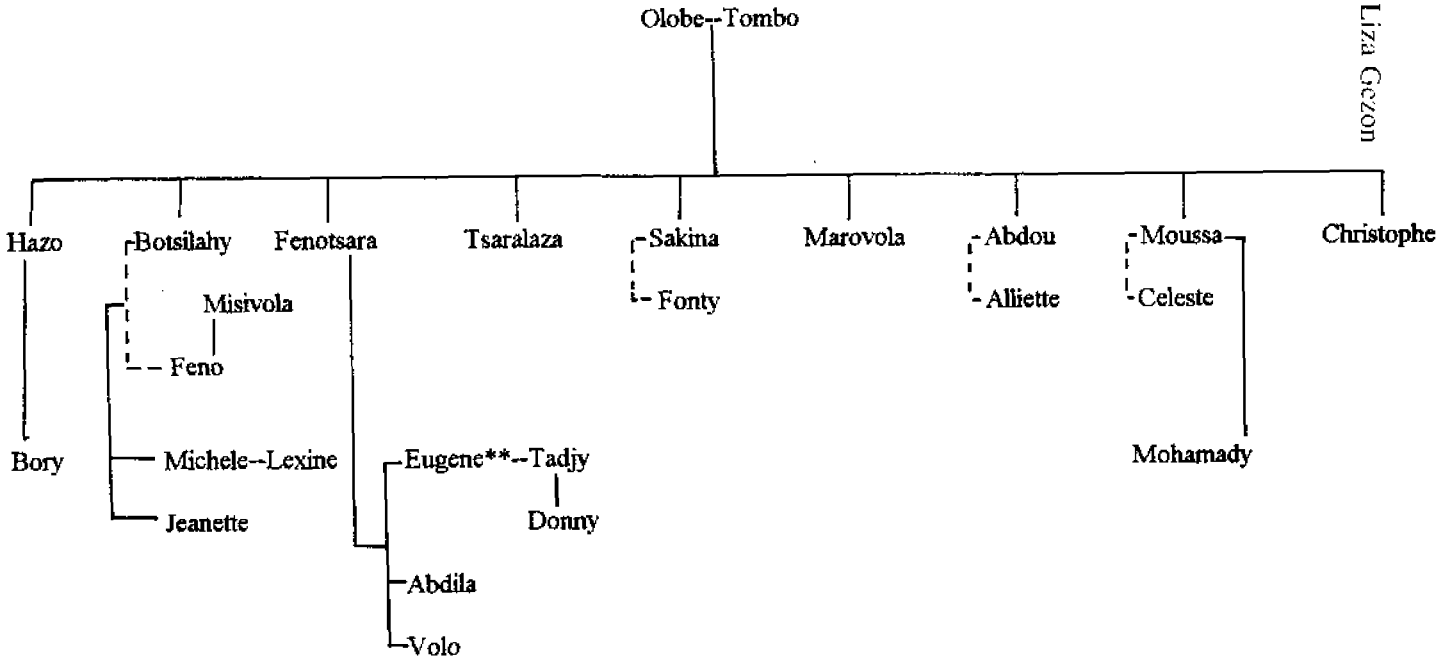
At different times during my stay, four of Olobe and Tombo's five daughters lived in the village and one visited for extended periods of time. To have so many adult daughters living in the same section of the village is surely unusual, given the virilocal rule. But each daughter had reasons for living in Bevary that were consistent with the logic of patrilocality : two were separated or divorced and had returned home, one was on an extended visit and the other was married to a man whose family's village stake happened to be in the same section of the village as hers. All four of Olobe and Tombo's sons were married with children and lived in the village. The oldest son married Feno, the daughter of one of the wealthiest Antankarana men in the region.

Women and Authority

Women have authority both among their descending lineal relatives and within the collateral extended family unit. As for the Kaguru men described by Beidelman, political clout for many rural Antankarana women lies in their ability to surround themselves with kin who have obligations to them as subordinates (Beidelman, 1971). Among descending lineal relatives, women often maintain authority over their grown children, especially their sons and their households. One of Tombo's sons for example, told me that he had wanted to leave the village to become a sailor, but that his mother would not give him a blessing (*joro*) and therefore he did not dare.

Figure 3 Liza Gezon

Olobe's Branch of the Betsimisaraka Family



------ = spouse

**Eugene was adopted by Fenotsara after his mother, her older sister, died.

Figure 3

Feno was also influential in her household. Her oldest son, Michel, told me that he made no major decisions and did not even leave the village without getting the blessing of both his mother and father. She has become increasingly powerful as her sons have obtained wives and established their own households in the southern section of Bevary. Since her children were still young in 1993, (between the ages of 5 and 28) her influence did not yet extend too far past her immediate household. Her oldest son's wife, Lexine, however, directly felt her power and complained that Feno's authority extended to the economic domain when it came to collecting shares of the rice harvest. At harvest time, the *local* practice is that the primary woman farmer keeps the rice at the bottom of the pile of winnowed grain for herself, while the rest is controlled by the man. Lexine complained that Feno had tried to claim for herself the woman's portion from her son's field. She recounted that one year, when she was still newly married, she was far along in her first pregnancy at harvest time. Since she was bedridden, Feno was helping her son on the day the rice was put into granaries. Feno took the portion designated for the female farmer as her own, even though Lexine had been the primary farmer all along. Because of her position of subordination, Lexine could not say anything. She remarked that in subsequent years she always worked through the harvest, no matter how sick she was, since it was the only way of standing up for her rights. While I was there, Lexine had a rather difficult pregnancy, and her baby was scheduled to be born soon after the harvest. Nevertheless, she undertook all her agricultural tasks to the end and claimed her rice at harvest time.

The year I was there, Feno's second oldest son had a new wife who was pregnant with their first baby during that year's growing season and only infrequently worked in the fields. I was with Feno on the last day of the harvest as she claimed the wife's portion for herself. She justified it by saying that she had done much of the woman's work and was entitled to it. Lexine and her sister-in-law had the disadvantages of age and status as outsiders in that family. Through her actions, however, Lexine subtly negotiated her position through her presence in the fields at harvest time, insisting on taking the woman's portion of the harvest. Through time, Lexine's position may change, especially if she remains married and her sons remain in the village as adults. Even though Feno is an outsider among her affinal kin, she is in the process of slowly establishing herself as a family elder and authority as she gains control over the movements of an increasing number of people.

The process of gaining authority while living among one's affines can especially be seen in Tombo's case. Tombo was the oldest woman and the mother or grandmother of most of the current residents of the southern section of Bevary. By virtue of her age and her position as elder and future ancestor, Tombo's word was taken seriously,

especially within the context of family politics. Living with her in 1993 were several grandchildren, including one who was old enough to farm a small plot of his own. The child's classificatory father's brother had dug a canal across his grandson's rice field without asking permission, so Tombo called a family meeting where she could confront him on the matter. Although the accused at first protested that he had not done anything wrong, after much discussion he conceded to remove the canal. Tombo's position as an elder in the family gave her more authority than her young grandson would have had in the same situation. Even though she was too old to work in the fields, she was still active in making decisions about how land was to be used.

Women also have authority within the collateral extended family unit. Besides Tombo, the woman with the most political clout in the Betsimisaraka section of Bevary was Tombo's second oldest daughter, Fenotsara. Although she lived virilocally, her husband's family land was not only located within the same village, but squarely within the section that Fenotsara's patrilocal family occupied. Therefore, Fenotsara lived both virilocally and patrilocally. Her position of authority was not official, yet she was actively involved in family matters and her opinion was quite influential in family decisions. For example, when her father, Olobe, was dying, she took the initiative to call a family meeting to decide about funeral arrangements. Moreover, her brothers often advised me to consult with her and to inform her of my comings and goings. Although Fenotsara was not Olobe's oldest daughter, several factors combined to make her the most vocal woman family leader : she never moved out of the Betsimisaraka section of the village, she was married with adult children, she was healthy, and she had an outgoing personality.

Tombo's other daughters who lived in Bevary also had active roles in family politics. At times, like Tombo, they brought their own agendas up for discussion. Other times, the rest of the family solicited their opinions about family decisions regarding, for example, the funeral arrangements of their father. Women who had married into the family also sometimes sought the help of these women in confronting domestic issues like the suspected infidelity of their spouses.

These cases suggest that women who are closely tied to an extended family, either through their descendants or their patriline, have a considerable amount of power and influence in village politics at the family level, where they can air complaints or suggest courses of action. Within families, however, not all women have equal political clout. Age and adult children, especially sons, confer authority. A woman's place within the family is not fixed and consistent, however, and interactions provide the framework for establishing, negotiating, or relinquishing authority. Whereas Lexine once unwittingly ceded her rights to the woman's portion of the harvest to her mother-in-law,

for example, she successfully claimed the rice in subsequent years. Through her insistence on a settlement, Tombo also actively asserted her authority over her descending lineal relatives and her affines.

Family vs. village/state politics

But not all women in Bevary were connected to one of the large extended families. Although these *vahiny* women were the most disadvantaged in the family political system, they could gain assistance from outside political sources. Sitela and her husband, Jean, for example, had no nearby relatives and lived in the *vahiny* section of the village. When Jean caught Sitela sleeping with another man, neither one had family elders to mediate the case. According to local stories, women can have had all their hair shaved off in punishment for such a breach of marital fidelity, although I never saw a woman afflicted with this punishment. Generally, however, a woman loses rights to any gifts that her mate had given her in the course of their relationship. Jean wanted this to be enforced in their case. He also wanted the village officials to tell her she must leave the village. He brought the issue to a member of the *Comite du Fokontany*, who decided that the issue could be handled informally, without needing a public meeting of the *fokonolona*. After having consulted with other *fokonolona* officers, he decided that Sitela should in fact return her bedstead, jewelry and other possessions to Jean. Sitela disagreed with the verdict, since she had received many of the gifts before a previous break-up, and she went to the local *zandaro* (from the French *gendarme*, or officer of the law) who said they would summon Jean if he did not let her keep her goods. Jean and the *fokonolona* were daunted at the thought of getting involved with the higher authorities and they acquiesced. They did, however, make her sign a *fokonolona* settlement (called a *taratasy*) promising she would not return to the village.

As this case demonstrates, people can turn to the state authorities if they feel their concerns are not being met fairly at the village level. This advantage is particularly important for women outsiders, who may not have the sympathy of the male village authorities. Although women who live near their extended family have a political and economic advantage over *vahiny* women, the *vahiny* are more free to call upon outside authority when they feel that people involved in village and family politics are not advocating their best interests.

Marriage, Labor, and Economic Opportunities

Women in Agriculture

Just as women have differential access to political authority, so they have different economic opportunities and constraints, and unmarried women generally fare considerably worse than men or

married women. In rural communities, women's differential access to resources can especially be seen in agriculture (Thomas-Slayter and Rocheleau, 1994, Goheen, 1996, Rocheleau et. al., 1996, Collins, 1991). In this region, the division of agricultural labour gives married women a subsistence advantage over single women because of their partnership with their husbands. Women's tasks in rice farming are the following : weeding, cooking food for collective work parties, tying the cut stalks at harvest, helping to rake the straw from the rice grains, and winnowing. Men, on the other hand, are responsible for some of the heavier agricultural labour : they guide a herd of cattle to trample the soil before planting and thresh the grain from the stalks at harvest; they coordinate water flow from canals, cut the rice and then stack it after the women have tied the bundles, clear the ground for threshing, load rice into granaries, and unload it either to consume or send to market.

If women farm by themselves, they must secure labour for men's tasks, some of which are easier than others for women to take over. Women, for example, have no easy access to herds of cattle to perform the tasks of turning the soil, threshing, and pulling carts of rice to market. They are, on the other hand, physically capable of regulating the flow of water from the canals, although their movements are somewhat restricted since they are hesitant to venture to the fields before dawn or after dusk to assure that the water is allowed to flow onto their fields on their assigned days. One woman won a case against a man with whom she shared a canal, having accused him of going out after dusk and before dawn to switch the direction of water flow away from her field and into his. The *fokonolona* went out to their fields and verified that her rice looked wilted and water-deprived, while his was healthy. In deciding that she was wronged, the *fokonolona* re-affirmed a culturally-constructed gender-based constraint on labour.

Unmarried women who are closely connected to a sizable extended family can often secure the necessary materials and labor of production and marketing more easily than those who are not, since their brothers or sons may be willing to donate their material and labour. One young man, for example, took his younger sister's rice to market as a favor, while Misy, an unattached single woman, had to pay him to take her rice. While his sister merely gave him the rice and waited for him to give her the money, Misy had to accompany her rice and actively market it. Marovola, one of Tombo's daughters, was a divorced single mother with several small children and an infant. One year, she asked for and received the right to farm a small piece of land that her deceased father had owned. Despite her access to land, however, she still had a hard time securing the necessary labor. Even as part of an extended family, Marovola had to rely on donated labor, which placed her in a subordinate position of being unable to

negotiate the terms and timing of the labor done in her fields. Whereas single men typically compensate women day laborers with a token amount of unhusked rice at harvest (they may receive two baskets in a total harvest of anywhere between one and five hundred baskets), there is no established precedent for women to compensate male labor in such a convenient, low-cost way.

The labour shortage facing single women prevents many from farming at all except as seasonal day laborers, for which compensation is minimal. Day labor is frequently an informal arrangement, where the primary female farmer or a single male farmer informs the single women of the day and the type of labor needed--usually during the various stages of the harvest. The day laborers tend to spend either one or several days at the field at the very end of the harvest process until the job is done. On the last day, when the men load the rice into carts to store in granaries, the helpers receive one or several baskets of rice--depending on how much they helped and on how much the farmer wants to give them. Maso, for example, is a seasonal day laborer. As an unmarried women in her 50's, she moved into the *vahiny* section of Bevary on the recommendation of a kinswoman who had married a man from Bevary. She did not farm, but rather made her living from working for other people and by petty buying and selling. In contrast with many young and married women, she rarely obtained new clothes and household furnishings and often had a hard time buying enough rice to feed herself. Maso is typical of women of her age and social status.

In sum, the women who have the greatest access to and control over agricultural resources are those who are married and/or part of and extended family network. They often have access to land to farm because of their husband's ability to work if they are married, or they can sometimes get land and labor through family connections. Despite these relative advantages, however, these women still do not have as much access to the means of production as do their husbands and male extended family members. Advanced age, while it can be a political and economic advantage for those connected to extended families, it can be a detriment to those who are unattached, since younger women have more strength and stamina for making a living on their own.

Married Women and Gifts

In addition to farming, nearly all women make money from petty buying and selling. Married women generally use these earnings from buying and selling to buy food items to complement rice (fish, beans, greens), but they occasionally buy small luxury items such as clothing or cosmetics to supplement the gifts they receive from their husbands.

Single women, especially if they are landless, tend to use their earnings to buy all food and personal items.

It is noteworthy that in addition to agriculture and petty buying and selling, many women, married or single, receive a large portion of their economic resources from men with whom they are sexually active. Husbands are expected not only to provide rice for the household, but to supply their wives with clothing, furniture, jewelry, and other luxury items when they can afford to do so. The men generally get the money for buying gifts by selling surplus rice. The harvest is considered officially to belong to the husband and wife couple, but the man most directly controls the selling of it and the money that it earns.

As an indication of the centrality of gift-giving within a marriage, villagers often have sympathy for a woman who seeks divorce because her husband has not given her enough gifts (given their household means), even if he has remained faithful to her. Although women complain when their husbands have mistresses, they will often not divorce if they continue to receive significant gifts. If a woman catches her husband having an affair or if he recognizes a child by another woman, she is entitled to a large gift--such as a new house, a sewing machine, a large piece of furniture or a radio-cassette player--in compensation for her personal humiliation. The gift is meant to show the woman and the community that the man wants to repair the relationship so badly that he will make a significant sacrifice in order to save it.

In one case in Bevary, Celeste became more and more discontented with her marriage to Tombo's son, Moussa, commenting on how little she had received in the past year. She had told me already in December 1992 that she thought he had a mistress and that he no longer cared about her. Nearly a year later, the story became public that Moussa's mistress had had his child in December 1992, but that the baby had died. Before the baby was born, he had informed Celeste of his mistress' pregnancy and had promised her significant monetary compensation, since he planned to recognize the child formally as his own. Early 1993, Moussa told Celeste that he no longer had a relationship with the mother of this child and therefore would not give her the promised money. Several months later, however, she learned that he was in fact still seeing his mistress. Since the announcement of the child, she had not received any compensation money nor any gifts or clothes whatsoever. In response, she called on her mother's brother, who came to Bevary to admonish her husband. She also warned her husband's mother and sisters that she would leave if he did not act properly. They scolded him for his inappropriate behavior and told him that he should treat Celeste better.

Right before I left, it seemed apparent that he still had not left the other woman, and Celeste was threatening to leave. Moussa told her

that she could leave if she wanted to, but that he would not take her back once she left. When I returned in 1995, I found that Celeste had left about a year before and that Moussa had married his old mistress, the mother of his deceased child.

Women have different strategies for receiving their share of gifts. Lexine, for example, was quite aware that her husband, Michel, had many mistresses that he saw when he traveled alone to sell rice and buy supplies for their boutique. She said that although she was not happy with that arrangement, she would not divorce him unless something significant happened, such as if he recognized a child he had by one of them, or if he stopped buying her luxury goods.

One time I was with them on a trip to Anivorano to sell their rice, and Lexine insisted that she would not go home until Michel bought her an expensive outfit. She told him that she wanted to look good in town--better than all of his mistresses--so that she would not feel ashamed in front of them. He bought her what she wanted. Later, she told me that she did not know if he even had any mistresses in that town, but that she imagined he did, and it was an effective strategy for getting the clothes to which she felt she was entitled. She considered that any money her husband earned belonged equally to each of them, as joint members of the same household. For a man to spend money on a mistress or otherwise to squander the money was like robbing the household.

Married women do not always directly control more economic resources than single women, but they are entitled to staples and luxuries that often make subsistence considerably easier.

Single Women (Manangy Tovo) and Payments

Just as a married woman has the right to gain access to resources through her husband, so single women attain resources through their relations with sexual partners. A single woman in this case is one who has been married and divorced, or who has not been married, but has sexual relations with men. Particularly in the case of younger women, these relations may fully support them and keep them from needing to farm. Parents in Bevary do not encourage their adolescent daughters to become sexually active, since it lessens their chance of having what I will refer to as a traditional marriage, or, a marriage according to *fomba* (custom). If a young unmarried woman gets pregnant, her chances of having a traditional marriage are even less, unless the father of the child marries her. A traditional marriage is arranged by the parents with the consent of the youth and is marked by gifts to the bride from both the husband and the bride's parents, and ceremonies both at the bride's home, when the grooms relatives come to get her, and at the groom's home, when the two officially meet as spouses.

Many young women want a traditional marriage since it means a certain amount of comfort; they receive gifts of household furnishings and personal belongings from their family and their husband. Although people recognize that the life of a single woman is financially difficult, being single is socially acceptable for divorced women, widows and older single women who have never been married. There is a certain stigma, however, for adolescents who get pregnant before leaving their parent's household. One young woman, Feno's daughter Jeannette, got married, had a baby, was divorced, and returned home to Bevary between the time I left at the end of 1993 and returned in 1995. She was proud that she had gone through the marriage, because she had a home full of nice things to show for it : she had a wooden bedstead with a mattress, wooden chairs, a table, many new clothes and a full range of kitchen goods (dishes, flatware, glasses, pots). In contrast was Finesy, a young woman about Jeannette's age who got pregnant without being married right before I left in 1993. People said her situation was especially unfortunate, since a man had already asked to marry her. When the man learned of her pregnancy by another man, he asked for her younger sister, who accepted. People considered her unwise in her willingness to jeopardize a potentially comfortable situation.

Just as a married woman's relationship with her husband is founded on the receipt of material goods, so a single woman is not expected to have relations with men without compensation. For a night with a man, a woman often receives a payment in cash or in goods. People said that a woman with integrity will demand compensation from her relations with men. Alliette, now the wife of one of Olobe's sons, told me about her life as a single woman (*manangy tovo*) before coming to Bevary. She said that she would never have relations with a man without receiving money or goods from him, even if she liked him and was attracted to him. She said it was a matter of survival, and she would not set herself up to be taken advantage of. "I have to live, don't I ?", she asked rhetorically.

While it is socially acceptable to be a *manangy tovo*, certain men are off-limits. Misy, who had left her husband from the Avaratra section of the village, rented a room in the Betsimisaraka section instead of returning to her father's village. She had occasional sexual liaisons with men, but eventually moved in with a family (Zokilahy, his wife Betsy, and her child from a previous marriage) from the *vahiny* (newcomer) section of the village. She did this, she claimed, to save money and to live near friends. One night, Betsy caught Zokilahy and Misy sleeping together. Betsy got angry and charged at Misy with a spear. The incident caused an uproar in the village and Betsy was to be tried for attempted murder. She did not appear before the village elders when they called her to trial, however, and Zokilahy told them that she was sick and had gone to the city to the hospital. It eventually

became apparent that she would not be coming back. The elders told Zokilahy and Misy that they should stay apart, for fear that Betsy would come back and kill Misy. Zokilahy told them that he and Misy wanted to live together now and that he was divorcing Betsy. The elders were reluctant to agree, since if Betsy came back and killed Misy, the *fokonolona* would be accused of not having taken proper precautions. But they finally agreed, and included in the legal statement (*taratasy*) that they had encouraged Misy and Zokilahy to stay apart, and that if there were to be any more domestic violence, the *fokonolona* would not be implicated.

Misy was the subject of much village gossip, to be sure. But if she was held in contempt at all, it was not because she had sexual relations with a married man, but because of the man with whom she had them : in the perception of the village, Betsy and Zokilahy had taken in Misy out of good will. It was as if Misy and Betsy had made a bond of fictive kinship (*fatidra*). Misy broke that by taking away Betsy's husband. The villagers' interpretation came out especially in the words of a playful song (*antsa*) that the young men of the village improvised :

"*Anao Misy nivadiky fatidra*
'Merci' ho Maman' Zandritombo
'Atsika hody' ho Zandritombo"

("You, Misy, betrayed your fictive kin
'Thank you' said Maman' Zandritombo [cynically--Maman' Zandritombo is Betsy's teknonym, meaning Zandritombo's mother]
'Let's return home [leave the village and divorce]' said Zandritombo")

Michel's wife Lexine was a relative of Misy, and she also let her know that she disapproved of her behavior. Misy, on her part, rarely spoke with the villagers of the Betsimisaraka section any more, even when she had to pass through to get to the water hole. In 1995, the couple was still together and Misy continued to stay away from the Betsimisaraka section of the village. She had even found a new water source that would allow her to avoid regularly walking through the section.

Under most circumstances, villagers do not have contempt for the *manangy tovo*. On the contrary, they are considered to be doing what they need to in order to make a living. When I visited Jeannette in 1995, she was newly divorced and had not yet had the experience of receiving men into her home, although she knew that it would be likely to happen. She said she was especially glad to have done a traditional marriage and received her household goods, since it would make it easier to be a *manangy tovo* and receive men in style.

Women and Economic Resources

The Antankarana women living west of the Ankarana massif have different strategies and constraints for gaining access to economic resources. Many of the writings about rural women have focused on women as farmers (see Jane Collins, 1991 for an overview), but as these cases suggest, the way women participate in agriculture varies, and some have more direct access to and control over agricultural processes and products than others. Married women, for example, often directly participate in and co-manage the agricultural processes that generate the material resources they receive. Single women, however, may not, since, unless they own land, they are only involved as seasonal day laborers. Young women who are *manangy tovo* may in fact generate nearly all their subsistence needs from men who pay them for sexual relations.

Conclusion

In seeking to understand and describe social relationships, it is useful to note not only broad categories and tendencies of experience but also the processes and means by which they are experienced differently by people at various times and in different places. As these cases have suggested, women's political and economic involvements in the Ankarana region often differ from each other as much as they collectively differ from men's. Age, marital status, residence, and connection to an extended family are axes of social differentiation that join and divide Antankarana women.

Embedded within divergent experiences are varying measures of social advantage. I have argued, for example, that women with certain constellations of characteristics have privileged access to village-level political processes and economic resources. To some degree, hierarchy is situational and ambiguous, since women who do not fit into the privileged categories may benefit on different occasions. Sitela, as an outsider, did not have access to family-level decision-making processes. But when she committed an act that was heavily stigmatized by villagers (having an affair), she was not restricted by her family ties. Rather, she could seek help from outside authorities, who were more lenient on such matters. A woman from one of the extended families of Bevary, on the other hand, may have felt constrained to have such a problem handled by patrilineal or affinal authorities, even if the settlement would not be in her favor. But in the agricultural context, certain socioeconomic characteristics, like being the mother of adult sons living in nearby households or living near one's patrilineal kin, translate into concrete advantages in access to labor and other means of production.

Gender in the Ankarana region is cross-cut by multiple social identities and categories of lived experience. Close examination of a specific ethnographic setting reveals that normative description of ethnic, cultural, or gender roles masks the ambiguities present in individual interactions and hides the processes by which certain behavior patterns are established, negotiated, and maintained.

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ABSTRACT

Women living on the west side of the Ankarana massif in northern Madagascar do not all have the same means of accessing and managing the resources of their local environments. Women are differentiated according to age, marital status, number of children, length of residence in the local area, local kin relations and amount of cattle and land owned. This article examines various women's approaches to decision-making and subsistence through case studies which suggest political and economic implications of different social positions for women in this region. Normative description of ethnic, cultural, or gender roles masks the ambiguities present in individual interactions and hides the processes by which certain behavior patterns are established, negotiated, and maintained.

RESUME

Les femmes qui habitent le côté occidental du massif Ankarana du nord malgache n'ont pas les mêmes moyens pour accéder aux ressources de leur environnement et pour les gérer. Les femmes sont différenciées par l'âge, le statut marital, le nombre d'enfants, la durée de résidence dans la région, les réseaux locaux de parenté, et la possession (ou non) des boeufs et de la terre. Cet article analyse les manières par lesquelles une variété de femmes prennent des décisions et assurent la subsitance à travers les cas d'études qui soulèvent des implications politiques et économiques pour les statuts sociaux des femmes dans cette région. Des decriptions normatives des rôles ethniques, culturels ou de genre masquent les amibiguités qui entrent en jeu dans les interactions personnelles et cachent les processus par lesquels certains modes de comportements sont établis, négociés et maintenus.

FAMINTINANA

Tsy mitovy ny enti-manana eo am-pelatanan'ireo vehivavy monina amin'ny faritra andrefan'Ankarana, ao avaratry Madagasikara, mba ahafahan'izy ireo mampiasa sy mandrindra ny zava-misy eo amin'ny tontolo manodidina azy. Avahana arakaraky ny taonany, ny maha-mpitovo na maha-vady azy, ny isan-janany, ny haelan'ny fotoana nipetrahany tao amin'ny toerana misy azy, ny fihavanany amin'ny olona eo an-toerana, ny isan'ny omby na ny haben'ny velaran-tany hananany, ny vehivavy. Manadihady ireo fomba isan-karazany entin'ireo vehivavy ao an-toerana mandray fanapahan-kevitra na mamelo-tena ity lahatsoratra ity. Ireo ohatra samihafa nohadihadiana dia mampiseho fa misy fiantraikany amin'ny lafiny politika, ekonomika ho an'ireo vehivavy arakaraka ny toerana samihafa hananany. Ny famaritana ny foko, ny kolon-tsaina, ny andraikitry ny lehilahy sy ny vehivavy araka ny fiheveran'ny olona azy, dia manakona ny tena zava-misy eo amin'ny fifandraisan'ny tsirairay isam-batan'olona, ary manafina ihany koa ny fomba fametrahana, niadiana hevitra ary nitazonana ireo fihetsika sy fitondrantena eo amin'ny fiarahamonina.