

RANAVALONA I AND THE MISSIONARIES 1828-1840

by

Mervyn BROWN

Most histories of Madagascar present the accession of Ranavalona I as marking a sharp reversal in the progress of Christianity in Madagascar. They tend to make a clear contrast between the attitude of Radama I, who welcomed and encouraged the missionaries and the anti-Christian Ranavalona I who threw them out. Even those who acknowledge that the missionaries stayed on for a number of years after 1828 imply that restrictions of increasing severity were applied to their work, culminating in 1835 in the banning of Christian practices and the «expulsion» of the missionaries.

In reality, the fortunes of the missionaries fluctuated widely between 1828 and 1835, and at one period they enjoyed greater freedom to propagate Christian beliefs than at any time during Radama's reign. It would be misleading to say that the missionaries were expelled in 1835. Those who left did so of their own free will and two stayed on for a further year ; moreover two other missionaries subsequently returned to Antananarivo, one for a two-year stay and one for a brief visit before they finally left in 1840.

This paper aims to give an account of events affecting the missionaries between 1828 and 1840 ; to compare Ranavalona's attitude to the missionaries with that of her predecessor ; and to suggest some reasons for the changes in Ranavalona's attitude during the period in question. But first it is necessary to look briefly at the progress of the missionaries' work under the previous reign.

THE L.M.S. MISSION UNDER RADAMA I

At the time of Radam's death, the L.M.S. Mission consisted of four missionaries, Jones, Griffiths, Johns and Freeman, and three artisans, Chick, Canham

and Cameron *. David Jones, sole survivor of the tragic attempt to install a mission at Tamatave in 1818, arrived at Antananarivo, along with the British Agent James Hastie, in October 1820. David Griffiths followed in 1821, David Johns ** in 1826 and Joseph Freeman in 1827. George Chick a blacksmith and John Canham a tanner came out in 1822. The versatile James Cameron, engaged as a carpenter, arrived in 1826. A leather currier, Kitching, came in 1827 to work with Canham ; and a printer, Edward Baker, was to arrive in the capital a few weeks after Radama's death.

This small group of dedicated men had, within a period of less than eight years, already achieved remarkable results. Their work can be summarised under four headings – educational, artisanal, linguistic and religious.

Perhaps the greatest success had been achieved in the field of education. The schools established by Jones and Griffiths at first had difficulty in attracting pupils, partly because initially they had to teach in English and partly because of fears by parents that their children were being taken away to some new form of slavery or forced labour (*fanompoana*). But in 1824 the situation dramatically improved as the missionaries were able to teach in Malagasy and prepare texts in Malagasy. The use of senior pupils to teach the younger ones in accordance with the Lancastrian method enabled many new schools to be opened in surrounding villages, and by September 1824 some 2,000 children were being taught every day (1). The separate missionary schools in the capital were combined into one Central School which became to some extent a Teacher's Training College turning out teachers for the village schools. At the time of the death of Radama there were 37 schools with 44 Malagasy teachers and 2,309 pupils (2). By then some 5,000 people had passed through the schools and could read and write.

The work of the artisans had fared less well, partly because of the high mortality rate. The carpenter Brooks who came out in 1822 and the printer Hovenden who arrived with the printing press in 1826 both died within a few weeks of their arrival. The weaver Rowlands (1822) was never able to compete with cheap imported cotton and turned to teaching several years before his death in 1828. The spinner Cummins who brought a spinning machine in 1826 was also a commercial failure and returned home in 1828. The tanner

* One missionary, Jeffreys, and three artisans had died in Madagascar between 1822 and 1828.

** His real name was Jones, but he adopted the spelling Johns to avoid confusion with the older David Jones. The Malagasy distinguished the two by their physical appearance : Jones was *Jonja lava* (long Jones) and Johns was *Jonja fohy* (short Jones).

(1) Letter from D. Griffiths, 23 September 1824. L.M.S. Archives Inward Letters, Box 2, Folder 1, Jacket C.

(2) Second Report of the Madagascar Mission School Society, 1828.

Canham also encountered difficulties at first but by 1825 he was able to make an agreement with Radama for the setting up of a tannery and a shoe factory. The blacksmith George Chick was able to build on existing knowledge of iron-working and was successful in training hundreds of apprentices in more elaborate techniques. Cameron was also successful from the start. In addition to teaching his own trade of carpenter, he was able to introduce brick-making and the use of stone in building. He also managed to set up and operate the printing-press so that a number of books and leaflets had already been printed by the time the new printer, Baker, arrived (3).

The printing-press was essential not only for promoting literacy but also for the missionaries' hopes of converting the population to Christianity. Their first priority was the translation of the Bible into Malagasy. Already by 1826 when the press arrived Jones and Griffiths, assisted by twelve of the best Malagasy scholars, had completed a translation of the New Testament and parts of the Old. By the death of Radama the translation of the Old Testament was virtually completed and a beginning had been made of printing individual Gospels (4). Good progress had also been made in the preparation of an English-Malagasy dictionary.

These various activities, however worthwhile and rewarding, were for the missionaries subordinate to their main purpose of spreading the Gospel and converting the «heathen». Here they had less cause for satisfaction. Radama, who actively supported and encouraged their efforts in the schools and workshops, showed little interest in the religious side of their work and gave the impression that he accepted it reluctantly as the price to be paid for their other civilising activities. It was not that Radama was firmly attached to ancestral beliefs and traditions. He told David Jones (5) that he did not believe in the «superstitions and fooleries» of his people but that he conformed because they were the customs of the country of which he was king. But he was equally unenthusiastic about the new religion. He could not accept that there was any power higher than his own (6) ; and the moral teachings of the missionaries were in direct opposition to the uninhibited debauchery which characterised his private life and contributed to his early death (7).

(3) For a useful summary of the early artisan activity, see Cameron's «Recollections of Missionary Life in Madagascar during the early days of the L.M.S.» pp. 6-7.

(4) See W.E. Cousins, *The translation of the Malagasy Bible*. Antananarivo, 1873.

(5) Letter from D. Jones, 3 may 1821. L.M.S. Inward Letters, Box 1, Folder 2, Jacket C. See also the *Journal of A. Coppalle*, 21 october 1825.

(6) Letter from D. Griffiths, 20 december 1825. L.M.S. Box 2, Folder 2, Jacket D.

(7) Ibid. See also the *Journal of A. Coppalle*, entries for 29 october and 5 november 1825.



Nevertheless Radama tolerated religious instruction in the schools and permitted the holding of public religious services on Sundays. He also acquiesced in the missionaries' efforts to secure the observance of the Sabbath, and contributed to the extent of ordering his orchestra to play no music other than «God Save the King» on Sundays (8). The religious services, held in the chapel attached to Griffiths' house at Andohalo, at first attracted little interest. But the year 1824 again saw a dramatic change as the missionaries began to hold the services and preach in the language of the country and to compose Malagasy hymns (9). The Malagasy love of music and of *kabary* undoubtedly helped to swell the congregations which soon overflowed the chapel building (10). However, enthusiasm waned when the missionaries tried to relate their teachings to the private lives of their «hearers» ; the Seventh Commandment in particular encountered opposition, indeed incomprehension (11). Without the positive encouragement which Radama gave to the schools, attendance at the chapel services in due course declined. After the death in 1826 of James Hastie, who had exercised such a strong influence over Radama in favour of the British alliance, the missionaries felt their position less secure ; and in October 1827 we find David Jones worried about the possibility of the missionaries being expelled from the country (12).

Radama was thus far from being an ideal monarch from the point of view of the missionaries. But they recognised that without his support and authority they would have been able to achieve very little. Radama's serious decline in health in 1828 was accordingly viewed by them with apprehension since there was a serious possibility that his death would be followed by a reversal of his «civilising» policies. At the same time they nourished hopes of better times to come since it was believed that Radama had nominated his nephew Rakotobe to succeed him (13). The son of Radama's sister and of Prince Ratefy, who had visited England in 1821 with the first group of Malagasy youths to study there, Rakotobe had been one of David Jones' first pupils at the Palace school. He could have been expected to continue Radama's general policies and to be more favourable to the Christian religion. But on Radama's death, traditionalist officers of the Court moved swiftly to exclude Rakotobe and to proclaim the

(8) Letter from D. Jones, 21 april 1824. L.M.S., Box 2, Folder 1, Jacket A.

(9) Ibid.

(10) Letter from D. Griffiths, 17 june 1824. L.M.S., Box 2, Folder 1, Jacket B.

(11) Letter from D. Griffiths, 4 november 1824. L.M.S., Box 2, Folder 1, Jacket C.

(12) Letter from D. Jones to A. F-E. Viret, Private Secretary to the Governor of Mauritius, 4 october 1827. French translation by J. Valette in *Bulletin de Madagascar* N° 271, december 1828, p. 1127.

(13) Letter from Prince Ratefy to Sir Charles Colville, Governor of Mauritius, quoted in Ellis, *History of Madagascar*, Vol. II, pp. 407-409.

succession of Radama's principal wife Ramavo, a supporter of ancestral beliefs and practices, as Queen Ranavalona. Rakotobe, Ratefy and other close relatives of Radama were put to death, and the missionaries had good reasons for fearing the worst.

THE L.M.S. MISSION 1828-1836

Shortly after her accession Queen Ranavalona sent a comforting message to the missionaries and other Europeans in the capital, assuring them of her protection and stating that she would continue Radama's policies (14). The closing of the schools and the prohibition of religious services and singing during the Court mourning for Radama did not necessarily imply anti-foreign feeling; and Court mourning was also a plausible justification for the Queen's refusal to receive Mr Bennet from L.M.S. headquarters who was on a visit of inspection at the time of Radama's death (together with the Rev. D. Tyerman, who died a few days after Radama). However the treatment accorded to Dr. Robert Lyall, the new British Agent whose arrival was unfortunately timed on August 1, the day Radama's death was made public, seemed to indicate a fundamental change of policy. At first the refusal to accept his credentials could be attributed to Court mourning. But a message from the Queen on 28 November 1828, which in effect denounced the Anglo-Merina treaty of 1820, made it clear that no British Agent would be accepted (15). On 25 March 1829 Lyall was expelled from Antananarivo by the guardians of the idol Ramahavaly brandishing serpents, on the pretext that he had ridden a horse too close to the village of Ambohimambola, home of the idol Rakelimalaza. Opinions differed in the missionary community as to whether Lyall was really at fault (16). But it is most probable that the true motives for the expulsion were political and that the episode of the horse was merely a convenient excuse (17).

At the same time the missionaries and artisans were told not to be alarmed at Lyall's expulsion but to continue their work without fear (18). Previously they had been encouraged by permission to reopen the Central School at the end of December 1828, well before the end of official mourning, although the prohibition of public worship and singing was maintained (19). A request by

(14) Ellis, *History of Madagascar*, Vol. II, p. 416.

(15) *Le Journal de Robert Lyall*, p. 132.

(16) Letters from D. Jones, 25 march 1829 and D. Johns, 28 march 1829 (L.M.S., Box 3, Folder 1, Jacket C) are critical of Lyall but French supported him (letter to Lyall of 27 march 1829 in *Le Journal de Robert Lyall*, p. 203).

(17) Letter from Lyall to Governor of Mauritius, 31 march 1829. *Le Journal de Robert Lyall*, pp. 173-174.

(18) *Le Journal de Robert Lyall*, p. 207.

(19) Letter from J.J. Freeman, 9 february 1829, L.M.S., Box 3, Folder 1, Jacket A.

the missionaries for permission to preach received an evasive answer (20) ; but permission was given shortly afterwards to resume moral and religious instruction in the schools, to the great joy of the missionaries (21). Henceforward the missionaries had to endure frequent changes of government policy towards them, evidence either of a feminine capriciousness on the part of the Queen, or of conflicting views among her advisers.

At the beginning of 1829, the missionaries sent to the Queen a number of Gospels, catechisms and other books, which she accepted with thanks. Copies of the same books were then distributed to army officers and senior pupils at the schools. A week later the books given to the Queen and the officers were all returned with the explanation that they had no time to read them ; but the same message permitted schoolchildren to receive books and learn to read (22). However a few weeks later a message concerning the opening of village schools ordered that only books could be distributed free of charge, and that items such as slates, paper and pens should be paid for – a serious blow as most parents were too poor to buy them (23). It also ordered that no payment, either in money or in kind, should be made to the Malagasy teachers in these schools, who had previously received a small salary from the Madagascar Missionary School Society, set up in 1825 and financed by subscriptions from local Europeans and contributions from England (24). Whatever the motives for this latter interdiction (Freeman (25) suggested that it was jealousy on the part of army officers who received no pay, plus nationalistic dislike of Malagasy received pay from a foreign source) the effect was to deal a further serious blow to the prospects for education.

For these reasons, and because of the lack of any positive encouragement from the Queen, the schools soon showed signs of neglect. In July 1829 the Queen visited the school at Ambohimanga and, finding the school-house in ruins she ordered the people of the town to repair it «as she would not that they should make her less than Radama, but that she was desirous to do more than he did». She also ordered her ministers to repair all the school-houses in Imerina (26). But her orders do not seem to have been carried out. Towards the end of the year David Jones was reporting that the schools were falling in ruins through negligence and also through lack of teachers, since teachers and

(20) *Le Journal de Robert Lyall*, p. 147 (entry for 29 december 1828).

(21) *Le Journal de Robert Lyall*, p. 154 (entry for 11 january 1829).

(22) *Ibid.*

(23) *Le Journal de Robert Lyall*, p. 171 (entry for 2 february 1829).

(24) The setting up of the Madagascar Missionary School Society is reported in a letter of 14 november 1825, L.M.S., Box 2, Folder 2, Jacket C.

(25) Letter from J.J. Freeman, 9 february 1829, L.M.S. Box 3, Folder 1, Jacket A.

(26) Letter from D. Jones, 29 july 1829, L.M.S., Box 3, Folder 2, Jacket A.

senior pupils had been drafted into the Army (27). Freeman had become so discouraged by the poor prospects for the Mission (and also by the threat of a French attack on the East coast) that he left Madagascar in September 1829 (28).

However other developments in 1829 favoured the prospects for the Mission, at least in the short term. The end of Court mourning on 27 May permitted the resumption of public religious services. About the same time the position of the artisans, which had been uncertain following the expiry of previous contracts, greatly improved owing to the ingenuity of Cameron. When a message from the Queen asked whether the missionaries could not teach «something more useful» such as the making of soap, Cameron produced within a week some «tolerably good and white soap» made entirely from local materials. The Queen and Court were delighted and in due course contracts were signed with Cameron and Chick for the manufacture of soap, sulphur and saltpetre and the construction of various machinery and apparatus (29). The latter included a hydraulic wheel to bring water to Lake Anosy via a canal, and a powder-mill on the edge of the lake for the manufacture of gunpowder (30). This was particularly valuable to the Government because of the double military threat from Sakalava rebellion in the West and French aggression on the East coast.

The French attack on Tamatave on 10 October 1829 was viewed with alarm by the missionaries who feared an outburst of xenophobia, and wrote to the Queen asking her to make it known publicly that they were not French (31). In fact the hostility of the French seems to have been an important factor in inducing the Government to adopt a more friendly attitude to the British, to the great benefit of the missionaries. From around the end of 1829 their situation began to improve. In February 1830 children who had left school without permission were ordered by the Government to return (32). In June, a letter reporting the departure of the pioneer David Jones for health reasons stated that although the Queen gave no active support to the missionaries, they had an abundance of work and liberty to teach, preach and print and to distribute testaments for which there was a great demand (33). The atmos-

(27) D. Jones to F-E. Viret, 2 december 1829. Port Louis, Archives, Vol. 391.

(28) Letter from J.J. Freeman (from Mauritius) to L.M.S., 10 december 1829, L.M.S., Box 3, Folder 2, Jacket C.

(29) Cameron, *Recollections of Mission Life in Madagascar*. The signing of the contracts is reported in a letter from D. Jones of 24 july 1829, L.M.S., Box 3, Folder 2, Jacket A.

(30) The manufacture of gunpowder was entrusted to «Verkey» (Ravarika) who had been instructed in this art in England.

(31) *Le Journal de Robert Lyall*, p. 236 (entry for 26 december 1829).

(32) Letter from D. Johns, 19 february 1830, L.M.S., Box 3, Folder 3, Jacket A.

(33) Letter from D. Griffiths and D. Johns, 28 june 1830, L.M.S., Box 3, Folder 3, Jacket C.

phere continued to improve and towards the end of the year the Queen gave permission for the opening of several new schools (34) (one for the small boys attached as suite to her infant son born on 23 September 1829) and for the building of a new chapel at Ambatonakanga. The new chapel was badly needed partly because the existing chapel attached to Griffiths' house was regarded by Griffiths as his own property and he was reluctant to allow the other missionaries to preach there. But the main reason was that the existing chapel was now inadequate for the large numbers of Malagasy who came to the Sunday services (35).

French troops had meanwhile withdrawn from the East coast in November 1830. But the mission's activities continued to flourish. In May 1831 it was reported that the schools were more frequented than ever, with 3,000 pupils recently enrolled, including 300 boys of the suite of Prince Rakoto, and that the Queen had authorised attendance at church and school by soldiers of the army (36). More important from the missionaries' point of view, in the same month the Queen authorised Malagasy to partake in the Christian sacraments of baptism, communion and marriage (37), thus going beyond what Radama had permitted (38). Within a few weeks Griffiths had baptised thirty Malagasy in his chapel at Andohalo and Johns eight more at the new chapel at Ambatonakanga which opened for services in June (39). This encouraging news induced Freeman to return in September, bringing a new missionary Theophilus Atkinson, and his wife. He reported that the position had improved so much since his departure a year previously that he could hardly believe his senses. Attendance at church services was large and voluntary ; many Malagasy were becoming baptised and confirmed and some were beginning to hold prayer meetings in each other's houses (40). Unfortunately the schools were dwindling away through lack of pupils. But in other respects education was developing, resulting in a great demand for books which could not be met. Many pupils were teaching each other ; and although there were many fewer children in the

(34) Letter from D. Griffiths, 29 november 1830, L.M.S., Box 3, Folder 4, Jacket B.

(35) Letter from D. Johns, 4 december 1830, L.M.S., Box 3, Folder 4, Jacket C.

(36) Letter from C. Telfair to F.E. Viret, received 28 may 1831, Port Louis, Archives, Vol. 391.

(37) Letter from E. Baker, 27 june 1831, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 1, Jacket A.

(38) According to Ellis (*History of Madagascar*, Vol. II, p. 390) in 1828 Radama gave permission for Malagasy who so wished to be baptised and married. But, apart from one marriage, no advantage seems to have been taken of this permission ; and Radama did not authorise Malagasy to take part in communion.

(39) Letter from E. Baker already cited (note 37) and letter from D. Johns, 15 july 1831, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 1, Jacket B.

(40) Letter from J.J. Freeman, 12 october 1831, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 1, Jacket C.

schools there were many more adults seeking useful knowledge than at any previous period (41).

This Indian summer of missionary activity did not however last long. The rapid progress of the Church as measured by baptisms and confirmations alarmed what the missionaries called the idolatrous party of Court, led apparently by Rainiharo. He could not actively oppose practices authorised by the Queen, but in November 1831 he issued a secret order to all soldiers and scholars forbidding them to be baptised or take part in communion (42). Shortly afterwards, in the middle of December 1831 the Queen's permission for the sacraments was withdrawn ; there were to be no more baptisms and all Malagasy were forbidden to take part in Holy Communion (43). By then approximately 100 Malagasy had been confirmed and many more were coming forwards as candidates (44). It would appear that the «idolatrous party» had persuaded the Queen that those partaking in Communion formed a kind of secret society owing allegiance to a foreign power (45). But, rather surprisingly, there was no prohibition on Malagasy attending ordinary church services. The two chapels continued to be well attended and prayer meetings in private houses were kept up with zeal (46).

There were, however, other indications that the Malagasy Government wished to see the missionary activity gradually reduce and disappear by the process of natural wastage. When David Jones left Antananarivo he had been the object of flattering attention from the Court (47) and had been given a letter from the Queen commending his work and saying he could return whenever he wished. But when a letter from the Governor of Mauritius to the Queen expressed the hope that Jones would be able to return soon, she replied that there was no need for him to return because the children he taught were perfect in reading and writing (48). Raombana claimed, perhaps with hindsight,

(41) J.J. Freeman to Sir Charles Colville, 15 october 1831, Port Louis, Archives, Vol. 391.

(42) Letter from D. Griffiths and E. Baker, 2 december 1831, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 1, Jacket C. The person responsible is described as «the present chief officer R**» but other contemporary evidence, notably Raombana, indicates that by the end of 1831 Rainiharo held this position. However it is possible that the missionaries had in mind his brother Rainimaharo (Ratsimanisa), described by Lovett as «the chief enemy of Christianity».

(43) J.J. Freeman to Sir Charles Colville, 17 december 1831, Port Louis Archives, Vol. 391.

(44) Letter from J.J. Freeman, 11 february 1832, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 2, Jacket B.

(45) See letter from J. Cameron, 11 april 1832, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 2, Jacket C.

(46) Letter from D. Griffiths, 26 march 1832, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 2, Jacket B.

(47) *Le Journal de Robert Lyall*, p. 230 (entry for 24 july 1830).

(48) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 5, pp. 591 and 596-597.

that it was at this moment that the idea struck him that the Queen would at some time abolish the teaching of Christianity and drive away the missionaries (49). The aim was to be achieved by accepting no more missionaries and by applying the rule instituted by Radama that foreigners could stay only ten years in Imerina. The Queen was accordingly angry when Atkinson arrived, apparently without permission (50). He was ordered to return home after less than a year, on the grounds that he could teach only «*taratasy*» (i.e. school subjects) and not any new craft (51).

As Jones had already left (after less than ten years) the first missionary to be affected by the ten-year rule was Griffiths, who arrived in 1821. Most other members of the Mission were looking forward to his departure, since he appears to have become arrogant and egoistic, especially after the departure of Jones had left him as the senior missionary. However he was popular among the Malagasy and had friends at Court who were his former pupils ; and in January 1832 a letter from the Queen praised his work and authorised him to stay another year (52). Other missionaries wrote to their London headquarters to complain of Griffiths' «*treachery and falsehood*» (53) and to recommend his withdrawal (54). The L.M.S. headquarters accordingly ordered Griffiths to leave (55). But again his friends at Court rallied round (they included Rahaniraka and Raombana, who wrote to the L.M.S. in his support). The Queen sent a further letter praising his work and intimated that she wished him to stay (56). With this backing, Griffiths decided to stay on ; and he continued to defy the L.M.S.'s wishes over the next two years despite a letter from the Directors of the L.M.S. to the Queen (57), and a threat to withdraw financial support (58). When the L.M.S. finally cut off his salary, in September 1834, he

(49) *Ibid.*, p. 597.

(50) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 6, pp. 860-862.

(51) Letter from T. Atkinson, 18 june 1832, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 2, Jacket D.

(52) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 6, pp. 862-866. See also letter from Rahaniraka and Raombana (them known as Rafaralahy) to W. Alers Hankey. L.M.S., 12 june 1832, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 2, Jacket A.

(53) Letter from J.J. Freeman, 6 april 1832, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 2, Jacket B.

(54) Letter from J. Cameron, 11 april 1832, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 2, Jacket C.

(55) Letter from D. Griffiths, 20 june 1832, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 2, Jacket D.

(56) Letters from Rahaniraka and Raombana to Rev. J. Arundel, L.M.S. of 21 june 1832 (Box 4, Folder 2, Jacket D) and 14 august 1832 (Box 4, Folder 3, Jacket A).

(57) Letter from J.J. Freeman, 9 december 1833, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 4, Jacket C.

(58) Letters from D. Griffiths, 26 february and 28 march 1834, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 1, Jacket A.

nonetheless stayed on to continue his missionary work, hoping to support himself by trade (59).

Meanwhile Canham the tanner had completed his ten years in 1832. His contract with the Malagasy Government had previously expired but he had obtained permission from the L.M.S. to stay on as a teaching missionary (60). He does not seem to have been asked to leave in 1832 ; and when in 1833 he asked permission to stay he was authorised to stay another year (61). However a request for a further extension was refused and he left in the middle of 1834 (62). Although Chick the blacksmith had arrived at the same time as Canham, the question of his departure at the end of ten years does not seem to have arisen, presumably because he was too useful and he was still engaged, along with Cameron, on Government contracts.

Meanwhile, despite the bickering between Griffiths and the rest (except for the printer Baker who tended to take Griffiths' side) the work of the Mission in all its aspects continued in a reasonably satisfactory manner. Already by the end of 1831 Cameron and Chick were employing over 600 workers on different projects, including the construction of Lake Anosy and the manufacture of soap, sulphur and nitre at their workshops at Analakely (63). A few months later Cameron was reporting that some 20 tons of soap had been produced and the importation of soap had been stopped (64). The printing press directed by Baker, with the help of Kitching and a number of Malagasy apprentices, had continued to operate without interruption. After the printing of separate gospels, the complete New Testament had been printed early in 1830. Over the next five years the printing of the Old Testament was almost completed (66), and good progress was made with the printing of an English-Malagasy dictionary. Numerous tracts, catechisms, hymn books and school books were also published, and in 1833 the number of books of all kinds printed amounted to 15,000 (67).

(59) Minutes of meeting of the Antananarivo Mission, 15 september 1834. L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 1, Jacket D. According to Raombana (*Annals*, Book 6, p. 1084) Griffiths' Malagasy friends collected money and rice to support him.

(60) Letter from J. Canham, 24 january 1832, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 2, Jacket A.

(61) Letter from J. Canham, 20 july 1833, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 4, Jacket B.

(62) Letter from J. Canham, 1 june 1834, L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 1, Jacket C. (Raombana states incorrectly that Canham had to leave after ten years — *Annals* Book 6, p. 982).

(63) J.J. Freeman to Sir Charles Colville, 15 october 1831, Port Louis, Archives, Vol. 391.

(64) Letter from J. Cameron, 11 april 1832, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 2, Jacket C.

(65) Yearly review by Freeman, Johns and Canham, 28 may 1833, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 4, Jacket B.

(66) W.E. Cousins — The translation of the Malagasy bible.

(67) Ellis, *History of Madagascar*, Vol. II, p. 470.

The fortunes of the schools continued to fluctuate, usually in relation to the Army's recruiting needs. In August 1832 the Queen gave orders to replace all the pupils taken from the schools, estimated at nearly 5,000 (68). (Not surprisingly, parents were reluctant to send their children to school when it seemed to be a mere prelude to army service, and some took to sending slaves instead of their children to make up the numbers ; this was probably the reason for an order of September 1832 forbidding the teaching of slaves) (69). Two months later however the Queen's orders had not been complied with, as the Government's first priority was still to swell the army to face the continuing French threat. Indeed the schools were stripped of all boys over the age of 13, whether pupils or teachers, the only exceptions being the twelve scholars collaborating on the translation of the Bible and the apprentice printers (70). In response to a plea by parents that they were losing too many children, the order to fill the schools to the level fixed by Radama was amended so that only half the numbers had to be supplied (71). With the drafting of the older boys, many schools had a preponderance of girls (and perhaps parents tended to fill their quota as far as possible with girls who would not be called up into the army). To correct this the Government ordered that two-thirds of the places at the schools should be filled by boys (72). By the autumn of 1834 the French threat had receded and the Queen once again ordered the schools to be filled to the level fixed by Radama (73). In consequence, there were in the early part of 1835 more schools operating and more pupils attending them than at any previous time — 100 schools and 4,000 pupils compared with, for example, 60 schools and less than 2,500 pupils in 1832 (74).

In the field of evangelisation, the prohibition of the sacraments seems to have been the only impediment. Religious instruction was an important feature of the school curricula, and the missionaries were permitted to preach in the villages as well as hold services in the two chapels in the capital. Christians called up into the Army were permitted to hold religious assemblies among

(68) Letter from J.J. Freeman, 20 august 1832, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 3, Jacket B.

(69) Letter from J.J. Freeman, 23 september 1832, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 3, Jacket B.

(70) Letter from D. Griffiths, 25 october 1832, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 3, Jacket B.

(71) J.J. Freeman to Sir Charles Colville (undated, but probably early 1833). Port Louis, Archives Madagascar 9 F, Doc. N^o7.

(72) Biannual report by J.J. Freeman, 30 june 1834, L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 1, Jacket C.

(73) Biannual report by L.M.S. Mission, 6 november 1834, L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 1, Jacket D.

(74) G.S. Chapus, *Quatre-Vingts Années d'influences européennes en Imerina*, p. 129.

themselves and many did so (75). The congregations in the chapels continued to grow and Freeman noted that whereas in the time of Radama they consisted mainly of schoolchildren ordered to attend by the King, now they were nearly all adults attending voluntarily (76). In 1834 the chapel at Ambatonakanga became so crowded that a gallery was constructed to increase its capacity. Private prayer meetings were continuing ; village preaching was making good progress ; and worship was being carried on by ex-scholars in many distant parts of the country (77).

It was inevitable that the success of the missionaries would bring about a reaction from the «idolatrous party» which was increasingly dominant at Court. An essential part of the Christian teaching was opposition to the worship of «graven images», and followers of the missionaries began openly to express their contempt for the idols. Particularly disturbing to the traditionalists was the way in which idolkeepers themselves were turning to the new religion : Raombana estimated that one-third of them actually attended church services (78). The head-keeper of the chief idol Ramahavaly even offered the idol to Griffiths to send to England and said he would put «another piece of wood» in its place (79). One of the very first Malagasy to be baptised was Rainitsiheva, a wellknown *mpisikidy* who took the name Paul and became known to the missionaries as «Paul the diviner». The most notorious case was that of Rainitsiandavana, an idol-keeper who began preaching his own version of the Christian message, to the effect that Christ would return, that slavery would be abolished along with war and work, that all men would be free, etc. When questions from the Queen's officers elicited his view that this would make a Mozambique slave the equal of the Queen (80), he had his chief disciples were immediately put to death by being placed head down in a pit and having boiling water poured over them.

This episode increased the Queen's suspicions of Christianity ; and the traditionalists, led by Rainiharo, Rainimaharo and Rainijohary, ensured that she was informed of various reports concerning the Christians' contempt for the idols. One such report involved a sister of Rainiharo who expressed scorn for

(75) Letter from J.J. Freeman, 20 august 1832, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 3, Jacket A.

(76) Letter from J.J. Freeman, 26 november 1833, L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 4, Jacket C.

(77) Biannual report of L.M.S. Mission, 6 november 1834. See note 72 above. According to Raombana (*Annals*, Book 7, pp. 146-149), prayer meetings were held in up to 30 private houses every week.

(78) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 7, pp. 155-156.

(79) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 7, pp. 142-145.

(80) This is the version in Lovett's History of the L.M.S., based on missionary accounts. According to Raombana (*Annals*, Book 7, pp. 156-168) the fanatic was put to death because he offered to raise the dead, including former Kings (who might have claimed the throne back).



the idols and declared that many thousands of Malagasy and even slaves thought as she did. On hearing this « the Queen was so grieved and angry that she wept for about a rice cooking (half an hour) and vowed death against all the Christians» (81). According to Ellis, the decisive incident, which profoundly moved the Queen, was the appearance before her of a chief who asked for a spear to kill himself because of the dishonour done to the people and their customs by foreigners (82).

On 26 February 1835, Rainimaharo conveyed to the missionaries a message from the Queen thanking them for their work in imparting useful knowledge and stating that they were welcome to stay if they had any new crafts or useful knowledge to impart ; but the customs of the ancestors could not be changed and henceforward no Malagasy could take part in any form of Christian worship (83). At a great *kabary* on 1 March, the chief judge read out the Queen's proclamation forbidding Christian practices and ordering a strict adherence to ancestral customs. All printed books were to be handed in. Those who had been baptised, had attended public worship or private prayer meetings, and even those who had voluntarily learned to read, were given one month (later reduced to one week) to come forward and accuse themselves, on pain of death. Under this threat, the great majority of the Christian came forward to confess and recant. Those with «honours», numbering about 400, were downgraded, losing half their honours ; the remainder, about 2,000, had to pay a small fine (84).

The missionaries were not ordered to leave, and were permitted to continue teaching secular subjects, mainly arithmetic, reading and writing. But with no prospect of Christian teaching, most of them decided to leave in the middle of the year. As regards the artisans, their contracts with the Government were almost completed and Chick, whose health was not good, was already planning to leave for South Africa (85) ; and Cameron had obtained the Queen's agreement that he should leave for England in 1835, taking two Malagasy apprentices for further training, and return in due course if the Queen wished him to continue his work (86). In the new situation the Government proposed that

(81) Letter from E. Baker, 17 march 1835, L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 2, Jacket A.

(82) Ellis, *History of Madagascar*, Vol. II, p. 491.

(83) An English translation of the message is in L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 2, Jacket A.

(84) Letter from J.J. Freeman, 10 march 1835, L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 2, Jacket A. See also Raombana (*Annals*, Book 7, pp. 215-220) who states that all Christian officers, irrespective of rank, were reduced to three honours (sergeant).

(85) Letter from G. Chické 22 september 1834, L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 1, Jacket D.

(86) Letter from J. Cameron, 3 october 1834, L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 1, Jacket D.

Cameron should stay on to continue and develop his manufacturing industry ; but he refused to stay unless Christian teaching were resumed (the Queen just laughed at this idea, according to Raombana) (87). Griffiths, whose trading had not prospered, also decided to leave as he could not support himself (88).

Accordingly Freeman, Cameron, Chick and Kitching left in June 1835, with Griffiths following two months later. Between March and June a great effort was made on the printing. As the Malagasy apprentices had been withdrawn, Baker had to set the type, with Kitching operating the press. By June the printing of the Bible was finished and complete bound volumes produced ; together with the first volume (English-Malagasy) of a dictionary which had been prepared mainly by Freeman. After the departure of the main body, Johns and Baker stayed on another year in order to print the second volume (Malagasy-English) of the dictionary which was being prepared by Johns (89) ; and also to maintain contact in the hope that the Queen might change her mind (90).

During this last year, Johns reported a widespread reversion to «superstitious practices» and increasing brutality on the part of the Government : in one week nearly 200 robbers were put to death in the capital (91). However a small number – 40 or 50 – of the Christians risked death by remaining faithful and they maintained clandestine contact with the missionaries. They also met secretly for prayer meetings in the house of Paul the diviner. In the Vonizongo, where Christianity appeared to have taken particularly strong root, prayer meetings were held on isolated hill tops from which the approach of any stranger could be observed (92). While Baker continued with the printing, Johns was limited to improving the English of a dozen senior teachers who were teaching English to about 40 children ; and to preparing a Malagasy grammar at the request of the Queen (93). Johns was also engaged in translating Bunyan's «Pilgrim's Progress», the Malagasy version of which was later published in London. Permission was granted to print a separate edition of the Proverbs of Solomon (presumably because of the relatively secular content) but even the distribution of this was banned when Rainiharo and Rainimaharo

(87) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 7, p. 234.

(88) Letter from J.J. Freeman, 17 may 1835, L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 2, Jacket A.

(89) Letter from J.J. Freeman, 4 june 1835, L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 2, Jacket A.

(90) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 7, pp. 231-233.

(91) Letter from D. Johns, 26 september 1835, L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 2, Jacket C.

(92) Letter from D. Johns, 19 June 1835, L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 2, Jacket B.

(93) Letter from D. Johns, 21 november 1835, L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 2, Jacket C.

were informed, confirming that the Government was opposed to the circulation of any printed books among the people (94).

Once the printing of the second volume of the dictionary was completed, there was little useful work left for Johns and Baker, and the Government indicated that they should leave in the dry season of 1836. One contributory reason may have been the Queen's anger at reports that English ships (in fact American whalers) at the Bay of St-Augustine had protected local Sakalava from assault by Merina troops (95). The two missionaries nevertheless applied for an extension of one year, but this was refused, and they finally left in July 1836. Before departing they had left eight boxes of Bibles with friends for distribution ; they had also left the vestry at Ambatonakanga full of Bibles and other religious books which were subsequently carried away and distributed (96), to be concealed in safe places or to be buried underground.

EPILOGUE 1837-1840

Thus ended nearly sixteen years of continuous missionary activity which despite the final setback, left an indelible imprint on Merina society. But there was a short tragic epilogue which can be briefly told. After the departure of the last missionaries, the Christians were not watched so closely, and more of them plucked up courage to meet privately for prayer and worship (97). The authorities therefore resorted to increasingly severe persecution. In July 1837 a group of the leading Christians, including Paul and the leading woman Christian Rafaravavy were arrested and condemned to perpetual slavery ; and one of their number, a woman called Rasalama who continued openly to proclaim her faith, was executed to become the first Christian Martyr. The following year a man called Rafaralahy was executed for organising prayer meetings. Under flogging his wife revealed the names of his associates who included most of those enslaved the year before. Some including Paul and his wife were arrested and put in irons ; a few including Rafaravavy escaped into the Vonizongo where they were concealed by friends. They eventually managed to establish contact with David Johns who after a brief visit to Tamatave in 1837 returned there again in 1838 to see what he could do to help the Christians (98). Johns was able to organise their escape, with the help of some merchants in Tama-

(94) Letter from D. Johns, 26 march 1836, L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 3, Jacket A.

(95) Letter of 21 november 1835. See note 93 above.

(96) Letter from D. Johns (from Tamatave), 21 july 1837. L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 3, Jacket A.

(97) Ibid.

(98) Letter from Malagasy Christians in Vonizongo to D. Johns in Tamatave, 28 july 1838. Letter from D. Johns in Tamatave to L.M.S., 6 august 1838. L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 3, Jacket B.

tave, and after many adventures ten of them reached Mauritius, of whom six including Rafaravavy sailed to England with Johns at the end of 1838 (99).

Meanwhile around September 1838 the resilient Griffiths had returned to Antananarivo, where he once again occupied his house at Andohalo. Before leaving in 1835 he had proposed to Rainiharo that he should return at some future date with trading goods to sell in the capital, and had offered Rainiharo half the profits without any outlay or risk. Rainiharo had obtained the Queen's permission for him to come back at any time for another stay not exceeding five years. His real object in returning was of course to explore the possibility of the resumption of Christian teaching (100). Inevitably he became involved in helping the persecuted Christians. With the help of the same merchants in Tamatave he organised in May 1840 an escape plan for sixteen Christian prisoners, including Paul the diviner (101). Unfortunately they were betrayed by a guide when within a day's journey of the sea; two managed to escape but the remainder were captured and brought back to the capital in chains (102).

A few days later, on 4 July 1840, the pioneer missionary David Jones turned up in Antananarivo, accompanying Lieutenant Campbell who was bearing various messages from Queen Victoria and the acting Governor of Mauritius. Although they had been kept waiting for more than an week outside the capital they were received with a guard of honour, music and an artillery salute. However the message from Queen Victoria turned out to be merely the notification of her impending marriage to Prince Albert. Campbell's main business was to try to obtain permission for the recruitment of Malagasy labourers for the Mauritian sugar plantations; for the return of missionaries and the accreditation of a British Agent. Campbell appears to have been maladroit in putting forward these requests and they were rejected almost with contempt (103). Jones, who was spied on closely by his guard of honour, was able to achieve nothing, especially as Griffiths had now fallen from favour. Interrogation of the recaptured Christians revealed his role in their escape, which had included the supply of money, blankets and lanterns. The angry Queen accused him of trying to steal her subjects and send them as slaves to Mauritius. He was fined the substantial sum of £ 30 and ordered to leave Madagascar and never return (104).

(99) Letter from D. Jones (sic) in Port Louis, 15 may 1839. L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 3, Jacket C.

(100) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 8, pp. 1323 et seq.

(101) L. Powell in Tamatave to E. Baker in Mauritius, 8 may 1840. L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 3, Jacket C.

(102) D. Griffiths to L. Powell, 27 june 1840. L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 3, Jacket C.

(103) Raombana gives a detailed account of the Campbell mission in *Annals*, Book 10, pp. 104-161.

(104) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 10, pp. 141-142.

Of the captured Christians, five were sentenced to perpetual slavery and the remaining nine, including Paul and his wife, condemned to death. They were carried naked on poles, and their guards deliberately lingered outside Griffiths' house (where the three Britons were staying) on the way to Ambohi-potsy where they were speared to death (105). Griffiths, Jones and Campbell left a few weeks later, at the end of July 1840, leaving the whole missionary enterprise apparently in ruins. Jones died next year in Mauritius having seen the collapse of his life's work ; but Griffiths lived long enough to see the triumphant return of Christianity to Madagascar over twenty years later.

THE ATTITUDES OF RADAMA AND RANAVALONA COMPARED

This brief survey of missionary activity under Ranavalona shows that, contrary to general belief, there was a substantial degree of continuity in Government policy towards the missionaries after the death of Radama ; and that most the worthwhile achievements of these early missionaries were registered not under Radama but during the first years of Ranavalona's reign. This was certainly true of the artisans' work. Owing partly to the high mortality among the artisans, their work, except for Chick's metalwork, did not get going properly until near the end of Radama's reign. Their major achievements, both in the sphere of public works, notably the construction of Lake Anosy, and in manufacturing industry, belong to the early years of Ranavalona. It was during the same years that they trained the bulk of the apprentice who provided a firm foundation of skilled labour on which Jean Laborde was later able to build.

Ranavalona* appears to have been just as keen on the artisans' work as Radama had been. There may have been a slight difference of emphasis in their motives. Radama appears to have been more concerned with improving the skills of his people while Ranavalona's principal aim was probably to reduce dependence on foreigners for products such as soap and in particular for gunpowder and armaments. Raombana, writing many years later, maintained that the Queen was always determined to get rid of the artisans as well as the missionaries when the time was ripe (106). But there is no contemporary evidence to support this view. There is no reason to doubt the genuineness of the statement in the Queen's message to the missionaries on 26 February 1835 that

(105) Letter from D. Jones, 20 July 1840. L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 1, Jacket C.

* The extent to which Ranavalona decided policy herself or acted on the advice of her ministers is still uncertain and may never be decided. In the ensuing argument the name «Ranavalona» should be taken to mean «Ranavalona and/or her ministers», except where the context clearly indicates a reference to the Queen herself.

(106) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 7, p. 136.

they were welcome to stay if they had any new crafts or useful knowledge to impart. Even Raombana admits that the Queen made «a little effort» to retain Cameron (107), and there seems little doubt that if Cameron had so wished he could have stayed on indefinitely, as Laborde did, to contribute further to the development of manufacturing industry.

The major part of the output of the printing press also belongs to the first years of Ranavalona's reign. The press was of course only installed less than two years before Radama's death, and there was no professional printer to operate it until Baker arrived in September 1828. Whereas Radama welcomed the printing and distribution of books as part of the general educational process, the Queen and her Minister at times showed their suspicions of books, for example when books distributed to army officers were recalled in January 1829. But books were freely distributed in the schools; and until 1835 there was no attempt to interfere with the printing and translation work of the missionaries. Indeed, as we have seen, the printing apprentices and the scholars helping with the translation were specifically exempted from conscription into the army. By 1835 the Government had begun to realise the important role played by printed books in the work of Christian proselytisation; hence the recall of all books and the withdrawal of the printing apprentices at the same time that Christian practices of all kinds were banned. It is however surprising that the missionaries were permitted to continue operating the press themselves and to stay until the printing of the Bible and the Dictionary were completed; and that the Government did not keep a sufficiently close watch on Johns and Baker and their Malagasy friends to prevent the distribution of a substantial number of Bibles and other books at the time of their departure. This would seem to indicate either a continuing ambivalent attitude towards books or a serious underestimation of the power of the printed word.

In the field of education there was a clear difference of attitude between Radama and Ranavalona, but the difference was more one of individual character and temperament than of policy. Radama was passionately interested in education as the principal means of modernising and «civilising» his country; and he was one of the first Malagasy to learn to read and write in the European script. He actively supported the schools and encouraged the pupils by frequent visits and by offering prizes to the best scholars, chosen by an annual examination conducted personally by himself (110). Ranavalona, apart from her traditionalist upbringing, was older than Radama and unreceptive to new

(107) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 7, pp. 233-234.

(108) Letter from D. Jones, 16 december 1833. L.M.S., Box 1, Folder 4, Jacket B.

(109) Letter from D. Jones and D. Griffiths, 14 june 1826. L.M.S., Box 2, Folder 3, Jacket B.

(110) Letter from D. Jones and D. Griffiths, 9 june 1826. L.M.S., Box 2, Folder 3, Jacket A.

ideas. She showed little personal interest in education and appears to have remained illiterate until her death. During her reign therefore the schools frequently languished for lack of Government support. However the Queen did tolerate the existence of the schools. She permitted them to re-open six months before the end of the official mourning for Radama, and from time to time issued orders for the schools to be filled. It is possible that the main motive in filling the schools lay in their convenience as recruiting centres for the army. But it should be remembered that the practice of drafting school teachers and senior pupils into the army (admittedly on a much smaller scale) was started by Radama (111). And in Ranavalona's defence it could be argued that at a time when her kingdom was threatened by Sakalava revolt and French invasion it was right that army recruitment should have priority. Once the dangers had receded orders were given for the schools to be filled again so that in 1835, as we have seen, there were more schools open and more pupils than at any previous time. After the prohibition of Christian teaching on 1 March 1835, the teaching of secular subjects, mainly reading, writing and arithmetic, was still permitted; and during his last year Johns was asked to give English lessons to senior teachers. It thus cannot be said that Ranavalona's Government was opposed to all forms of Western learning. Some elements may have hoped that basic secular education, divorced from Christian teaching, could continue under Malagasy teachers after the departure of the missionaries. But without the missionaries to organise and inspire the teaching and to supply basic educational materials, the schools could not be expected to survive very long.

On the fundamental issue of religious teaching and Christian worship there was also perhaps less difference between the attitudes of Radama and Ranavalona than would appear at first sight. As we have seen, Radama's attitude to Christian teaching was one of reluctant tolerance. He gave no positive encouragement and support to the missionaries' work in this area, whilst the example of his dissolute private life was a serious handicap to their efforts to teach Christian morality. During his reign the missionaries made discouragingly little progress towards their main goal of converting Malagasy to Christianity. If Ranavalona had prohibited Christian teaching at the outset of her reign it is fairly certain that the small Christian plant would have withered and died; there would have been no need for persecution and no martyrs, and the subsequent history of the Church in Madagascar could have been very different. Instead, however, after the period of mourning for Radama, religious services and teaching were resumed. Later, and very surprisingly, permission was granted for the Christian sacraments; and although this permission was withdrawn after only seven months, no other restriction was placed on Christian worship, preaching and teaching until the total prohibition of March 1835. It was during these few years that native Christianity put down sufficiently strong roots to withstand a quarter of a century of increasingly severe persecution.

(111) A letter from D. Jones and D. Griffiths of 30 July 1825 mentions the call-up of several teachers and 50 pupils. L.M.S., Box 2, Folder 2, Jacket B.

Ranavalona's tolerance of Christian worship for such a long period is surprising in view of her strong attachment to traditional beliefs, in contrast to Radama who professed to despise them. Whatever the reasons (discussed in the next section) Ranavalona clearly under-estimated the attractions of the new creed and its threat to traditional beliefs. Once the dangers had been fully realised, the strength of her own traditionalist beliefs ensured the severity of the reaction. One can only speculate as to how Radama's attitude towards Christianity would have developed if he had lived a normal span. He was well aware that the spread of Christian beliefs would profoundly disturb the traditional order of society and way of life. He was also sensitive to public opinion. At times he warned the missionaries that they were being too active and zealous and asked them to proceed more slowly so as not to cause too much offence to traditionalist opinion (112). In an early conversation with Jones he envisaged that it would twenty years to enlighten his people and wean them away from «superstitious practices» (113). It is likely therefore that he would have kept a tight rein on the missionaries' proselytising activities, and he might not have allowed them to develop as rapidly as they did in the early years of Ranavalona' reign. On the other hand, the logical result of his policies would have been the gradual Christianisation of the country as part of the general educational process ; and if he had lived it is reasonable to suppose that the country would have been spared the horrors of the anti-Christian persecutions.

As regards the departure of the missionaries, the account given above makes it clear that the use of the word «expulsion» is inappropriate. The «ten-year rule» which governed their departure was instituted by Radama (apparently at the instigation of Robin, who aroused Radama's fears that if the English were allowed to stay indefinitely they might take over the country as they had done in India) (114). And the rule was applied very liberally by Ranavalona, as is shown by the following list of departure during her reign :

- Jones* Left voluntarily for health reasons in 1830 after just less than ten years.
- Canham* Left in 1834 after twelve years having failed to obtain a further extension.
- Chick* Left voluntarily (health reasons and end of contract) in 1835 after thirteen years.
- Cameron* Left voluntarily in 1835 after nine years, having refused a Government request to stay on.
- Freeman* Left voluntarily in 1835 after a total residence of six years.

(112) Ellis, *History of Madagascar*, Vol. II, p. 356.

(113) Letter from D. Jones, 3 may 1821. L.M.S., Box 1, Folder 2, Jacket C.

(114) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 6, pp. 857-860.

Griffiths Left voluntarily in 1835 after fourteen years, and subsequently was allowed to return.

Johns Left in 1836 after ten years having been refused an extension.

Only two missionaries can be said to have been expelled in the sense that they had to leave against their will before their ten years were up. Atkinson had to leave after only one year, but he was a special case as he appears to have arrived without permission. This leaves only the printer Baker who was asked to leave in 1836 after eight years.

One can only guess whether, if he had lived, Radama would have applied his own ten year rule strictly. He might well have relented, as Ranavalona did, in the case of an old friend like Griffiths. But a major point of difference is that, even if the rule had been strictly applied, Radama would probably have continued to permit the arrival of new missionaries to replace those who left ; whereas Ranavalona appears to have envisaged from an early stage the gradual disappearance of the teaching missionaries (but not necessarily the artisans) as they left after ten years or so without replacement.

THE MOTIVES BEHIND RANAVALONA'S CHANGING POLICY

It is generally agreed that Ranavalona's chief characteristics included a genuine devotion to ancestral customs and beliefs and a fierce nationalism allied to a xenophobic distrust of foreigners. These qualities, which were shared by most of her ministers and advisers, are sufficient to explain the final prohibition of Christian practices in 1835. But questions which remain to be answered are : why were the missionaries allowed to continue their proselytising work for so many years after Radama's death ; why during this period did Government policy towards them fluctuate so widely ; and especially why did they at one time enjoy greater freedom in their religious work than at any time during Radama's reign ?

One consideration was certainly the need to demonstrate continuity with the previous reign. This was a traditional requirement for a new monarch in a deeply conservative country. It was all the more necessary in the case of Ranavalona because her claim to the succession was distinctly dubious (This is not the place to pronounce on the legitimacy of Ranavalona's claim in the light of the complex Merina rules of royal succession (115) ; it is sufficient to note for our present purposes that in the eyes of many Malagasy, including Raombana, she was a usurper). Hence her assurances at the outset of her reign, repeated at her coronation when she said : « I will not change what my predecessors did,

(115) The question has been discussed most recently by Alain Délivré in « *L'Histoire des Rois d'Imerina* », chapter VI.

but I will do more than they have done» (116). When her Government's actions were quite clearly not in accord with what Radama had done, for example the refusal to accept the annual payment from Britain in accordance with the Treaty of 1820, and the refusal to accept Lyall as British Agent, she fell back on the rather unconvincing formula that she had received no orders from Radama on these matters (117). Even as late as March 1835, at the *kabary* announcing the prohibition of Christian worship, the Queen's spokesman said that Radama had never told the Queen that the missionaries would teach Christianity, only reading and writing (118).

A more practical reason for permitting the missionaries to remain was the value of the work of the artisans, especially after Cameron had managed to make soap and produce the materials for the manufacture of gunpowder. The missionaries themselves were in little doubt that they were tolerated only because of the manufacturing work carried out by the artisans (119). The important Government contracts signed by Cameron and Chick in 1829 undoubtedly helped to prolong their stay ; and it is perhaps significant that the prohibition of Christian worship and teaching in 1835 coincided closely with the completion of work under these contracts. Early in 1834 the Government was discussing with Cameron a possible contract for the manufacture of cannons (120), but nothing came of it. One is tempted to speculate whether, if Cameron had agreed to manufacture cannons, the prohibition of Christian practices might have been further postponed. It is conceivable that this could have happened if no-one else with the necessary ability had been available. But in fact by 1835 Jean Laborde offered an alternative source of artisan skill which was not tied in any way to Christian teaching.

In the early years of Ranavalona's reign, foreign policy considerations were a major factor in her attitude towards the missionaries. The French threat on the East coast, culminating in the bombardment and occupation of various ports, made it undesirable to quarrel with Britain at the same time. Raombana had no doubt that there was a direct relationship between the Queen's attitude towards the missionaries and the seriousness of the French threat on the East coast. He states that so long as the French were on the coast the Queen encouraged the missionaries even to the extent of agreeing to the Christian sacraments ; «but after the flight of the French from Madagascar, Her Majesty's conduct to the missionaries was immediately altered for the worst» (121).

(116) From a translation of the Queen's speech in L.M.S., Archives, Box 3, Folder 3, Jacket B.

(117) *Le Journal de Robert Lyall*, p. 132 (entry for 28 november 1828).

(118) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 7, pp. 199-208.

(119) Yearly Review of Madagascar Mission, 28 may 1833. L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 4, Jacket B.

(120) Letter from J.J. Freeman, 15 february 1834. L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 1, Jacket A.

(121) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 5, pp. 598-602.



In fact the link was not quite so direct. The first French attack on Tamatave took place on 11 October 1829. In the following February the missionaries reported that the Queen and Government appeared much more friendly (122) ; and in the succeeding months there was no interference with the missionaries' work, although they grumbled about the Queen's lack of positive support for their work. However, the major improvement in the missionaries situation took place *after* the French withdrew their forces in October and November 1830. At the end of November Griffiths was writing : «The Queen shows herself more friendly to me at present than ever before. Every thing I have applied for latterly she has invariably granted.» (123). It was only six months later, in May 1831, that permission was given to celebrate the Christian sacraments. The withdrawal of this permission seven months afterwards seems to have been caused more by alarm at the spread of the new religion than by the reduction of the French threat. And as we have seen Christian teaching and chapel services were allowed to continue for three more years, long after French troops had withdrawn.

However, the French threat continued to exist, at least in the minds of the Malagasy Government, for a considerable time after the withdrawal of the troops, and was sustained by frequent rumours of a further invasion. With rebellions to cope with in the West and the South, the Government was still too weak to contemplate an open breach with the two leading European powers at the same time ; and relations with Britain were already sufficiently strained as a result of disputes with Mauritius, especially over the Malagasy Government's prohibition of the export of cattle, on which Mauritius was heavily dependent. As time went by and a new French invasion did not materialise, the Government became more confident ; and their confidence was increased by the successful manufacture of gunpowder, thanks to Cameron, and of muskets by the Frenchmen Droite and Laborde. Then in 1834 the Queen ordered the construction of stone fortifications at Foulepointe and Tamatave. Raombana maintains that the Queen had already decided to expel the missionaries and that the fortifications were intended to meet possible British retaliation (124). He also states that it was only after the completion of these fortifications that the Queen was ready to proceed to put an end to Christian teaching and to drive away the missionaries (125). Writing a long time after the events Raombana may have attributed a logical relationship to events which were purely coincidental. It is nevertheless noteworthy that the moment when the Queen decided that Christian teaching was no longer tolerable coincided with the time when the East coast fortifications were

(122) Letter from D. Johns, 19 february 1830. L.M.S., Box 3, Folder 3, Jacket A.

(123) Letter from D. Griffiths, 29 november 1830. L.M.S., Box 3, Folder 4, Jacket B.

(124) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 6, p. 1115.

(125) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 7, pp. 128-136.

completed, when Cameron and Chick had finished their contracts and when Laborde had shown that he could continue and expand the manufacturing industry established by the missionary-artisans.

With so many conflicting policy considerations there was plenty of scope for the exercise of influence by those who had the ear of the Queen ; and policy towards the missionaries was almost certainly affected by the varying fortunes of groups and individuals at the Court. On several occasions during the early months of Ranavalona's reign, Lyall noted the existence of two opposing parties at Court. One party, which favoured a continuation of Radama's policies, was supported by most of the army officers (many of whom had passed through the missionary schools). The other party, to which most of the ministers and judges belonged, wanted to turn the clock back and expel all the Europeans (126). There was also a struggle for individual power at the beginning of the reign. In September 1828 Lyall refers to the Prime Minister Andrianamba, who he states was in favour of good relations with the English government, and to the Second Minister Rainimahay (127). Six weeks later Rainimahay is referred to as Prime Minister but there is mention of Andriamahery as the new favourite minister (128). By December 1828 it is Andriamahery who is described as Prime Minister (129) ; but in March 1829 Rainimahay re-appears as «Chief of the Ministers» (130) whilst Andriamihaja is mentioned as the Queen's favourite (131). Only a few weeks later Andriamihaja (the presumed father of the Queen's son) emerges as the one «who is now recognised as Prime Minister» (132), a position he was to hold for more than a year.

Little information is available about the attitudes of these various leading figures. If we are to believe Lyall, the first Prime Minister Andrianamba favoured the British connexion, and his early downfall might indicate a success for the «idolatrour party». However Andriamihaja, although a leading member of the group responsible for the succession of Ranavalona, appears to have sympathised with Radama's modernising policies and to have given some support to the missionaries. In May 1830 Freeman, reporting on the revival of superstitious practices, stated that only Andriamihaja adhered to Radama's plans and continued to support the schools and the work of the artisans (133). However his youth, his rapid rise and his great influence with the Queen aroused the

(126) *Le Journal de Robert Lyall*, p. 146 (entry for 24 december 1828) and p. 156 (entry for 14 january 1829).

(127) *Le Journal de Robert Lyall*, p. 107 (entry for 15 september 1828).

(128) *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125 (entry for 26 october 1828).

(129) *Ibid.*, p. 141 (entry for 4 december 1828).

(130) *Ibid.*, p. 181 (entry for 22 march 1829).

(131) *Ibid.*, p. 196 (entry for 26 march 1829).

(132) *Ibid.*, p. 175 (letter for 5 may 1829).

(133) Letter from J.J. Freeman (in Port Louis), 17 may 1830. L.M.S., Box 3, Folder 3, Jacket B.

jealousy of the older traditionalist Ministers, who intrigued against him and had him put to death, probably around September 1830 (134).

Henceforward, the balance of power and influence at Court seems to have swung towards the traditionalist group headed by three brothers of the Andafiavaratra family : Rainiharo, variously described as Chief Officer, Prime Minister or Commander-in-Chief ; Rainimaharo (or Ratsimanisa) described sometimes as Commander-in-Chief, sometimes as Chief Secretary ; and Rajery, a judge. The first two were the most important. According to Raombana they were both lovers of the Queen ; they were also among the keepers of the Queen's favourite idol Rakelimalaza. Another influential traditionalist was Rainijohary, keeper of the idol Rafantaka (135). There can be little doubt that this group wished to see Christian practices prohibited and the missionaries expelled. But they were restrained not only by the policy considerations discussed above but also by the existence of a still numerous party in the Government who were in favour of Christianity. According to a missionary report at the end of 1831 this group was not in possession of the highest power and had no-one they could look to as head (possibly since the death of Andriamihaja) ; but several had access to the Queen and held high posts in the army and administration (136).

Among the latter group one can certainly count the twin brothers Raombana and Rahaniraka, who had returned to Madagascar in 1829 after eight of study in England under the auspices of the L.M.S. They had retained strong pro-British and pro-Christian sympathies and they undoubtedly used what influence they possessed, as two of the Queen's secretaries with daily access to her, in support of the missionaries (137). Raombana himself mentions a certain Rabohara as a friend of Griffiths at court who used his influence to keep Griffiths in Madagascar (138). However, the influence of this pro-Christian party appears to have declined vis-a-vis the traditionalists, who had gained a complete ascendancy by the time Christian practices were prohibited in 1835. In so far as much of the pro-Christian strength was among army officers, their influence at Court was no doubt weakened by their frequent absences on various campaigns, from which many failed to return.

One minor influence working against the missionaries was that of the French artisans and in particular Jean Laborde. As Frenchmen and Catholics

(134) The precise date of Andriamihaja's death has never been clearly established (see Raymond Delval, *Radama II*, p. 79 footnote (1)). But the approximate date of September 1830 emerges fairly clearly from a study of Lyall's Journal.

(135) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 7, pp. 220-222.

(136) Letter from D. Griffiths and E. Baker, 2 December 1831. L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 1, Jacket C.

(137) Simon Ayache, *Raombana l'historien*, p. 124.

(138) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 6, pp. 865-866.

they had a double reason for working against the British Protestant missionaries ; and the missionaries themselves had no doubt that the local French influence was exercised against them (139). Raombana records that when the decision to prohibit Christian practices was conveyed to the missionaries on 26 February 1835, the three French residents of Antananarivo, Laborde, Droite and Vincent, were also present ; and the last two (but not Laborde) commented that the Queen was quite right to prohibit Christian practices so as not to interfere with old customs (140). But undoubtedly Laborde's main adverse impact on the missionaries was his availability as an alternative to the missionary-artisans.

It remains to consider the impact on the fortunes of the missionaries of their own personalities and behaviour. This could not have been decisive in the long term, but may well have affected the varying fortunes of the Mission in the short term.

The claustrophobic atmosphere of the small Mission emphasised differences of personality and placed a strain on Christian love and brotherhood. Already at the beginning of Ranavalona's reign there was a conflict between the two senior missionaries, Jones and Griffiths, on the one hand and Freeman on the other. Freeman, a man of superior education and social class, seems to have resented the position acquired by the two Welshmen of humble origins. Lyall, who came from a similar background, supported Freeman and wrote to the L.M.S. accusing Jones and Griffiths of behaviour unsuitable for missionaries such as drinking spirits and smoking for long hours with the artisans (147). After the departure of Jones in 1830 and the return of Freeman in 1831 the conflict continued between Griffiths and Freeman ; and as we have seen most of the missionaries and artisans sided with Freeman because of Griffiths' increasingly arrogant behaviour. The dispute was eventually referred to the Queen who, after sending Rainiharo to investigate, decided in Griffiths' favour (142). All this bickering must have done some harm to the missionaries' reputation.

The Queen's decision in Griffiths' favour may have been influenced by the fact that Freeman was not popular at Court. Ranavalona was prejudiced against him because when he returned in 1831 he brought a letter of recommendation from the Governor of Mauritius. She accordingly suspected (with good reason) that he was acting as unofficial Agent of the British Government (143). More-

(139) Letter from J.J. Freeman, 15 february 1834. L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 1, Jacket A.

(140) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 7, pp. 188-192.

(141) Letter from R. Lyall, 15 march 1829. L.M.S., Box 3, Folder 1, Jacket A.

(142) Letter from Rahaniraka and Rafaralahy (Raombana) to L.M.S., 12 january 1832. L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 2, Jacket A. See also Raombana, *Annals*, Book 6, pp. 1077-1080.

(143) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 5, p. 605.

over he brought a new missionary, Atkinson, who had not obtained the Queen's permission to come. Raombana also records the Queen's anger with Freeman because he wanted to bring in smallpox vaccine (which she believed actually caused the disease) ; because he «interfered» by writing to the French to urge them not to colonise Madagascar ; and because she saw him sketching a view of Antananarivo (for the History of Madagascar on which he was collaborating with Ellis) and accused him of preparing plans for a foreign invasion (144). However it is doubtful whether Freeman's unpopularity with the Queen had any significant influence on the main course of events.

Griffiths' influence on developments was more direct and more complex. His personal popularity with the Malagasy in general and a group of friends at Court in particular undoubtedly helped to prolong his own stay and probably reflected favourably on the position of the Mission as a whole. But his missionary colleagues accused him of specific actions and behaviour which did positive damage to the Mission. He appears to have regarded the Mission as his Mission and the chapel as his own chapel ; and he did not want to share with other missionaries the glory of winning over Madagascar to Christianity. Thus he was accused of trying to get control of all the schools into his own hands (145) ; criticising his colleagues in talking to Malagasy (146) ; and telling the Government that the other missionaries were not necessary as the schools could be carried on by his pupils (147). His colleagues believed that, because of his influence with the Government, no other missionaries would be permitted to come (148) ; that he had used this influence to secure the departure of Atkinson ; and that if he were forced to leave he would «blow up the Mission» (his own words) (149). He was even accused of helping to bring about the expulsion of Lyall ; and of opposing the appointment of a British Agent (who could be expected to weaken his own influence at court) (150).

The above list by no means exhausts the catalogue of complaints against Griffiths. He was said to have been very friendly with Laborde and Droite

(144) Raombana, *Annals*, Book 5, pp. 609-627.

(145) Letter from J.J. Freeman, april 6, 1832. L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 2, Jacket B.

(146) Letter from J. Cameron, april 11, 1832. L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 2, Jacket C.

(147) Letter from D. Johns, april 15, 1832. L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 2, Jacket C.

(148) Letter from Freeman, Johns and Canham, 26 august 1832. L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 3, Jacket B.

(149) Letter from J. Canham, 18 september 1832. L.M.S., Box 4, Folder 3, Jacket B.

(150) Letter from J.J. Freeman to Secretary of Governor of Mauritius, 26 february 1834. L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 1, Jacket A.

who became his «bottle companions» (151) ; and to have supported the Frenchmen and spoken against the British artisans Cameron and Chick (152). More seriously he was accused of being responsible for the withdrawal of permission for the sacraments by imprudent behaviour in two respects. Firstly, when permission for baptism had been granted, he had rushed ahead and baptised as many as possible when it would have been wiser to proceed more cautiously to avoid alarming the Government too much (153). Secondly he was said to have directly provoked the prohibition by an imprudent letter he sent to the First Minister describing the close bonds between members of Christian churches, which aroused the Government's fears of creating a second loyalty (154). It may be that some of the accusation against Griffiths were unfair. But there can be little doubt that the net result of his personality and behaviour was to weaken the effectiveness of the Mission as a whole.

We have seen that there was a considerable degree of continuity between the policies of Radama and Ranavalona ; and that in many aspects of their dealings with the missionaries there was less difference in their attitudes than might appear at first sight. The attitude of Ranavalona and her advisers was far from being one of blind reaction and hostility. On the contrary it was composed of a relatively sophisticated balance of often conflicting policy considerations, both internal and external. It was also affected by the struggle for power among conflicting groups at Court ; and to a limited extent by the personal influence of individuals, both Malagasy and Europeans. One is tempted to speculate whether the outcome would have been different if in the struggle for power the pro-Christian group, perhaps under the leadership of Andriamihaja, had gained the ascendancy over the traditionalists. But the balance of evidence indicates that such an outcome was always unlikely, given the Queen's strong attachment to ancestral customs and devotion to the idols.

One must conclude therefore that it was inevitable that Christian teaching and worship would be prohibited sooner or later. Christian beliefs were so clearly incompatible with the revival, at the beginning of Ranavalona's reign, of «superstitious practices» which had been either suppressed or discouraged under Radama – consultation of *sikidy* to decide policy, deference to the idols as interpreted by their keepers, and in particular the application of the *tangena* ordeal to human beings which was to cause countless deaths during the reign. It remains a matter for surprise that the Government took so long to put a stop to the missionaries' work. The various considerations outlined in this paper go some way to explain the delay. But the final conclusion is

(151) Letter from J.J. Freeman, 15 february 1834. L.M.S., Box 5, Folder 1, Jacket A.

(152) Letter from Freeman cited in note 150.

(153) Letter from Johns cited in note 147.

(154) Letter from Cameron cited in note 146.

that the Queen and her advisers made a serious mistake in underestimating the power of the new religion backed by the magic of the printed word. By permitting the missionaries to teach and preach for over six years and to print and distribute many thousands of books and pamphlets which directly or indirectly spread the Christian message, the Queen's Government allowed Christianity to implant itself so firmly that it could resist the fiercest persecution. William Ellis published his *History of Madagascar* in 1838 when the fortunes of Christianity seemed to be at their lowest ebb, when all the missionaries had withdrawn, when the few faithful Malagasy Christians had been driven underground and when the first Christian martyr had been executed for her faith. But his concluding words proved to be prophetic (155) :

«The scriptures have been extensively circulated in the island ; the seed of divine truth has thus been scattered widely over the country -- that country, now the sacred deposit of a martyr's ashes, thus taken possession of for Christ, must ultimately become his inheritance ; that seed is incorruptible seed and, now watered with a martyr's blood, must issue in a rich and abundant harvest».

(155) Ellis, *History of Madagascar*, Vol. II, p. 537.

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Mauritian Government Archives (Port Louis)

It has not been possible to consult the original documents, but use has been made of an unpublished collection of French translations by G.S. Chapus of certain letters, in the Library of the Academie Malgache, entitled «Nouveaux documents sur l'époque de Radama 1er et de Ranavalona 1ère».

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RÉSUMÉ

La plupart des histoires de Madagascar donne l'impression que Ranavalona a, dès son avènement au trône, renversé la politique de Radama envers les missionnaires britanniques. Une étude détaillée de documents contemporains (surtout les lettres de missionnaires, le journal de l'agent britannique Robert Lyall et les Annales de Raombana) montre que cette affirmation doit être nuancée. En effet, il y avait beaucoup de continuité entre les politiques des deux souverains. Pendant plus de six ans Ranavalona a encouragé le développement du travail des missionnaires-artisans ; elle a permis, sans montrer le même enthousiasme que Radama, la continuation de l'œuvre éducative (interrompue de temps en temps, il est vrai, par le recrutement de professeurs et d'élèves pour l'armée) ; elle n'a pas empêché le travail de l'imprimerie missionnaire, qui a édité et distribué des vingtaines de milliers de livres et de feuilletons ; et pendant une certaine période au moins il était accordé aux missionnaires plus de liberté que sous Radama en ce qui concerne l'œuvre de prosélytisme chrétien. En conséquence, on peut constater que les accomplissements les plus importants des premiers missionnaires datent de ces premières années du règne de Ranavalona.

Il serait inexact de dire que les missionnaires furent expulsés, même en 1835. Ranavalona avait annoncé qu'elle appliquerait la règle fixée par Radama, selon laquelle tout Européen devait quitter l'Imerina après un séjour de dix ans. Mais l'application de la règle s'avéra très flexible. Plusieurs missionnaires restèrent plus de dix ans contre un seul qui dut partir contre son gré avant dix ans. La plupart des missionnaires partirent de leur propre volonté après la prohibition de l'enseignement chrétien en mars 1835 ; mais deux d'entre eux restèrent jusqu'en 1836, et il fut permis à deux autres de rentrer entre 1838 et 1840.

Cette attitude relativement tolérante est difficile à concilier avec le dévouement presque fanatique de Ranavalona aux idoles et aux traditions ancestrales. Plusieurs explications sont suggérées : le besoin politique de démontrer la continuité avec le règne précédent, surtout parce que le droit de Ranavalona à la succession était douteux ; la valeur de l'œuvre industrielle des missionnaires-artisans, dont la fabrication de poudre ; la menace d'une invasion française sur la côte est, et l'imprudence de provoquer le gouvernement britannique en même temps ; et l'existence pendant quelques années d'une faction importante à la Cour qui favorisait une continuation de la politique libérale de Radama. Mais en fin de compte il paraît que, en permettant aux missionnaires de continuer à travailler pendant plus de six ans, la reine et ses ministres ont sous-estimé la puissance des doctrines chrétiennes. Pendant cette période, la nouvelle religion s'est enracinée si fortement en Imerina qu'elle a pu survivre à toutes les persécutions féroces des vingt-cinq années suivantes.

