TABOO
TABOO

A Study of Malagasy Customs and Beliefs

BY

JØRGEN RUUD

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J. R.
**Introduction**

The Malagasy word *fady* (pronounced *fahdy*) is of Indonesian origin. F. Rudolf Lehmann mentions the word *pali* from the Ngadju language (Borneo) in “Die Polynesischen Tabusitten”¹. *Pali*: unerlaubt, verboten, Unglück. Lehmann compares it with the Malagasy word *faly* from the West Coast, and *fady* (sacré) in Betsimisaraka. In the Maanj language (Borneo) the corresponding word is *padi* (tabou), according to Otto Chr. Dahl: Maanj et Malgache². It corresponds with *fady* in the Merina dialect³, which is the official Malagasy language. The *p* in *pali* and *padi* is changed into *f* in Malagasy, according to the phonetic laws. Otto Dempwolf ⁴ also refers the Merina word *fady* to the Ngadju *pali* (Verbotensein). He renders *fady* by Verbotensein, Tabu (in Vergleichende Lautlehre des Austronesischen Wortschatzes).

The Polynesian word taboo, which has been an international term for a long time, will be used in this book together with “prohibition” and “prohibited” as a synonym of *fady*, though with the reservation that *fady* has a local and specific Malagasy meaning, which I intend to explain.

A Malagasy proverb says: “I would rather die than eat anything which is prohibited”. This common native way of thinking expresses how seriously they look upon the rules connected with eating. What is said about food, however, can also be said about the taboos in a wide-ranging meaning. A European who lives in the country, mixes with the Natives, and speaks their language every day, will soon discover that the taboos are omnipresent. If he clashes with them, he will find himself up against a wall of difficulties. If he is ignorant of these compact and massive rules, he will meet with many unpleasant experiences. Personally, I felt it necessary to penetrate into this
mystery of old rules and regulations, which even to-day are very present.

This led to the ethnographic research work which I have done from time to time during the twenty years I stayed in Madagascar, from 1934 to 1954. During my many journeys, I had the opportunity of seeing how customs, rites and ritual functions are carried out. There are many things in the traditional sacrifices or in the driving out of demons which are difficult to describe. One can only get the right impression of the feeling and spirit of these functions by being present. Several times I was refused admission, as very often the ceremonies are only for the family. But through conversations one can learn a good deal, as the Malagasy is usually communicative.

Not all have the ability to explain well, so one has to find the right people. To carry on a conversation on taboo is difficult, as it touches upon the Natives directly, and one may be looked on as indiscreet. It is useless to ask: What are your taboos? One may, however, say: What customs and traditions, including taboos, did your ancestors observe in this place? This way of asking is more neutral and less dangerous. During the conversation one will also learn what is practised at present, and that is the intention. A constant contact with the Natives, together with understanding of and respect for what is told as well as for the narrator himself, is of vital importance. I have gathered useful material both from Christians and from non-Christians, from civil servants, witch-doctors, labourers and employers. Their contributions are all of interest, and every one can give some material of value. It must, however, be an indisputable condition that the collector can clearly separate subjectively coloured information and bias influenced either by antipathy or sympathy towards the Government, Mission work, witch-doctors et cetera, from traditions and customs of olden times. It is objective material that is needed, not propaganda communications. This must be explained on every occasion, and the Natives have no difficulty in understanding what is wanted. Several times the conversation had to be carried on with a smaller group, especially with the village council. This consists of some few capable men in the village, and they know best the traditions and present practice. It was usually among these men that I felt most confident. But I had to tell them every time that I was not
interested in their taboos, but in the taboos of the Malagasy people in general. As a rule the conversation led to family events, and the different members added to each other’s narratives. On such occasions one would have to write as fast as possible and not interrupt with unnecessary questions. It is important that each question should be answered by several, so that light can be thrown on all sides of the matter and the narrators can correct each other. If the question is correct and put at the right moment, both psychologically and pertinently, the searcher will, as a rule, obtain correct and important information. To make sure that the information I had gained was about practices among the Malagasy people in general, and not only the impression of individuals, I had to ask the same questions at different places, in other words, to check as comprehensively as possible. During the checking some of the information given was without value and had to be omitted; one can never be too careful about this.

Usually foreigners are not granted admittance to taboo places of sacrifice and old burial places. This must be respected by everybody. But one may ask for permission. Now and again I obtained this, but usually on the condition that what I learnt should be used only when describing the country and the people, and this promise I have kept. As the matter of taboo is so personal and confidential, I have for good reasons left out the names of the informants. In some places it is not even permitted to let others know one’s own taboos. They are family secrets. Many are also afraid of giving information about internal matters, especially out of fear of the witch-doctor’s power. I have, however, mentioned the places in Notes, the canton and the administrative district where I have received information, so that one can have a foothold and find the place in case further investigations out in the field are wanted. When place-names are given, however, it does not mean that the taboo mentioned is found only in that village, but it is local determination which belongs to the ethnographical research worker’s technique. In the case of the Antanosy tribe I have not given any place-names, as the territory is so small that it is not difficult to find out what is typical of this tribe.

There are certain fields in which many taboos originate, but they are not discussed in this book, — for instance, the divination (*ny sikidy*) and the unanimity and coexistence in village society (*ny firai-*)
san'ny miara-monina). Should such be subjected here to a full treatment, the work would become too voluminous.

I have endeavoured to present common Malagasy views and customs with their many outward differences and variations. The historically determined taboos are also common to the whole of Madagascar. They are linked to a place and a certain incident in the past, but this too is something typically Malagasy. From the animal taboos, for example, there are a large number of homogeneous stories about a domestic animal, a wild beast, or a bird which has rescued people in a wonderful way. Stories about historically determined animal and plant taboos are found in every clan and tribe. A study of the origin of these taboos, and of the mentality and way of thinking which they represent, reveals a striking similarity. There can be no doubt they belong to the common material.

The taboo formulae are not identical. The imperative: "You shall not" is the most common and direct form, which parents and guardians use in the actual situation. The narrative form is used in official speeches (kabary) and when the grandparents inform their grandchildren about the historical and traditional origin of the taboos. They say: "Our ancestors cursed the one who broke the fady stipulated by contract". The hypothetic form, the same in exhortations and warnings, "If you do this and that, such and such a misfortune will happen", is used a great deal. Both the narrative and the hypothetic forms are indirect, but still a very effective way of maintaining the taboos. The indirect form is also found in the instructions concerning destiny (ch. III). I have numbered as taboo-days certain days which are determined by fate, without mentioning the word fady. If it is necessary to change the character of a day by means of rites and sacrifices, it is because it is an "evil day" in itself and therefore a taboo day. The same method is used to indicate that a new-born baby is taboo. A taboo-child is, because of its birth, a forbidden child, and something special must be done with it. In my formulations I have often used my notes verbatim and retained the expressions which were used during my conversations with the Natives. The way in which a thing or matter has been expressed is of importance to the study and the understanding of it. The more spontaneously the material has been presented, the more valuable it is as material for study. As a
practical reference method the taboos are numbered in heavy type. The same taboo is sometimes mentioned at different points in the text, the reason being that they appear in different situations and on different occasions which all help to throw light on the matter. I have entered the Malagasy text in brackets in order to give people who understand Malagasy a chance to compare and check my statements. Want of space has forced me to abbreviate these as much as possible. As substantiation and study material they are invaluable.

In the terminology some Malagasy words are used, like: ombiasa (witch-doctor), vintana (destiny), ota fady (wrongdoing against taboos), zanahary (a god, as common name), and some other key words. They are all very ancient and local terms, taken from ceremonial practices. I have endeavoured to avoid the European meaning of the words and I have tried to explain what they mean to the Malagasy in the different situations. This is of great importance when trying to arrive at a correct understanding of the phenomena.

This book has a direct practical aim: to give as comprehensive as possible an account of the taboos of to-day, and to analyse their function and purpose. A European who lives and works in Madagascar, be he a colonial administrator, a missionary, a merchant, or a planter, will need some knowledge and understanding of the local circumstances. When I say that it is the taboos of to-day which will be presented, this means, in other words, that they have to do with the present time, or more precisely defined: this is not primarily a historical study. It is the present conditions that are of interest, not so much those of 200 years ago. It is, therefore, not a diachronic but a synchronic representation, which takes surroundings, economic conditions and habits, religion and tribal institutions into account.

This book is thus primarily concerned with matter, and not history. One may in this connection argue that matter can not be separated from history. I shall not contribute to the lively and important discussion on the relationship between ethnology and history, but only mention as an experience from my own work as a field-worker, that one has to take history into consideration, because matter is linked up with tradition. The Native acts on the basis of earlier recognised rules. His present is based on the past. By ceremonies and saga, customs and recitations of the ancestors' history, he makes the past come alive.
Family tradition is something different and something more than history. It has a dynamic and modifying power, which moulds the men of to-day in the old pattern. Tradition even implies a programme for the future. When, therefore, matter is linked up with tradition, and thus with history, one will have to face the question: at which point in the past should one start explaining a topic or a matter, which is not specially diachronic but synchronic? Or one could put the question like this: how far back into the past ought one to go when it is not the historical but the present and contemporary circumstances which are to be dealt with? Theoretically this is a very broad question. The way I have chosen with regard to history, however, came naturally as a practical solution of the problem: to such a degree as history and tradition are of importance for the interpretation and understanding of the taboos which are in force to-day, history must be taken into consideration. Apart from this, history is not primarily a relevant question in this book.

In accordance with this I shall render an account of the limitations of this study, which are of two kinds, an outward one and an inward one. It might be natural to compare the Malagasy taboos with the taboos which are present in the Pacific islands, as the word *fady* linguistically and historically belongs there. An orientation towards the west might also be of interest, especially because the old Malagasy calendar with the *vintana* system is most probably of Arabic origin. But when, in dealing with *fady*, I exclusively adhere to Madagascar. I do this for good reasons. Madagascar has for many centuries been isolated from eastern and western influences, and the taboo customs are to such a degree local and "naturalized" that we can call them a hundred per cent Malagasy. Old regulations and prohibitions are renewed and revived, and the witch doctors constantly issue new ones. There is a "local-manufacturing" of taboos which follows its own principles and methods, or to put it thus: The Natives' taboos have grown up in Malagasy soil. They belong in a natural and organic way to the language and the Malagasy mentality and way of thinking. They are not borrowed, but inherited property. I fully appreciate what great scientific importance a study of the influence both from the Eastern Islands and from Africa would have. But they are chiefly independent problems which must be solved separately.
The second limitation of my investigations is in relation to European influence, which in its broad features comes from the French colonization as from 1895, and from the introduction of Christianity, which effectively started about 1820. During my stay in Madagascar I have had the opportunity of seeing the economic, social, religious, and cultural influences of these two sources, and even the taboos have been influenced by them. I do not touch upon the influence of colonization or of the Christian missions, because I think that it is methodically more correct to present the taboos as they are, according to the old and traditional belief and thinking, than to consider this influence in each different case. Such considerations would be rather a hindrance than a gain. The point is to explain fady as a specific Malagasy and indigenous idea. When the material has be analysed without asking about foreign influence, the very important problem of the possible influence of these two cultural sources can be dealt with more easily.

I have described not only the taboos, but also the rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices connected with them. I have given some information about local conditions as well. This I have done in order to give the reader a clear picture of how the taboos are dependent on many circumstances. If they are dealt with separately, they will easily be taken out of their natural context, and, from an ethnographical point of view, they will have little interest. In order to present a clear picture of their meaning and importance, they must have their place in the context. And when a definite phenomenon is to be described and explained, many relevant factors must be included and all available material must be used. Every detail is of importance.

In "Guder og fedre" I have presented the customs and religion of the Tanala tribe, and this may be used as a supplement to this book. "Tabou et Totémisme à Madagascar" by Arnold van Gennep, Paris 1904, is a large and representative study. The author presents in a clear and learned way the Malagasy taboo, especially in light of Frazer's theories, which to a great extent have influenced ethnological research work from the beginning of our century, and have a great influence even to-day. One of the many important facts pointed out by van Gennep is the taboos as being typically Malagasy. An epoch-making theory of his is that taboos are linked up with ceremonies accompanying important incidents in the life of man, like "rites de
passage”. The lifting of taboos by means of rites creates a new situation for the individual and for the collective group. This is a theory founded on the real conditions. However, since 1904, when van Gennep’s book was published, the ethnological research work has developed, and new points of view have been brought forward. One has to study the phenomena within a wider setting. It is, however, the study itself, my observations in the field, and the information given by Natives, which have led me to certain conclusions and to a definite interpretation of the present subject.
The hospitality of the Natives is always surprising to Europeans. If a stranger stays in a village for the night he is always ceremoniously received. The most prominent men of the village wish him welcome in a little speech couched in well-chosen phrases, and he is offered gifts of food, usually a hen, rice and bananas. Water and fire-wood are brought and someone is always willing to prepare the food for him; but it is considered an insult if he offers to pay for what he has received. The reception varies according to the stranger’s standing; but whoever he may be he is always met with politeness, helpfulness and modesty. When passing through a village, a stranger is always asked to enter a house; and he must reply politely whether he accepts the invitation or not; if he does not answer it is considered an insult.

Only in the larger villages are there special houses for receiving strangers. Such houses are built by the colonial authorities for their civil servants, and they do not differ much from the other houses of the village. Where such houses are not found, the village chief decides where the visitor is to live, and the owner of the house he has chosen has to move temporarily. (1) To refuse this decision is taboo. A prominent person who is known for his wealth and power is always given a house to himself. Fresh floor mats are laid over the old ones, and everything is done to show him hospitality. In the evening the young people assemble outside his house to dance and sing for him. But the elders usually hold a council in connection with such a visit, as an unfamiliar person is considered dangerous and surrounded by strict taboos.

In Vakinankaratra there is a typical Malagasy saying which goes: "Our forefathers cursed him who had prepared food (2) which he
concealed instead of giving it to a stranger” (Ny ntaolo nanoxona mihitsy izay tsy nanome sakafo ho an’ny vahiny raha nanana, nefa nosoroniny)². But there is also a very popular saying which goes: “The food which is prepared has no master” (Ny sakafo masaka dia tsy misy tompony), and anyone who enters when the food is ready is invited to eat. A Tanala and Betsimisaraka custom is to call out in the evening that the food is ready, and one who wishes may come and eat with the household³. The invitation may have this form: “I call you in the North and you in the South, you in the East and you in the West. Come and eat!” But any one who encroaches on this custom is at once met with sarcastic remarks which put an end to the exploiting of hospitality. One must not offer to pay for meals of this kind. But one may ask to buy rice for oneself and one’s companions.

In many places (3) the sale of milk is prohibited, as it is considered an “insult” to the calf to sell its mother’s milk⁴, for it will pine or even die. This belief also has a natural explanation. The calf is suckled by its mother till it is about 6 months old. The cattle do not produce much milk, usually not more than two or three litres a day, and the only fodder is the wild grass growing on the plains. Thus the mother’s milk is an absolute necessity for the calf. To sell the milk reduces the herd. This belief shows clearly the mother-child principle. To let the calf have the mother’s milk is natural, to sell milk is unnatural. A person may, however, receive as a gift a calabash bowl of milk. But he must not offer to pay for it.

(4) To show a stranger a wrong road is taboo. An old saying goes: “He who shows the right way saves life” (Fady ny mampivily vahiny. Tsy maintsy tondroina làlana mahitsy izy, araky ny tenin’ny ntaolo hoe : Izay manoro làlana mahitsy mamindra aina)⁵. A stranger must be respected and helped, as the natives often fear that the honour and dignity of the village may otherwise be endangered. If the stranger does not get the reception due to him, he may, after having left the village, throw a curse on the inhabitants for their lack of courtesy, thus causing many disasters. A lone stranger has Andriamanitra⁶ on his side, and the curse will be heard and put into effect by the god, as an act of justice. To be ungenerous towards others is believed to bring poverty to oneself, expressed proverbially as follows: (5) “Not to give food to others, family or friends, was taboo to our forefathers; for it
would bring poverty, and cause inability to keep oneself” (Ny tsy hanome sahafo ho an'ny havana nataon'ny ntaoło ho fady, fa mahakely harena, sady tsy mahavelon-tena)7.

I would like to mention an instance of the Malagasy hospitality. During my visit to the Vazimba clan8 in the Bemaraha mountains, I was told by them that some families were robbers and notorious for theft of cattle and women, and for making poisonous charms. One day I was passing a group who were busy enlarging a family grave. The man in charge of the grave offered me food, meat and rice, which was boiling in large iron cauldrons. But before I had answered, someone said the meat was three days old, so it was not certain the white man would like it. “Very well”, the man in charge said, “you see that herd of cattle in the valley over there. There are about 400, and they are mine. I will instruct one of my sons to kill an ox for you”. Protests were in vain, and in the evening a man brought me the choicest cuts.

During my stay with the Mikea clan,9 I was receвед with overwhelming hospitality. They gave me what was their daily food: roots of wild plants, birds, apes, hedgehogs and honey. They carried my luggage and my water supply from camp to camp, through the 50 kilometres broad virgin forest to the coast. I was the first white man they had seen, and they looked up to me as a zanahary10. It was no use explaining that I was an ordinary man. A woman pointed at my worn shoes said: “There you see the foot of a white man”, believing it was my actual foot. I took off my shoe and said: “My foot is just like yours with five toes, only it is white”. But my explanations were in vain. I was a god. This artificial form of courtesy is very tiresome and impedes contact. They danced and sang for me, and in each new camp they built a special hut for me, while they themselves mostly lived in the open. If a white man comes to a very remote place, which is inhabited even by villagers, he may sometimes be looked upon as a zanahary.

The fishing population of Vezo on the western coast have this rule of courtesy: When a stranger living in the village chances to be on the beach where the fishermen come in, he will most certainly be given fish as a gift, as it is not customary not to give anything. But (6) the sale of fish to a stranger is forbidden. When the fish has been brought into the village, they seldom give anything away, as the fish is then divided between the different families which are entitled to a part of
the catch. The custom of giving fish on the beach arises from the belief that it will give fishing luck, if some of the catch is given away. *Andriananahary* is the patron of fishing, and meanness towards others will cause a poor catch.

Like the host the guest also has his obligations. (7) He must not ask the name of the persons living in the house, or the name of the village. He must not leave the village alone, as he might (8) unintentionally approach a sacrificial site or a Vazimba grave\(^{11}\), which are often difficult to detect in the high grass and bushes. He might also approach sacred trees, a spring or cairns. It is not advisable to ramble about by oneself, but one may ask the village chief for a guide to show one the places of interest in the vicinity. But it is not advisable to stray farther than one is permitted to do.

A foreigner is always considered a stranger (*vahiny*). In intertribal relations a native from another tribe is also looked on as a stranger when he comes to a village. The rules of hospitality are relatively simple as far as a real stranger is concerned. But the relations between the different clans are not always the same as between the tribes. Thus a Sakalava may not always enjoy the hospitality of his tribe everywhere on the West coast. For instance, there exists an old enmity between the Vezo and the Masikoro\(^{12}\). The Vezo accuse the Masikoro of being superior, the Masikoro despise the Vezo for being stupid and inferior. They also despise the Mikea for being wild and untamed, and not least because the last-mentioned do not practise circumcision. The Makoas\(^{13}\) are not thought well of by any of the other Sakalava clans, owing to their African origin.

In the northern part of the Tanala tribe there are, for instance, the Taiva, the Zafindriamanana, the Zafimaniry, the Mahasila clan, and each has its geographical boundaries. Owing to old quarrels each clan looks upon the others with a certain enviousness, and local patriotism is still a strong feeling. In spite of this, every Tanala, notwithstanding the clan he belongs to, may enter a forest village to cook a meal, or to spend a night. He takes fire-wood and water, only saying: "Excuse me", or "May it not be taboo to me" (*Aza fady*). The good or bad relations between the different clans to-day depend usually on how the relationship was in the past, and the hospitality is regulated as a whole by these circumstances. Within the clan every one is considered to be
more or less related, and thus hospitality follows naturally, intercourse becomes less formal, and the taboos become more unnecessary. Taboos really come into effect in relation to strangers; the people of the place are then in a special situation.

What are then the real motives for hospitality? To receive a stranger may be a spontaneous expression of personal kindness. But even among the more warlike tribes such as the Bara, Sakalava, Mahafaly and Antandroy, one meets hospitality. To say that these tribes are less hospitable than, for instance, the Tanala and the Antaisaka is a mistake. Thus other motives must be found. It is of great importance for a household or a village that the population should be in an economic and social position to receive a stranger in an honourable way, as this in turn is of importance to the honour and reputation of the district. The most important motive, however, is the fear of the stranger and the dangerous power he possesses. The unknown in connection with a person is always a factor of uncertainty. To conclude in a peaceful way a meeting with a stranger, so that the home and the place keep their good name and integrity is the common aim. Therefore to respect the taboos of hospitality is tantamount to protecting oneself and one's family against the unknown and dangerous power emanating from a stranger.
CHAPTER II

Authority and seniority

If we want to find out what it is that forms the society, we must start with the individual household. Generally it consists of husband, wife and children. Frequently the old parents of the husband live in the same house, but one may also find them in a house of their own beside the other. Even then they belong to the household, as it is the son’s duty to look after them as long as they live. It is also up to him to give them an honourable funeral. This is a kind of old age pension for which one of the sons, preferably the eldest, is responsible.

The home (ny tokantrano) forms not only a definite social entity, but is also the nucleus of the native society. We would not, however, realize this fundamental core if we did not see it in connection with the patriarchal construction of the home.

In the relationship between parents and children it is obviously the father who has the absolute authority. He is the master, both of his children as well as of his household. The mother has a certain authority concerning the children, though it is subject to her husband’s decisions. We find this authority as a well-founded and built-up system which puts its distinct mark on the home and on the rearing of the children. The man in the house is the pivot around which everything else must turn. Later on, when quite a few taboos are mentioned as illustrations of this authority, we must constantly have in mind that it is not something that he has for the sake of his own pleasure. His authority means responsibilities and obligations as well. It plays such a role that to a great extent it has the potency to create and sustain the Malagasy society. Without it, the native society would become rootless, even absolutely chaotic on decisive points. Thus, this social authority and standing are not something he has taken on out of covetousness.
and unfounded despotism; on the contrary, he has taken them over by virtue of the old laws and traditions of his society. These laws are still up to date and in force, and they take effect automatically with an overwhelming power. In this respect, the Natives show themselves as very social minded individuals, both the ones who have the power and the others who must submit to it. Both sides take it for granted, because it is old, established common practice.

(1) The children are forbidden to mention the name of their father. They must call him father, daddy (Ray, Dada, Ikaky)\(^1\).

(2) The children may not mention his house or the parts of his body by their ordinary names, but must use other terms, i.e. euphemisms. The following Antandroy fady will show this\(^2\):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forbidden Term</th>
<th>Euphemism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>His house (ny tranony)</td>
<td>His residence (anjombany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His head (ny lohany)</td>
<td>What he has got up there (amboniny)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His hair (ny volon-dohany)</td>
<td>His ever so many (maroiny)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His ears (ny sofiny)</td>
<td>What he hears with (fihainony)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His eyes (ny masony)</td>
<td>What he sees with (fijeriny, or ravimbia)(^3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His nose (ny orony)</td>
<td>His olfactory organ (fiantsony)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His lips (ny sominy)</td>
<td>What he moves (fiwimbiny)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His mouth (ny vavany)</td>
<td>His taboo (falieny)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His tongue (ny lelany)</td>
<td>What he moves in all directions (famelekiny)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His hands (ny tànany)</td>
<td>What he uses for holding (fitànany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His feet (ny tongony)</td>
<td>What he walks with (fandiany)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The coastal people to the West, South, South-East, and those of South Betsileo have the same fady, and the same way of employing euphemisms.

(3) It is strictly forbidden to eat before the father eats\(^4\). If a child does so, it will in some cases be driven out of the house. In other places the child, as a token of regret, will have to lick the soles of the father’s feet. This act is not a sign of humility only, but also of earnest entreaty and appeal. It does not matter whether the child who broke the taboo is big or small, or whether he did it out of carelessness or not; this is the only way of rehabilitating the authority of the father. The transgression brings heavy consequences because the transgressor will die young, they say.
Among the Betsimisaraka nobody can start eating till the father says: “Eat then” (*Hano a’ry*). Among the North Betsileho this taboo is so strict that the others must wait as long as 2—3 hours before they may start if the father is not present when they are going to eat. The same taboo applies to the great common meals. Then no one may seize the spoon till the most honourable person present has started eating.

Things belonging to the father are strictly taboo, for instance (4) his spoon. Forks and knives are not used for eating.

The father has his own plate, and (5) nobody else must use it. Those who do are not honouring their father.

It is forbidden for others (6) to sit where the father is wont to sit, which is by the eastern part of the northern wall. Often he has a little wooden stool, which has the same taboo. Should it happen that the smaller children play with it, they would get a spanking and rough scolding.

(7) The children must not sit on anything higher than the object their father is sitting on. The little wooden stool is very low, so their place must therefore be on the flor. Many of these tokens of honour apply to the father only, not to the mother or the grandmother. This distinction is to a great extent transferred to the relation man-woman. We shall take one example from the Tsimihety tribe. In a certain house there live a young man and his grandmother, and they have got just one chair between them. The young man will use the chair, the grandmother the floor, as women are of a lower rank than men.

(8) It is not allowed for the children to lie on the mattress, or on the sleeping mat of their father. In later years many have procured a bed; otherwise, however, they use grass mattresses or just a mat on the floor. The bed must be along the eastern wall, with the head towards the North. The children sleep on a mat on the floor to the West of the fireplace, which is about in the middle of the room.

(9) Children are not allowed to drink before their father has quenched his thirst. If a child has done so, it must take off its hat seven times (number seven symbolizes the evil), and say: “Excuse me for drinking before you”. Then the child is freed from the taboo.

(10) Children are not allowed to drink or to eat lying down. Such a position shows that they do not respect their parents, and that they will become refractory on growing up; they will even wish their parents
dead. As a person lying on his back resembles a corpse, no one must lie on his back during the day\textsuperscript{12}. If so, he will bewitch the master of the house, so that he will die before long. Only evil witches do a thing like that.

(11) Children are not allowed to sit North of the hearth (avara-patana)\textsuperscript{13}, as this is the place of the men during conferences and other important conversations.

(12) The wife and the smaller children are not allowed to eat together with their husband and father\textsuperscript{14}. The Sakalava are particularly strict about this. Sons above eleven or twelve years usually eat together with him, whereas the wife, girls and babies eat to the West of the hearth. When eating outside, as they often do, the husband and the boys will sit a little further away to the North or to the East of the wife.

It is an old custom in most parts of the Island that women are not allowed to eat together with men. One does not eat only to get satisfied; eating has got a certain ceremonial character, where things must be done in the right way. The fundamental sharp division between man and woman must therefore necessarily be practised even during a meal.

In springtime, when manioc and bananas are going to be planted, (13) no one may start planting till the father or the grandfather has put down the first plant\textsuperscript{15}. This is not only a privilege of a father over his grown up self-supporting children, but it guarantees a good harvest as well. The very first plant decides the growth of the others. A man having children has got a generative, creative and productive power inside him, which is of vital importance to the planting.

(14) When a child is going to ask its father for something, it must not stand, but sit on the floor. If it stands while asking, the child must be stubborn and wanting in respect\textsuperscript{16}.

(15) None of the bigger children are allowed to sit down in front of their father, or (16) to pass by him inside the house\textsuperscript{17}. If someone must needs do so, he must ask respectfully for permission and bow on passing.

In connection with the father-son relationship the Betsimisaraka have got the following taboo: (17) A young man is not allowed to wear shoes if his father is still alive\textsuperscript{18} (Izay velon-dray tsy mahazo mikiraro). Usually everybody goes barefoot; to wear shoes like the Europeans do is a sign of being rich and of having power and prestige. Thus a son
wearing shoes would have put himself above his father, which is just what this taboo forbids him to do.

(18) It is also forbidden for a son to shave if his father is still living (Izay velon-dray tsy mahazo maka ny volom-bava)\(^{19}\). During travels through the coastal districts and the more remote parts of the Inland anyone will notice more often than not that the young men grow beards. A good growth of beard means dignity and instils respect, the contrary being suggestive of a woman. Now and again the men do shave, however, especially when they want to be dressed up on certain occasions, for instance when they meet to receive a visiting magistrate, or when going to the Revenue Officer to pay their taxes, etc. On occasions like these, men with long beards are rather rare. Nevertheless, one fairly often sees men with growing beards, and the reason is that their fathers are still alive.

In order to make this point clearer I shall take one example from Vakinankaratra: If a son with a beard wants to shave it off, he must buy a permit from his father. Having only lent it to his son, the father is the one who owns the beard. Therefore the son has not the authority to remove it without asking (Raha manan-tsotrota ny zanany, ka tiany hesorina, dia vidina amin'ny rainby, fa mbola azy, hono, ireny, nampindraminy. Noho izany, tsy manam-pahefana ny zanany haka azy aey ha-trany)\(^{20}\). The price is a sum of money, a good coat, or a fine lamba. By paying, the son frees his beard from the taboo; he has asked his father's foregiveness, in this way admitting his authority.

The little children are strictly taught to honour their parents. (19) When playing inside, they are not allowed to kick the walls. This will kill their parents (Fadin'ny ankizy ny mandaka zinderina, fa mahafaty ray sy reny)\(^{21}\). Even done innocently and accidentally a kick on the wall would mean that the son or daughter would be difficult to handle as a grown up, objecting to his parents and even likely to kill them. It is just the innocent playing, the way a child moves, talks, cries or crawls that the parents study. From these very things they can find out how a child will behave when growing up. If it shows signs of wisdom, courage, power, and such qualities, by its movements and antics, the parents can look to the future happily and proudly, whereas a baby wanting to lie on its back, and enjoying himself by kicking the walls makes them very worried. Such a child makes them think of a future
stubborn boy or a disobliging girl, and so, in order to defend themselves and their honour they resort to taboos. When the parents always scold their children, and order them to keep the taboos in mind, they usually think more of themselves than of teaching their children to respect the sacredness of the taboos.

If we sojourned in a Malagasy village and observed the daily life of the people, we would find the children carefree and unimpeded, running around naked and doing just what they please. Being only a visitor the spectator sees the idylls of the village, whereas in reality nothing like an idyll exists. The children cannot possibly do as they please with parents and elder sisters and brothers constantly admonishing and fussing about what they are forbidden to do. The admonishing might be begun gently, but very often it goes on to scolding and heavy abuse and angry voices. The taboos are hammered in from early childhood onwards. After having lived for some time among the Natives one will discover that they are to some extent formal in their behaviour, yet without seeming unnatural.

If the parents are asked why they are so strict, they will answer, as a rule, that this is the only way to teach the children how to keep the decisions of their ancestors. “We tell them stories of disobedient children who were cursed by their parents (voaozon’ny ray aman-drehy). The effect of these curses usually impresses the children. Curses root out whole families (Ny ozona mahabotry taranaka, mahakizo fara). The reason for family taboos and the keeping of them is to preserve the young and the future generations.

(20) It is strictly forbidden for sons or daughters to walk in front of their father.

(21) Nor must the wife walk in front of him. The master of the household always walks in front, then comes the wife carrying their luggage or what else they might need, and usually a baby on her back. Behind her the children are bringing up the rear, the eldest one first, and so on in order of age. They must also carry burdens in proportion to their strength.

The Autumn festival is a great occasion. It is called “The First of the Fruits” (voaloham-bokatra), or “The First Eating of the Rice” (ny santa-bary). The Tanala and the Betsimisaraka call it “The Pre-
paring of Food out in the Open” (*kinahandro*), and the Sakalava “The First Flower” (*loha-vony*). By festival time people are hungry, as the old stores of rice do not always last till the new rice comes. The festival is celebrated in different ways; I shall only mention some common rules.

(22) It is strictly forbidden to eat from the new crop of rice until the father (grandfather) has eaten first. Any grown-up son or daughter having their own rice-field must bring a little of the first fruit to their father. Only then may they themselves eat.

This festival has a distinct religious character as well. Some of the first rice is boiled and put at the place of the sacrificing, served on palm leaves or on new and clean plates. The whole of the village is gathered there when the sacrificer calls on *Andriamanitra* and the ancestors to come and receive their gifts, thanking them for having let the rice grow and ripen. Afterwards follow supplications for blessings, fruitfulness, happiness and progress. (23) To eat before this ceremony has taken place is blasphemy.

When a South-Betsimisaraka has brewed himself a portion of rum, (24) he is not allowed to taste it till he has brought his father some, and some to the place of the sacrifice besides.

There are several things one must pay attention to concerning the various parts of the beasts to be slaughtered. The rump of the animal (*ny vody*) is the most valuable part. In most parts of the island it is strictly forbidden, even unheard of, (25) for children whose father is still alive to eat this part, be it of fowls, cattle or sheep. If the parents are dead, the son may eat from this part. In some tribes, such as the Antankarana and the Bara, the legs of fowls are considered to be the parts that belong to the father, whereas at Cap-Diégo, in the district Diégo-Suarez it is forbidden to give the rump of the beast to parents and grand-parents, as this is considered to be the children’s part.

To live far away from one’s home place does not free one from the power of the taboos. They are still effective, even if one is away studying in Europe, or serving in the army. This can put a person up against quite a few tricky problems, particularly with regard to the food he will have to eat. If anybody breaks this taboo at home, a beast must be sacrificed in the traditional way: *Andriamanitra* and the dead
ones get their part of the sacrifice followed by the usual public dinner.

The following words express clearly the great authority of the parents, especially of the father: The parents must be respected because they are the proxies of Andriamanitra. Through them one was given life and the ability to see the moon and the sun (Tsya maintsy hajaina sy homem-boninahitra ny ray aman-dreny satria solon’Andriamanitra. Ary ireo no nahazoan-aina, sady nahitana ny volana sy ny masoandro)29. I want to point out, however, that this patriarchal authority has no specifically religious quality, to the native way of thinking. The expression of being the proxies of the god is just one of the many strong Malagasy expressions which need not have any religious meaning.

(26) The son who has dishonoured his father by being disobedient or by slighting him in the presence of others, is inexorably expelled from his family and his other relatives. He must leave his home place and go far away and try to find some employment there. He will become restless and rootless for the rest of his life. He will become poor and miserable. Then it is said about him that he has been stricken by Andriamanitra’s and his ancestors’ curses (Novalian-Andriamanitra sy ny razana isy). If his wife should happen to be his accomplice, she must go with him, but if she is not, she will be brought home to her parents with many excuses as well as a clear explanation, and her parents just have to accept her. If the son had anything to give as a sacrifice, be it an ox or a fowl, he had to give this before leaving. On such an occasion all the people of the village are gathered at the place of sacrifice where the sacrificer renders an account of the matter to Andriamanitra and the dead ones of the family, mentioning them by name and asking them to accept the sacrifice as an atonement.

It may happen, especially among the Bara people, that the son who is about to go away shows no signs of remorse whatsoever, and is hard as flint, keeping on in his disobedience and accepting his expulsion with pride and arrogance. However, whether the son repents or not, the sacrifice must be made in order to remove the taboo.

An infringement of a taboo infects all in the village, making everyone a taboo, or, as the Natives say themselves: They become “unclean” (maloto). This is a psycho-physical uncleanness that must be removed by the same kind of means.
The following shows what a serious offence it is to insult and dishonour one's parents. The information is given by members of the Antitofo family of the Vazimba clan. They live in caves, in the wild and almost inaccessible mountains a couple of days walk northwards — east of Antsalova. It may happen that a mother, who is not respected and obeyed by her children, becomes so unhappy that she commits suicide in the following way: When all the others are away finding food, she takes a bath in a shady rivulet. Then she goes home and puts on all her finery and her very best lamba, which might be red, but is preferably black. She also takes her heirloom silver, which is kept in a secret place, for instance in a crevice in a steep mountain side. Her silver consists of bracelet, earrings, old coins threaded as a necklace or fastened to the hair; besides these she has chains of many-coloured beads. She decorates herself as if she were going to a feast, most probably because she is going back to her ancestors, to her home to be, and this needs careful preparations. In a way it is a kind of burial outfit.

Thus bedecked she walks out into the forest to find and to take with her bark from the Lombiry bush (Asclepias). The juice from this plant is very poisonous. She could easily have found other poisonous plants, for instance the Kisompa bush. Lombiry poison can be taken either by licking the root or by eating some bark, or by rubbing the root into powder and then drinking it mixed with water.

Then the unhappy mother continues her preparations by cleaning her cave and putting it into order. In the end she will close the narrow entrance with sticks and stones, take the poison and lie down on her bed, which is made of fresh, dry grass, to die all by herself.

We cannot undertake to analyze this situation, but only to mention one or two facts. There is no doubt that the motives are sorrow (alaheho) and despair, because she is not respected and honoured by her children any more. Consequently she gets the feeling of having no proper social position among the living. The Malagasy would not have any foundation for this life without the respect and esteem of his family. Honour (voninahitra) means so much to them. I can safely say that nothing can lead more easily to strife, stealing, killing and rioting than an insult to one's honour. (fahafaham-baraka).
Another very probable motive is vengeance. The mother’s death will worry the children as long as they live. It will become a lifelong nightmare which they cannot get away from, even in their dreams. Only through repentance and sacrifice will they get rid of the blame and the guilt.

Otherwise, suicide is seldom heard of in Madagascar, but I shall mention still another example from the same Antifofo family of the Vazimba clan as it was told me by themselves. In this case it is not the disgraced person who commits suicide, but the violator of the taboo. A son disgraces his father and is expelled and chased away. As a restless refugee and outlaw he may one day become so desperate that he “gives his heart away” (mamoy fo). After having found a Kisompa bush in the forest, he pulls it up by its roots and then he puts the bush back upside down. He kicks the root several times before tearing a piece off and eating it. Soon he feels strong pricking sensations, gets pain in his stomach and heart, accompanied by giddiness. The root has a drugging power, and in four or five hours he will sleep for ever. He may go home to his cave after having taken the poison, just to take a kind of vengeance on his father. His nearest relatives then come hurrying, and he tells them why he has taken the poison. They beg and entreat him to take an emetic, either raw birds eggs or fresh gastric juice from a newly slaughtered ox, but he usually refuses saying brusquely: “I am taking my leave of you as I am not going to live long, but to die.” If his father would forgive him, the boy’s life could have been saved by giving him an emetic, but never have I heard of any case where an expelled person was forgiven. The boy is not buried in the family vault, but he is thrown down a precipice far away from his cave, and his body is eaten by wild animals.

If a mother scolds her children very severely for minor reasons, curses them and calls them dogs, pigs and so on, the children might be so unhappy and desperate as to make away with themselves. This they do by walking out into the field where they pull out a rice plant and eat of the poisonous root. There are also many other poisonous plants and roots in the Bemaraha mountains. When a child commits suicide because of his mother, the corpse is carried to the river, where a fresh wind is blowing. There it is washed and prepared in the
traditional way. The mother's scolding and cursing has made the child unclean. This taboo uncleanness is taken away by the wind and the running water. The child is then buried in the family vault. I got the impression that the cave-dwellers are very temperamental, and that it is a short way from thought to action among them, both for the good and for the bad.

When the father dies, the authority is chiefly transferred to the eldest son, because he is the first-born (ny lahimatoa). More than before he now gets the name of honour: "The oldest one" (ny zokiny). This means also great authority over his sisters and brothers. If he dies, the second son takes over. Among the sisters and brothers there are many important matters which must be discussed, like marriage and divorce, the upkeep of the family tomb, circumcision, quarrels of different kinds, or it may be misfortune which concerns them all or one of them. The eldest son is the chairman, and he has the last word in the decisions. He is looked upon as the substitute for his father, and he is the connecting link between the sisters and brothers (loham-pianakaviana). Even if he is less gifted than the others, he has the authority, which is protected by many taboos. Here are some of them:

(27) Do not drink water before your elder brother has been given water, because you then would be in danger of falling into the ditch (Aza misotro rano mialoha ny rahalahy zokinao, ndrao hianjera antatatra)31. Another version: Do not drink water before your elder brother, as that makes you blameworthy, and will lead to your early death (Aza misotro rano alohan'ny zokinao, fa mahavoatsiny, ka mahafaty tanora anao).

The elder brother's priority is evident from the following: It was not the custom of our ancestors (28) to remain seated when an elder brother came into the house, but he had to be given the seat. Otherwise one would die young (Tsya fanaon'ny razanany ny mipetraka amin'ny ahalana an-trano, raha misy rahalahy zokiny miditra, fa miafa ny zandriny, fa mahafolaka an-dantony)32. If in a meeting of a council one can support one's statements by referring to the ancestors, all discussion will stop, and the old taboo rules will be followed.

(29) Do not sit on the right hand side of your father or elder brother, as that will bring blame on you (Aza mipetraka eo ankavanana'ny
rainao na rahalahy zokinao fa mahazo tsiny)\textsuperscript{33}. The right side means dignity.

(30) It is taboo to tap one’s father or elder brother on the shoulder (like a comrade). Only if the elder one does this first is it permitted to do the same (Fady ny mitehin-t soroka ny ray aman-dreny, na ny rahalahy zoky, fa tsy maintsy izy no aloha)\textsuperscript{34}. As seen from the above examples, many of these seniority taboos concern the father and the elder brother. These rules about subordinating oneself to somebody are very strict, and they are absolutely indisputable. They are in themselves laws of good and decent behaviour, and they constitute the social order of precedence. The height of the body is also of importance. It is a rule that if a son is taller than his father or elder brother, this difference in height must be bought. According to his position (31) he has no right to be taller than they, and it is, therefore, this right he must buy. (Raha manan-tombo halavany noho ny ray na zoky ny zandry, dia vidina, fa hatramin’ny asy no tena lalâna (sahâza) ho anjarany, ary ny halavany dia tsy maintsy vidiny aminy, vao azo)\textsuperscript{35}. This difference in height is quite a serious thing, as it concerns the father’s honour, or if he is dead, the elder brother’s honour. The tall boy may be arrogant and oppose his parents and guardians. His extra inches must in a way be cut off, and this he can do by giving his father (or brother) a sum of money or an ox, a good overcoat or a nice lamba, as a sort of excuse for being so big. In this way he would show that in spite of all he is submissive.

(32) It is taboo for an elder brother or for parents to carry the spade or the empty basket home from the field when a younger brother or the son is with them\textsuperscript{36}. The younger one must carry the things.

It is a very common custom that (33) a man, who is presenting a case, or expressing his point of view in a meeting or a council, is not allowed to say anything himself\textsuperscript{37}. He must be represented by his father, and he will explain the case. If the father is dead, the elder brother will conduct the case.

The relationship between father and son is also shown in the following two rules: (34) To answer back when one’s father is angry and reproves is prohibited\textsuperscript{38}. In the same way (35) it is taboo to conduct a case against one’s own father\textsuperscript{39}. It does not matter whether he is right or wrong. (36) It is not allowed to send an elder brother to fetch some-
thing⁴₀, (37) or to ask him to carry one’s burden⁴¹. If, however, the younger brother is in trouble, the elder brother usually offers his help, and it is admirable how brotherhood can help the individual in the problems of the day.

Seniority does not only count in the family. One has to show respect for all who are older than oneself. The Natives are very particular on this point. If an old man is sitting by the roadside, or outside his house, (38) one cannot just pass without saying anything. One must say: “May I pass, please” (Mbay ary, tempoko). This polite remark is very common and can be heard in the house, on the roads, in the village, everywhere. The respect for age is so common that such a remark is spontaneous, it is natural to everybody, even to the small children. Whether the older one is known or not means nothing in this respect. We shall take an example from the weekly market-day, when practically everybody, both great and small, goes to the market place. The farmers come with their corn and potatoes, with pigs and fowls and cows for sale. The potter and his wife bring heaps of pots, the blacksmith brings all the tools of his trade from his workshop, the carpenter bears his new, red suitcases along the narrow paths. All are in a hurry in order to be at the market-place early enough to be able to sell their things and to buy from others. When the children and the young people pass the older ones, they all mumble their “Excuse me, may I pass, please”. The old ones mumble in reply “all right” (e-eh). These en passant remarks fall quite naturally, and show that respect for seniority is a law of the society.

The second example is from everyday life. A young man has started on a long journey, and he walks very fast. On the path ahead of him he can see an old man struggling with a heavy burden. He carries two baskets, which are tied on to a stick resting on his shoulder. The young man is now facing a problem: How can he pass this old man? (39) It is taboo to pass him without further ceremony⁴². When he overtakes him, he says: “Do not let it be taboo to me to carry your burden.” Then he carries the burden in front of the old man for a while and leaves it on the path. The old man thanks him, and the young man can continue with good conscience. This everyday example is not first and foremost a sign of love, but of tact and politeness.
There are a lot of taboos which are determined by vintana. Some orientation is therefore necessary. The instructions concerning destiny are so comprehensive that a complete description would be too voluminous. Only the main points will be dealt with here, in so far as it is necessary for the understanding of the taboos in question. In the literature on this topic the following works are of interest: L. Vig: *Skæbne-lære og Dagvelgeri blandt Madagasserne*¹, H. Russillon: *Le Vintana ou sort*², L. Dahle: *Sikidy and Vintana*³, R. P. Callet: *Tantara ny Andriana eto Madagascar*⁴ (hereafter shortened to Tant.Andr.).

Vintana is a power which has a strong influence on many things. If a new house or a new tomb is to be built, it must be done in accordance with vintana. The future vintana (destiny) of a new-born child depends on the month and the day it is born. Sowing and harvesting, marriage and burial, in short, all kinds of important work must take place on fixed days, and these one can find by means of the vintana system.

Since this system is of such a vital importance for the understanding of the whole matter, it will be necessary constantly to refer to the vintana system in the following chapters, especially chapters VI, VII, VIII, IX, XIII, and XIV. The special vintana technique, which concerns all these chapters, I shall, therefore, deal with here. Thus the reader is advised to refer to this system and its interpretations when reading the above-mentioned chapters. A day may be a lucky one (tsara) and thus bring happiness, or it may be an unlucky one (rasty) bringing disaster. Every day and every month has its definite vintana character. To oppose the vintana power is something impossible and unthinkable, as it is almighty. It is
like an inexorable law of nature, to which everybody must blindly subject himself.

With regard to its functions and encroachment on the daily life of the people, it acts like a despotic and independent power. However, it is not isolated from the supernatural powers. According to common beliefs, vintana was instituted by Andriamanitra. It has been practised by the ancestors through generations. The sacred dead ones of the family sanction its decisions, and these express at the same time the will of the ancestors. The different sub-gods, who are Andriamanitra's messengers, superintend strictly that the people arrange their work according to this, and the penalty for opposing vintana is always unquestionable.

The vintana system is known all over the Island. It is more or less the same in the different tribes, but the interpretation and the symbolism may differ. This must be kept in mind when reading literature on vintana. The application of the vintana power can be found in the Natives' calendar, which is mostly of a religious character. The official calendar was introduced by the French colonial administration. According to the vintana calendar, a week has the following seven days: Alahady: Sunday, Alatsinainy: Monday, Talata: Tuesday, Alarobia: Wednesday, Alakamisy: Thursday, Zoma: Friday, Asabotsy: Saturday. According to the diviners' practices a month has 28 days. A month starts with the new moon and ends with the wane of the moon, i.e. a lunar month.

The year has 12 such months, and here are their names, starting with the first month of the year: Alahamady, Adaoro, Adizaooza, Asorotany, Alahasaty, Asombola, Adimizana, Alakarabo, Alakaosy, Adijady, Adalo, Alohotsy. These 12 months have their fixed and unchangeable places in or on the four walls of the house (see fig. 1).

The Malagasy house, the cattle-pen, the family tomb and the village, are always built in certain relations to the North, the South, the East and the West. This is all determined by the Malagasy cosmological conception of the world, as being square and horizontal. The four directions play a decisive part in this connection. As an example we shall take the dwelling house. The Alahamady month is always in the north-eastern corner, Asorotany is in the south-eastern corner, Adimizana is in the south-western corner and Adijady in the north-western
Fig. 1

Plan of a Malagasy house. Interior and vintana
corner of the house. The remaining eight months are distributed thus: two months on each wall, Adaoro and Adizaosa on the eastern wall, Alahasaty and Asomboka on the southern wall, Alakarabo and Alakosy on the western wall, and Adalo and Alootsy on the northern wall.

The four corner months are called the vintana mothers (reny vintana), and they are the most important ones. The eight months on the walls are called the vintana children (zana-bintana), and they are dependent on their "mothers". Alahamady "carries Alootsy on her back" and "holds Adaoro in her arms" like a mother. Asorotany "carries Adizaosa on her back" and "holds Alahasaty on her lap", and so on. According to their meanings, these twelve months have authority over the people as far as conduct and behaviour are concerned. Each one of them is a vintana, and they all have their definite character of destiny, which the household is bound to accept. The 28 days of a month have also their fixed places on the walls. They are distributed as follows: There are three days on each of the four corner months. These become, therefore, three vintana with their own meaning and symbolism. We shall come back to this later. The three days are called "the mouth" (vava), "the middle" (vontona), and "the end" (vody). These names are used figuratively, and they usually appear in the possessive form, implying the name of one of the months, for example: Asorotany's mouth (see fig. 1). "Mouth" may also mean beginning, and "end" may mean the last part of something. "The middle" means something in or on the middle. Vontona, which means "the middle", has the possessive form vontony. Some authors have used the term vontona, "the middle", on the second day of the corner month. Others, like L. Vig, have used a different word, "vonto", which means something swollen, for example a swollen finger, or the increase of something, be it good or bad. Vontona and vonto have both the same possessive form, vontony, and this has led to confusion even among the Natives. If vonto is used as a name of the second day of the corner month, a vintana interpretation would be that this day will increase something. However, if we use vontona, "the middle", it would mean the day which is between the first and the third day, which are called "the beginning" and "the end" respectively. It is, therefore, in all likelihood vontona which is the right word, as this is in harmony with the context.
Thus the four corner months have three days each, in all twelve days of destiny. The eight months, which have their places on the walls, have only two days each, “the beginning” (vava), and “the end” (vody). They are in all 16 days, which added to the 12 corner days make 28 days. One must, however, have in mind that these 28 days are 28 powerful destinies (vintana) of each of the 12 months. They are not first and foremost the number of days in the lunar month, which has 29 or 30 days. In order to understand this, we must take a look at the counting of the days.

The Malagasy year starts with the Alahamady month, which is the month of the king and the nobles. The place of this month is in the sacred north-eastern corner of the house, towards sunrise. The diviners observe the phases of the moon very closely.

If we are in Alahamady and want to count the days, we shall have to start in the north-eastern corner of the house and go southwards against the movement of the sun. In the southern hemisphere the sun moves from the East towards the North before it begins to sink. One comes from Alahamady to Asorotany, further westwards to Adimirana, then northwards to Adijady, and at the end of the month one has come back to Alahamady. This is the monthly circle which the vintana runs around the house. All the 12 months complete this circle in turns during a year. The first day of the Alahamady month is Alahamady’s beginning, the second day is Alahamady’s middle, the third day is Alahamady’s end, the fourth day is Adaoro’s beginning, the fifth day is Adaoro’s end, and so on until the 28th day. When the month has 29 days, it is not completed on Alohotsy’s end but on Alahamady’s beginning, and if it has 30 days, the month ends on Alahamady’s middle. The following month does not start on Alahamady’s end, but on Adaoro’s beginning, and then it is new moon again. A month cannot start on “the middle” or on “the end”, only on “the beginning”. In order to get the correct number of days in a month, one simply adds to the 28 days.

Because of the constant movement of the moon, vintana is incessantly moving around the house. The moon “rises into new life” when it is new, “reaches its fullness” (feno manana) when it is full, and the wane of the moon is called “the moon’s death” (fatim-bolana).
The seven days of a week and the 12 vintana months have each their special function and character. They tell the people what is advisable and what is not advisable on such and such a day. If a day is an unlucky one for certain kinds of work, it will automatically become taboo to do such work on that day. Other days may be fortunate ones, bringing happiness. There are a great many taboos for the different kinds of work. The 12 different destinies have even their own colours with symbolic meanings. The different colours influence the special character of a day and make it a good one or a bad one. The colours also work as a guide when trying to find out what to do in order to turn an evil vintana into a good one. (See chart on the week-days' destinies, p. 36). This is of great importance when the future destiny of a new-born child is to be decided, i.e. if it will have a happy or unhappy future, and also if it will be allowed to grow up. By dealing with each month separately we shall get a general characterization of the fundamental meanings and functions of vintana. Secondly, we shall find the meanings of each of the 28 days in relation to its beginning, middle, and end. Thirdly, their meanings in relation to the seven days of the week will be given.

These seven days have different meanings with regard to destiny, and they influence the interpretation of the 28 destinies. We must, therefore, first study the seven days and find out what they bring of good and evil, and then deal with the different vintana of the month.

The days of the week and their destiny

Sunday (Alahady) is a powerful day because it is “the oldest one of the days” (zokin'andro). It has more authority and power than any of the other days. The word Alahady is similar to malady: hear well, apprehend quickly. What is done on a Sunday, is quickly and well done. White (fotsy) is the symbol of this day, but it does not stand for innocence. On the contrary, “to white one's neighbour” (mamotsifotsy namana) means slandering. “To white another's door” (mamotsy varavaranana) is to go slandering from house to house. “To spit white” (manao fotsy rora) is what one does after having been unsuccessful when begging for financial help, or after having lost one's case in court.
White does not mean purity either. For this there are other expressions, like madio, which is used about clean clothes, and figuratively about being free from taboo impurity. A European is not called “the white man”, as it would mean that he is ugly. The Native avoids this cleverly by calling him “the foreigner” (ny vazaha). “A white man” can also mean a slave who is ransomed (olom-potsy). With the ending -ny (fotsiny) it has the meaning “only”, “nothing but”. Ny mipetraha fotsiny: to be idle and lazy. To have a walk without any special aim: mitsangatsangana fotsiny. A man who cannot be relied on “says white words” (olona fotsy teny). There are many expressions showing that white things are something of poor quality. White spots on the skin might be the signs of leprosy. An albino (bobo) is not handsome. Silver coins are “white money” (vola fotsy) whilst golden coins are “red money” (vola mena).

Sunday is very powerful and may, therefore, be dangerous, especially for burials. (1) To bury a corpse on a Sunday is taboo, but if it is absolutely necessary, it must be done when “the eye of the day”, the sun, is “dead”, (folaka ny masoandro) i.e. after sunset. There is practically no dusk, so that the burial will have to be conducted in the dark. If there is a burial in daylight on a Sunday, this will cause “the death of young people” (folaka an-dantony). Young people and children have very little resistance, and the powerful Sunday may easily break them down. After sunset it is less dangerous because the day has come to an end. The following night belongs to the vintana of the next day. Sacrifices and purification ceremonies may be conducted on a Sunday.

Monday (Alatsinainy) is a day of weeping and sorrow, a proper day for burials. The one who has just passed away is handed over (famoi-zana) on this day, when the relatives part with him. It is also the right day for purification ceremonies (in Merina: fanaovan’afana), which naturally take place after burials.

According to Tant.Andr. it is a red day, but L. Vig maintains that Monday is a black day, and his interpretation is according to this theory. The colours of the days are very often the same in the different places, but the diviners may also have different opinions. If black is the colour of a day, the characteristics of the day are controversies
about inheritance of land. Black soil (tany mainty) is good planting land. (2) It is not advisable to start any important work on a Monday, as it is a gloomy day, and it will take extra effort to complete the work.

Tuesday (Talata) is a “light” and good day (andro tsara). Its destiny is good. It is pierced through (andro gorobaka), and it is, therefore, easy to work on a Tuesday. The spade cuts the soil as if the sod were pierced through. It is, however, very risky to make an agreement or to make an alliance with somebody on this day. A thing which is pierced through is the symbol of unfaithfulness and the breaking of friendship. If the Natives would break their loyalty to the authorities, they would present a cloth which was pierced through with a spear. By doing so they would indicate that the management was falling to pieces, and that the rulers were out of power. This was the way king Andrianampoinimerina of Antananarivo acted when informing the Betsileo king that he was defeated. The king of Betsileo was betrayed by his own relatives and had to subject himself to the king of Antananarivo. Tuesday is an unreliable day, a day without content. (3) It is, therefore, taboo to make important agreements on this day. To go to the wars, or to start on a long journey, however, is very fitting on a Tuesday. L. Vig8 interprets this day as “too light”, a vintana of playing and joy. It is the day for “light work”, like making love, but not for engagements. It is not a good day for important enterprises, such as starting the building of a new house or founding a village. Furthermore, it is a day for making sacrifices and for turning the corpse. Its colour is questionable, as it is striped and spotted, i.e. a day of scars and marks, as from small-pox epidemics and wounds.

Wednesday (Alarobia) is an evil day (andro ratsy). A proverb says that “Wednesday does not return” (Alarobia tsy miverina). (4) It is not a day for travelling, as one may run the risk of not coming back. (5) Neither ought one start any work of importance, because it is a “hard day” (andro mafy). If one starts working in the rice fields on a Wednesday, there will be no harvest. Nothing will come back, because it is the day “that does not return”. Labourers will make off and not return.
Wednesday is a good day for burials as there will not be any revenants. Besides, it has the effect that there will seldom be burials in the village. The turning of the corpse (famadihana) is done on this day because of its quality: The dead ones will remain in the tomb and not worry people in the village. It is also fitting for ceremonies of purification.

Thursday (Alakamisy) has a double nature, the reason being its name. The ending misy is similar to the verb misy: “there is”, “exists” which etymologically has nothing to do with Alakamisy. Misy is not an auxiliary. It is used to express something really existing. If taken in the positive way, it is a good day for weddings, as it will make the new home prosperous. It is wise to start the building of a new house on Thursday. Then there will be plenty of food, money, and children. The present tense misy (“there exists,”) can easily take on a future meaning, and is, therefore, filled with optimism and expectations. Understood like this, the day has a good destiny (tsara vintana). Thursday may, however, have a very different meaning. If taken in the negative way, (6) Thursday is dangerous. Then the dangerous meaning of its name will cause death in the village, and it is taboo to have burials on this day. It is a taboo day (andro fady), and practically all over the country this is how it is understood. This seems to be L. Vig’s interpretation as well. The day is black and weak, the day of the slaves. In Sakalava and other dialects this day is called Kamisy. Ka in Sakalava corresponds with asa in Merina, referring to prohibition. Ka misy (in two words) means “it shall not be”, or “far be it!”. It is a strong warning, stressing that all evil must be kept away.

Friday (Zoma) is the day for burials. Tant.Andr. says that “Friday mixes neither with good nor with bad” (Ny zoma tsy miomba ny soa tsy miomba ny ratsy). With regard to burials, it is a comparatively simple vintana. L. Vig calls it a red day. The red colour stands for power. This is the king’s colour, and Friday is the day of the king and the nobles, a powerful day (andro mahery). It symbolizes the power of kings and authorities. This display of power will often fall on the inferior and on the masses. It is typical that the day is called the day of weeping and of bloodshed. If the witch makes use of the red colour,
it means certain death for somebody in the village. The red colour is, therefore, also the colour of death and bloodshed. The dead ones are wrapped in a red *lamba*.

Saturday (*Asabotsy*) is in Tant. Andr.\(^{12}\) characterized as a "swelling day" (*mibontsina*). The last two syllables in *Asabotsy* — *botsy*, are similar to the root of the verb *mibontsina* — *bontsina*, (or *botsina*) which means swelling, like, for example, rubber tubing which is pumped up, eyes swollen after weeping, or the swelling of a corpse. The functions of this destiny are burials, mourning ceremonies, and lamentations over the newly dead. This is also a day of purification ceremonies. Thus we see how one word can influence the functions of a day. According to L. Vig\(^{13}\) Saturday is the children’s day. (7) It is a dangerous day for parents because the children easily oppose them. Illness on a Saturday is caused by children and young people. Soldiers are easily wounded on this day. It is the day of the “blue *lamba*”, the symbol of freedom. By wearing a blue *lamba* one showed that one was a free man, and not a slave. It is also a colour of quality. “A blue voice” means a good singing voice (*manga feo*). A fairly common name of a town is *Ambolahimanga*, which literally means “Blue Hill”. The real meaning is “the hill where it is pleasant to live.” The wooden post of sacrifice in the village is called “the blue tree” (*ny hazo manga*). *Manga* means dark-blue and shiny. (8) Saturday is an unfortunate day for big and important work.

In the following chart of the destinies of the seven days\(^{14}\), I have presented these synoptically, showing what directly follows the character of the days. This is also expressed in the colour symbolism. The causes of illness and accidents are deduced from the character of the days. They come from people, animals, and things which have the colour of the day in question. The day also indicates the unfortunate destiny of the new-born baby. From the chart one can read how the taboos and what is used to remove the evil destiny, both correspond with the day’s colour and its characteristics. Thus we get a “chain” of five links, which exactly work into each other: the day — its character — the cause of evil — the taboo — the sacrifice. This conformity to law is carried through all along the line. The synopsis shows that the diviner does not work at random or arbitrarily. He works according
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>The day’s character, <em>vintana</em></th>
<th>The causes of illness and misfortunes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Sunday      | A white day. The best one for sacrifice.  
The morning is good, the afternoon evil and dangerous. | White things:  
White stones, white food, e.g. milk, foam of water, bewitching from an old white-haired person. If the day falls on the *Alakaosy* destiny, meat of a white goat from the West, as this destiny has its place at the western wall of the house. |
| Monday      | Black. A day of sorrow and weeping.  
Conflicts about inheritance of land and property. Quarrels between man and wife. | Black fowls. If this day falls on the *Alakaosy* destiny, the evil will be caused by black goats from the West. |
| Tuesday     | A light day. A day of happiness. Multi-coloured. The day of scars and marks.  
A good day for sacrifice and for light work, for flirting and dalliance. | Striped, spotted things, with incised marks. Meat from spotted cattle. On an *Alakaosy* Tuesday, meat from red-spotted goats from the West. |
| Wednesday   | A brown day. The women’s day. A day of sacrifice when the women pray to their love-charms.   | Brown domestic animals. On *Alakaosy* Wednesday: a brown goat or buck from the West. Women who bring disaster and death on others by means of bewitched food and other things. |
| Thursday    | A black day. The day of the slaves. A troublesome day.                                      | All evils on this day come, in one way or another, from the slaves.                                   |
| Friday      | A red day. The day of the king and the nobles.  
| Saturday    | The day of the blue *lamba*.  
The day of children and young people.  
The day of the scars. One is easily wounded in a fight.                                       | From youth, who by means of bewitching throw evil on older people, and on their parents.             |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fady</th>
<th>Things which are used to remove the vintana’s fady</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To work, especially in the afternoon.</td>
<td>A white fowl is sacrificed for a new-born baby, who is born on a Sunday. It is not always necessary to slaughter the fowl, but only to swing it over or to rub it on the child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat from white animals, “white” food,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>milk, food consisting of white scum.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with white things.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To eat anything which is green, such as</td>
<td>Black animals for new-born babies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wild or cultivated vegetables, as these</td>
<td>A spear, which has been used when killing a wild boar, is used for people who are ill because of bewitching. The carrying pole from the hunt is also used for such cases. Black planting-soil, from ground laid waste by locusts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>remind one of agriculture.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy and difficult work, like the building of houses and the founding of villages.</td>
<td>A multi-coloured, spotted fowl is rubbed on the new-born. This protects the child from small-pox and syphilis. It also protects the skin from getting scars, marks and scales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food from three kinds of animals or three kinds of plants. A meal consisting of three different dishes. These things have “three colours”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lungs and all kinds of food of a brown colour.</td>
<td>A brown fowl is swung over a new-born Wednesday-child, or it is just rubbed on the child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To receive as a gift or to eat anything which has come from the slaves.</td>
<td>A fowl with the colour of this day is swung over the child or just rubbed on the child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To perform divination (misikidy) on this day, because the day will not make this prophecy sacred, i.e. effective and capable of manifestation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food made from blood. All kinds of food which is made of anything of a red colour. burnt locusts, because they have a reddish colour.</td>
<td>For a Friday-child a red fowl is used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work done by nursemaids.</td>
<td>Bluish-black fowls are sacrificed and rubbed on the child who is born on a Saturday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food which the children have played with or touched, or will give to their parents. These fady must be kept in order to master the powerful vintana of the new-born, so that the child will not become arrogant and overbearing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to certain methods of causality. The contents of this table are his own secret. The great body of the people are ignorant of them, but they accept blindly what he decides.

*The twelve months and their specific meanings*

During the present study I have made use of three different sources. Information about the 28 days is taken from L. Vig's book. His material is mostly from Vakinankaratra in the Inland, but it represents also generally common fundamental ideas. Another source of information on this topic is Tant. Andr. The material presented there is mostly from Imerina, but it also gives common Malagasy points of view. From this book one only gets general information about each month without a detailed interpretation of each day (the beginning, the middle, the end). In the present chapter this general characteristic follows the explanations of the three or the two days in each month respectively. Then follows a supplementary interpretation from the Antanosy tribe, which lives in the South-eastern part of the Island. This information I have received from Antanosy people. When using this material I give the name of the tribe. The three above-mentioned sources supplement each other and give a fairly comprehensive account of the matter.

1. *Alahamady's* beginning (*vav'Alahamady*) is a good destiny. The new-born baby will be eloquent and a popular speaker (*mpihabary*), because *Alahamady* resembles the word *mala'ady*: quick at grasping, quick at learning to speak. So far it is a good destiny. If, however, the day happens to be a Thursday, (see The days of the week and their destiny pp. 31 ff. also the chart, pp. 36—37) *Alahamady's* destiny might be influenced by the destiny of Thursday, which is a black day, the day of the slaves, and therefore bad. Here are two contradictory destinies. If a child is born on such a Thursday, the positive powers might be victorious and make the child strong and rich, or the negative powers might win and make it weak and poor. Only the future can tell which of these powers will win the battle.

2. *Alahamady's* middle (*vonton'Alahamady*) is a good day for different kinds of work, especially for sowing.
3. Alahamady's end (*vodin'Alahamady*) is a good destiny, though not as good as the two above-mentioned days.

Thus there are three Alahamady days in a month, as *vintana* runs its monthly circle. However, if one of the three days falls on a Wednesday, the red and dangerous colour of Wednesday will be dominating. If a child is born on such a red day, the *vintana* must be removed (*alaim-bintana*) i.e. what is bad in it, in order that the destiny of the day and of the child will not be dangerous to the parents. A ceremony of exorcism will be necessary, and for this a red sheep is used, as the Wednesday is red (brownish red).

According to Tant. Andr.'s summary characterization of Alahamady it is a good destiny. But it is powerful (*vintana mahery*), because it is the destiny of the king and the nobles, and thus it is red. Red is the most excellent and glorious of all colours. The Sovereign of Antanana-rivo had a red parasol (*elo mena*), and others were strictly forbidden to carry such an article.

Alahamady was the day of the bathing festivals (*Fandroana*). It was also New Year's Day and the National Day. If a nobleman is to do some work of importance, it must be done on Alahamady. It is like "a bull rooting up the earth" (*ombalahy mitrongy tany*), and this means extreme power. The north-eastern corner of the house is the Alahamady corner. It is in this corner that the master of the house conducts sacrifices, and keeps the sacred things: the fetish (*ny sampy*), which is an oxhorn filled with power (*mohara*), the sacrificial knife, the sacrificial bowl and the censer, i.e. if the man is a sacrificer. Just outside this corner, in the court-yard, is the place of the great sacrifices and exorcisms.

The Antanosy interpretation: In this tribe Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday are evil days, if Alahamady falls on one of them. Wednesday has already been mentioned (No. 9). If a child is born on one of these three days, and it happens to be Alahamady's beginning, the child will later on kill its father. If it falls in Alahamady's end, the child will kill its mother. If this day falls in Alahamady's middle, the child will bring death to both the parents. One has got to call the diviner (*ny mpanandro*), and have the destiny of such a day changed. If the day cannot be changed, the child must be put to death. Monday,
Tuesday and Friday in the Alahamady month are all good. Friday children especially have a very good destiny, because Friday is the day of the king and the nobles (andron'andriana).

(12) Alahamady is an unfortunate day for the planting of rice, and thus it is fady.

Here follow some of the taboos for women in this month:

(13) A woman must not go out to the rice-fields with her husband to look at the year’s crop. The reason for this may be that Alahamady is the month of the man, not of the woman.

(14) It is also taboo for a woman to work on this vintana.

(15) Furthermore it is taboo for her to fetch mahampy-reeds, (16) vankhoa (pandanus), and (17) rice from the rice-shed, as well as (18) to fetch green grass.

(19) It is not the custom to have funerals in this month. It is too powerful and dangerous for that. As mentioned above, the name of this month is very similar to malàdy (quick). If burials are conducted on this day, the similarity of the words may cause the death to return quickly and fetch others.

4. Adaoro’s beginning (vavan’Adaoro) is neither good nor bad. It is, however, a good day for the preparation of bull-fights. Then the game-bulls’ horns are sharpened, and their points are smeared with scorpion-poison or plant-poison. It is also the day for the castrating of bulls, and this day will give them long horns, which is the sign of fine and strong cattle.

(20) Children born on this day must not eat with horn-spoons, as this “horn-destiny” will persecute them, and tear them asunder like an angry bull. It is a good day for sowing plants which have strong stalks, like maize, this being strong. This plant alludes to the strong bull-destiny.

5. Adaoro’s end finds itself between good and bad. It must not be neglected or overlooked. On the other hand one must not “go for it” i.e. challenge it. Though Adaoro’s vintana is harmless in itself, (21) it will be dangerous if its beginning falls on a Tuesday and (22) its end is on a Wednesday. Then both the days are evil ones. According to Tant. Andr., Adaoro has, generally judged, a good destiny. It is red and often connected with fire: doro. Adaoro is often pronounced Adoro and the similarity to the dangerous word doro is then striking. It is a
general opinion (Tant. Andr.) that the lightning strikes very easily in this month, literally translated: “hated by the lightning” (*halam-baratra*). Fire will easily take place in this month. When a man has built a new house, he will walk around in the house with some burning grass to make it look as if the house were on fire. By doing this he protects the house from fire.

(23) A child born in *Adaoro* has a destiny which is connected with fire, so that it will be dangerous and bring disaster. In order to change this destiny into a safe one, a provisional grass hut is built outside the village. The mother creeps into this hut with the baby and sets fire to it. When she cannot bear being in the hut any longer, she dashes out with the child and cries on the top of her voice: “Fire! I am burnt!” From now on the family can live happily together with the new member, as the dangerous fire-*vintana* has been taken away. The Antanosy people say that it is an evil *vintana*, especially Wednesday and Thursday. The children which are born on these days of *Adaoro* will kill their parents. If their birthday falls in *Adaoro*’s beginning “the child will kill its father, the mother will be killed if the child is born in *Adaoro*’s end.” One has got to take away the *vintana* taboo. Otherwise the child will be a constant threat to the parents. If only this *vintana* is taken away, the child has every chance to grow up and be strong, healthy, and prosperous.

Apart from Wednesday and Thursday *Adaoro* is a beneficial *vintana*. This month is a very fortunate one for planting. It gives a rich harvest, be it rice, sweet potatoes or manioc. Storing places for milk are made on this *vintana*, especially for sour milk which is used a great deal. The keeping of cattle is an important livelihood in the Antanosy tribe. On this same *vintana* the places for the milking of the cattle are also made. Certain important undertakings and long journeys will be successful if made in this month.

6. *Adizaosa*’s beginning has a lucky destiny. Those who are born on this day will be very lucky in their farmwork, and their harvests will be big. This *vintana* is not altogether good, as the children will not be strong and healthy.

7. *Adizaosa*’s end is also good, especially as far as growing is concerned. What has been planted will grow well, and yield a good
harvest, especially the rice. This plant is too weak to be planted on the strong Adaoro’s “horn-destiny”. (24) A weak plant cannot be sown or planted on a powerful destiny day. (25) If one of the two vintana falls on a Saturday, its destiny will be weakened and a ceremony of exorcism will be necessary.

In Tant. Andr. Adizaosa is a good vintana. It is strong and firm and does not move or swing to and fro. The symbol of its stability is the large waterpot (ny sinibe) in the house, which has its fixed place by the Adizaosa wall. (26) It is fady to move it. It is filled from other pots or from bamboo pipes, which the women use when fetching water. “To be as firm and steady as the big water-pot” is a well-known idiom, and it shows Adizaosa’s character. It is therefore an excellent day for weddings. The new home will be solid and steady, i.e. the wife will remain with her husband, and they will always have a harmonious home. These are qualities which are valued by everybody. It is also a day for the building of new houses, and for the founding of a new village, as there is every chance that the dwelling place will be “true” (marim-ponenana), i.e. that the house or the village will be founded in the right way, and “will not oppose the destiny” (tsy manohibintana). The one who is born in Adizaosa will be blessed with a long life, he will be old and grey-haired. The main cause of this is the stability of Adizaosa.

According to the Antanosy interpretation, (27) Saturday and Sunday in this month are evil days, be they at its beginning or at its end. Children born on the above-mentioned days have a bad vintana, but not like that of Alahamady and Adaoro, where the parents of a new-born baby will be killed. Here it is the child itself that will be hit. It will die young (folaka an-dantony), or become a useless person in the community. It will be a nuisance to its parents and sisters and brothers. Thus the destiny of such a child must be changed in order to make the child a useful individual. Here we shall make note of the two aggressive ways in which the evil vintana of a new-born child may show itself. Firstly the vintana of a child may turn itself against the parents. Though both the parents and all the other people around think that the child’s destiny is evil (ratsy vintana), this need not necessarily mean that it really is so. The child may be “strong with regard to destiny” (zasa mahery vintana). This destiny will make the
child strong, both physically and spiritually. It will become rich and clever, strong and brave. When growing up it will acquire all qualities of importance. The jealous father is afraid of what will happen to himself and his authority in the future when the son grows up. Something drastic will have to be done about this.

Secondly the evil vintana may turn against the child itself and give it a miserable future. In this case the parents consult the diviner in order to have the destiny of the child changed, so that it can grow up and be a healthy and useful individual. The first-mentioned case, however, is more complicated. If the vintana turns against the father, the great question is if the child ought to grow up at all, or if the vintana should be changed. In such cases it may be necessary to put the child out in the bush or to kill it in another way.

8. Asorotany's mouth is good for a wedding, especially if it begins in the afternoon and lasts overnight. Then the married couple will be so well linked together, that the union will "last all through their life". The meaning of the day will be explained below.

9. Asorotany's middle means a very strong joining, like a stone wall or pieces of iron welded together, and it is therefore a reliable day for the feast of turning of the corpse (see ch. IX). The most important thing is that this function should take place in Asorotany's middle. This destiny will keep the door of the grave closed, so that it will not be opened except when death is caused by old age. This destiny will also prevent the corpses in the grave from being robbed of their valuables, which were buried with them. It will also keep witches (mpamosavo) away, so that they cannot bewitch the dead ones, or get fatal charms (ody ratsy) from the corpses.

10. (28) Asorotany's end is an evil destiny because of its power. The one born in this destiny will strike and overcome his parents and relatives. The new-born baby is a direct threat, and it must be put onto an ant hill as soon as possible. The powerful destiny will be destroyed when entering into the ants. Another method is to put the baby into a pot of boiling water. An old Sakalava custom is to bury the child alive. When the case is complicated, however, the diviners may discuss the matter for years before they agree on what should be done. In the meantime the child may grow and have all signs of being strong and healthy. If the diviners then decide that it is an evil vintana,
and that the child must die, the whole family will oppose them and insist on letting the child grow up. If the diviner wins in the end, the child will have to be buried alive, even if it is 10 or 12 years old. I have been informed by Natives that the herdboys may hear the cry from these miserable children for two days, as they are covered with stones, leaving only a small hole for their heads. There is also a practice of putting a new-born baby in the entrance to the cattle-pen. When the cattle are driven out in the morning the child may be trampled to death. If, however, the child survives, people from the vicinity may adopt the child, and the evil destiny will not turn against the adoptive parents. The child will be a socially useful individual, and even entitled to inheritance. This adoption must be officially declared in a meeting at the sacrificial place (so amin'ny hazo manga) in the village. It is worth while noting this destiny, as it is one of the most powerful ones of the 12, and as there are so many tragedies connected with it.

There are three Asorotany days in a month, the beginning, the middle, and the end. Thus there are 36 of them in a year. They are all evil, and therefore dreaded by the people. (29) The power of Asorotany is fortified if it falls on a Saturday.

In Tant. Andr. the interpretation of this vintana is limited to the positive side. It is hard and powerful (andro mafy, mahery vintana), and is therefore a day on which both the nobles and the people in general may begin working on a new family tomb. The tomb will then be solid, and it will last for ever.

The Antanosy people say that Asorotany is a powerful and dangerous destiny. (30) Wednesday and (31) Thursday are especially dangerous, but Saturday (mentioned in no. 29) and (32) Sunday are also bad. Children of this vintana will hurt and ruin others, and they themselves will easily be wounded too. A boy will turn into a good and brave soldier if born on this powerful day, whilst a girl will be patronizing and arrogant and even unfaithful to her husband. The children’s vintana is too powerful (mahery loatra). In order to make it weak and manageable, it is necessary to remove what is dangerous in it.

The only good days of Asorotany are Monday, Tuesday and Friday. It is the general opinion, irrespective of tribes, that (33) houses must not be built in Asorotany. It is so powerful that those living in such a house, will have to surrender to its power. This is quite intelligible,
so much the more as it is the day for the building of tombs. Houses for the living cannot be built on a vintana on which houses for the dead are being built.

11. Alahasaty’s beginning (mouth) is like jaws, which again and again tear asunder, just like a dog tearing up a piece of meat, or like the bird Papango, which tears to pieces what it has got in its talons. This destiny is, like Adaoro’s horn, a good one, especially for the sharpening of the game-bulls’ horns.

Children born on this day will become eloquent and bright. This destiny has much in common with Alahamady’s beginning.

12. Alasahaty’s end is good for sowing and planting of rice, maize, sweet potatoes and other crops.

According to Tant. Andr. (34) it is the day of the witches and of their charms, a black day. Its vintana must, therefore, be taken away. In order to remove the evil of this day, Sodisafana, a herb (Bryophyllum proliferum salis), is used. The diviners say: “I take this Sodisafana. It is evil, not good, but it takes away the evil, and it is the bad vintana’s substitute.”

(35) In Alahasaty’s beginning nothing of importance must be done, i.e. if it is done without the help of idols (raha tsy asandatra nu sampy), whose aid may be invoked by means of sacrifices. In Alahasaty’s end, however, one may start important undertakings. It is a very good day for weddings because it gives growth. The Antanosy call it a sharp destiny, a day for the making of weapons. This will give them a sharp edge. It is also a good day for the sharpening of the gamebulls’ horns.

(36) Children born on this day have a very dangerous vintana, especially if born on (37) Monday or Tuesday. The little one will, at least twice in the future, stab people. If he does not stab others, he will stab himself twice, so this dangerous destiny will have to be removed.

Alahasaty is good for planting, especially if the day falls on Monday, Tuesday or Friday. As it is sharp, it is fady to walk far or to travel on this day. One may run into something sharp: a robber’s spear, a scorpion, a person with a poisonous tongue, a poisonous charm, and so on.

It is, however, possible to make the vintana less sharp. This is done in the following way: The witch-doctor takes a forked twig, which has the shape of an ox-horn. He then sharpens one of the prongs and
makes the other one blunt. The sharp one stands for Alahasaty's sharpness, the blunt one causes the sharp one to be less dangerous. During the exorcism the twig is put into a pot of water, which has been boiled together with charms (ody). The forked twig, which has now been consecrated, is given to the one who is starting on a long journey. Without this consecrated twig, the traveller would be in great danger.

13. Asombola's beginning is a money destiny, a day of entering into contracts and of making agreements about purchase and sale. The day will bring prosperity. It is also good for the planting of hemp and sugar cane. The destiny of the day is good if the moon is waxing, (38) bad if the moon is waning. Children who are born in Asombola's beginning must wear silver rings. One who is born in this destiny will not be allowed (39) to carry black kettles or (40) black waterpots on the head. It is Asombola's similarity to the word "vola" (money), which is the cause of this interpretation, and this determines the character of the day. It is a money month. The money, even before 1895, was the old French silver coin (5 francs). The colour of Asombola is, therefore, white, and black things become taboo, for instance black pots.

14. Asombola's end is like its beginning in that it is good when the moon is waxing and evil when the moon is waning, but it is weaker than Asombola's beginning. The end of a vintana (ny vodiny) is always weaker than its beginning (ny vavany).

According to Tant. Andr., Asombola is the vintana of money and riches, and it is, therefore, good. However, (41) if one wears a red lamba on this vintana one will not live long. The thing which takes away the evil from this vintana, is a kind of grass called Tsimbolavola. The remedy which is used in this case resembles the evil which is to be removed; Tsimbolavola resembles Asombola.

The fixed place for the rice mortar and the winnowing-pan is by the Asombola wall. White things, such as a white hen or a white ox, are sacrificed for this vintana. According to Tant. Andr., these things are used when people supplicate (italahoana) to Andriamanitra. Two things must then be done: exorcism by means of charms, and sacrifice of a white animal. Among the Antanosy people, (42) Tuesday is the evil day of Asombola, whilst all the other days are good. In spite of
this some days are bad for planting. Only Monday and Friday are really good for this type of work.

Children born on an Asombola Tuesday are usually arrogant, and they will never become rich. They will suffer from poverty as long as they live, because Asombola’s vintana brings misfortune and disaster (mavoina). As for Tuesday, which is a very “light” day, its bad character must be changed.

15. Adimizana’s beginning is powerful and dangerous because it is an “either — or”. The one who has this destiny, will either become rich and mighty, or he will become poor and miserable, according to an old saying: “This destiny carries two things, either extreme happiness or disaster.” (43) One who has the bad destiny must not pluck grass and herbs and use them as fuel. In the Inland firewood is very scarce. Grass and ferns are therefore used instead. Other taboos mentioned by L. Vig, are: (44) To fetch water in black water pots, (45) to eat meat at burials, (46) to eat with spoons and plates which are cracked or chipped, (47) to eat burnt rice, (48) to go to the well and fetch water in pots which are not quite empty, (49) to open a grave for burial. A funeral on this day will cause an increase of corpses in the tomb.

Adimizana is the mark of what is changeable and unsteady. It would be madness to conduct a burial in this month, as it would cause the door of the tomb constantly to open, and the grave would be filled quickly. Generally speaking, Adimizana is dangerous and terrifying. The door to the house is always placed near to the Adimizana-corner; its swings to and fro and is therefore unreliable.

16. Adimizana’s middle is also unsteady and changeable. People born on this day will become great and mighty, typical chiefs, or they will become vagabonds and unreliable husbands. A miniature scale is given to children born on this day, and they must always have it with them. L. Vig indicates that this might have been done in order that the charm should bind them to certain duties and thus take away their desire to start life as vagabonds. Others, with this destiny, however, had to do the opposite, (50) and treat this charm as taboo. A money scale would ruin them in the end, when they weighed out money thoughtlessly. This was when small pieces of silver were used as
currency, and the coins were cut into small pieces and weighed out on a money scale.

In order to counteract the instability of this destiny, stones were hung down from the roof in houses where women were giving birth to children. The purpose was to make the destiny steady and reliable.

17. Adimizana’s end is the destiny of fertility. It is a good day for driving the cattle to the pasture. There they stay for months with a herdboy to look after them. This destiny is also ambiguous. The cattle may increase in number and strength but they may also be reduced to almost nothing. It is a fortunate destiny for a man who is already rich, (51) but it will work against a beginner. Whether these three Adimizana days are green or black is hard to say (L. Vig), as they vary according to the different destiny calendars. On (52) Thursday these destinies are bad.

Tant. Andr. points out that because Adimizana is so near the door of the western wall, all kinds of people will pass there, both good and bad. The one who is born on this destiny will be inclined to keep next to the door, and he will be pushed to and fro and have an uncertain future, just like the door which is constantly opened and closed. It is necessary to conduct exorcisms (mamaditira). For this purpose a little bush, Tsimatimaty, is used. It means “something which is difficult to eradicate”, something tenacious of life. Tsimativonoina, a species of beetle is used for sacrifice. This animal is called “something which does not die even if it is tortured.”

Dappled cattle (omby sada) and speckled fowls (akoho maramara) are bred for use during sacrifices and prayers to Andriamanitra (Ny omby sada na akoho maramara ompiana ho entina mangataka any Andriamanitra). The multi-coloured cattle and fowls indicate the instability of the vintana’s character. (53) It is fady to those who are born on this day to wear a “joined” lamba (lamba mitohy). Joined also means continuation (mitohy) and stands for everlasting misery.

Adimizana’s middle is good for important undertakings. (54) If a wedding takes place on this day, however, one will have to make an offering (misorona) of white stones (vato karanana). This is done in order to prevent the bride from misbehaviour and from constantly running out through the door and thus become unreliable. The white stones are buried under the threshold because they are hard (mafy) and also the symbol of strength and stability. Here they serve as
charms confirming the marriage. Etymologically the word is divided into *ady* (war) and *mizana* (scale). The swinging of a scale is the symbol of *Adimizana*’s nature.

Antanosy interpretation: Wednesday and Thursday (as mentioned in no. 52) are bad days (*andro ratsy*), because they bring misfortune (*andro mavoina*). (55) Children born on these days must be thrown away, or their destiny must be changed (*ala vintana*). A child born in *Adimizana*’s beginning, which falls on a Wednesday or Thursday, will kill its father, whilst a child born at its end, which falls on one of the same days, will kill its mother. Those born in *Adamizana*’s middle will kill both the parents. It is necessary for the parents to have this destiny changed, as *Adimizana* children have a very powerful *vintana*.

As far as planting and other important undertakings are concerned, *Adimizana* is a fortunate destiny. (56) It is, however, taboo to build a house in this month. *Adimizana* is also called *Alakaforo*. The end of this word is similar to the root of another word, *foro*. From this root the verb *mamoroforo* is formed, “to bring misfortune”. As a result of this similarity (*Alakaforo — mamoroforo*), the building of houses on this *vintana* will bring misfortune on the people.

18. *Alakarabo*’s beginning is, according to L. Vig, similar to *Asorotany*’s middle, which the same author calls “joining”. The destiny encloses one like two hands holding an object. Thus it is a day for weddings, for turning the corpse, and for the dedication of houses. What is done on this day is bound and linked together. If the tomb is opened for the turning of corpses on an *Alakarabo* day, one can be sure that it will not easily open again and receive new corpses. Undertakings, which acquire firmness, stability and faithfulness, should be made on this day.

19. *Alakarabo*’s end is similar to its beginning. It is called “something which is squeezed or pressed”, like, for example, putty. Its colour is brown. People born on this day may easily be taken ill from eating and suffer from heartburn.

In Tant. Andr. *Alakarabo* is the destiny of fruit and therefore excellent for planting. It will give a big harvest.

(57) If a man has to undergo the trial by the *Tangena* ordeal\[1\], he would never do so in *Alakarabo*. If he did, he would die even if he were innocent. If it is taboo to the relatives of this man to conduct
the ordeal on this vintana, they must ask for another day. A "lighter day" is preferable. Then the victim has a chance to survive.

The Antanosy people call this vintana a rain destiny. Floods will easily cover the fields and the crops. It is (58) Wednesday and (59) Thursday which are the evil days of this month. Those who are born on one of these days, will easily be drowned in the river. When a girl born in Alakarabo is big enough to carry a water pot on her head, she will bring misfortune on herself or on others, and consequently the child's vintana must be changed. Otherwise she may be drowned when she is old enough to walk out on her own, or she may kill her mother. If her destiny cannot be changed, she must be put out in the field or perish in some other way.

(60) It is fady to conduct burials in Alakarabo, because it will add to the grief and cause more than ordinary weeping. It is too powerful for burials, but quite good for the building of houses, as the rain will make the house wet, which is a sign of blessing. A woman who is giving birth to a child will do this with greater ease at the beginning of Alakarabo.

20. (61) Alakaosy's beginning is, according to L. Vig, a very powerful destiny, even more powerful than Asorotany's end. Both Alakaosy's beginning and Asorotany's end are dreaded as destructive destinies if they occur in wintertime when the grass fields are burnt. Children born on these two monthly days of destiny in winter must be killed. The other destinies can be removed. When the Alakaosy moon appears, it is common to throw wet, green grass towards it. In some places they throw cattle-dung. This is done in order to weaken the powerful destiny. The children should be placed face downwards and killed, because their destinies are so powerful that they will destroy their parents, relatives and others. It is thought better to have such children killed than to let them grow up and cause the death of thousands of others (L. Vig). (62) If Alakaosy falls on a Monday, it will become even worse.

21. Alakaosy's end: The colour of this destiny is green with a touch of brown in it. It is a "light" destiny, similar to Adimizana's middle. One must, therefore, hang stones from the roof of the house where a child is being born. This will give the child's destiny the necessary weight in the future.
The Alakaosy month is, according to Tant. Andr., a powerful destiny and the day of the king. What is done on this day will be successful. Those who are born with this vintana, however, be it its beginning or its end, are unfortunate. This powerful destiny will keep hold of them, and they must, therefore, be killed. The new-born child is placed face downwards in water and thus drowned. It is dangerous because it will “butt its father and mother” (manoto ray aman-drey). Another method is to place the child in the entrance to the cattle-pen, so that the cattle may step on it. When the cattle pass through the entrance, one says: “If the child will butt us, let it die. If it is not going to butt us, let it live (may it not be trodden to death)”. If it survives, it will be taken care of, and it will then have a good destiny. Whether it is a boy or a girl, the child will be called Tsimandresy, which means “The one who does not conquer”, i.e. its parents. Such a child will not “butt its parents”.

Another test which is made by the diviner in order to find out about a child’s destiny, is the following: He says: “Fetch a piece of a banana stem and make something which looks like a boat. Put the little baby into the boat and push this out on the water. If the child has a good vintana, the boat will not sink.”

According to Tant. Andr. Alakaosy is also the nobles’ vintana (vintan’andriana), powerful and dangerous, and the children who are born in this month must be killed. To save them, there must be exorcism and sacrifice, in which a certain sort of wood is used. It is called “powerful things” (zava-mahery). Power is always connected with the nobles.

The Antanosy interpretation: Alakaosy and Alahasaty are the worst months of the year. Monday especially is a day of disaster (mavoina). Children born on this day will kill their parents, and they must be thrown away.

The character of Alakaosy is dry, and it therefore brings drought. Those who are born with this vintana will never be well off, as their crops will be hit by drought and their harvest will be poor. However, it is a good month for long journeys, because it gives dry weather. It is also a fortunate vintana for the fencing of a plantation in order to protect it against the wild boars. The fence will be strong enough to
keep the noxious animals away because of the powerful *vintana*. If the
day falls on a Friday, it is a good day for planting.

After having made inquiries in many different places on the island,
I have learnt that (63) it is taboo to have burials in *Alakaosy*, as this
*vintana* is very powerful and dangerous. For circumcision, however,
it is a good month because it is dry and will make the wound “dry”,
i.e. it will heal well.

22. *Adijady*’s beginning is called “*Adijady*’s cry” (L. Vig). (64) It is
an evil destiny of weeping. Children born on this day will have poor
eyes, and they will stutter. It is a rain destiny as well, so that rain is
very common on this day.

23. *Adijady*’s middle is also called *Adijady*’s fullness, and it is a good
destiny. The foundations of a new house are laid on this day. It is also
the day for selecting the site of a new village, a new cattle-pen, a new
trading store, and for the digging of a new rice-pit. On this day the
seed-corn is prepared. It is especially good if it falls on a Thursday.
As already mentioned, Thursday is the day which gives and produces
things, and this suits *Adijady*’s fullness.

People with this destiny have special qualities. Rice-pits made by
them will soon be filled with rice. They are called “those who are not
unclean”, i.e. the uncleanness of death, or of having attended a burial.
(65) They must not partake in the opening of a tomb or (66) walk into a
house where there is a corpse, or even peep into such a house. The
impurity of death is a greater taboo to these people than to others.
Rice-pits must be opened only on this day. If it should happen that
the rice runs out, one would have to buy rice at a high price rather
than (67) open the rice-pit on an ordinary day. One must wait for
*Adijady*’s fullness, and a man with this destiny will have to open the pit.

(68) It is strictly prohibited to open the tomb on this destiny, as this
would cause many to die and thus fill the grave. Thus no burial must
take place.

The village gate is either next to *Adijady* or to *Adizaosza*.

24. (69) *Adijady*’s end is an evil destiny, a day on which one must
keep quiet and do nothing. It is, however, a good day for warfare and
for sharpening the game-bulls’ horns.

(70) If these three destinies fall on a Sunday, they are evil ones.
(71) People born on one of these days must not eat the meat of a beast
which has been slaughtered for a burial. These people are not allowed (72) to walk into a tomb during a burial, or (73) to remove soil from the entrance of the tomb. Those who die on one of these three Adijady days, are called “dead ones who have not reached the fullness of life”, i.e. Andriamanitra did not give them any day to be buried on, and they cannot be buried on any of the three days.

Adijady’s place is, according to Tant. Andr., next to the window shutter, which is on the western wall about two feet south of the Adijady corner. It is a hard (mafy) destiny, rigid and inflexible. The verb mijadona has the same meaning and is used to describe this destiny. In order to remove this hard destiny, a kind of grass called Tsipohafoha (Oxalis sensitina) is used. In the course of the exorcism it is thrown away. Then a beetle, Voanantoka (Elater) is sacrificed.

(74) If one starts some work on this day without completing it on the same day, it will never be completed. It is a good day for weddings, because it will make the marriage strong and lasting, and only death can separate husband and wife.

Adijady’s destiny is the cause of sorrow and weeping. It is the vintana of the stiffness of death (cf. mijadona: stiff, rigid, inflexible). Slaves who were “bred” (ompiana) with this destiny, be it at its beginning, at its middle or at its end, would never run away, but stay with their masters. It is an excellent day for the building of a house, for the founding of a new village, as this destiny will make them firm (mafy), solid and lasting (Tant. Andr.).

The Antanosy interpretation: Adijady is a heavy (mavesatra) destiny. Saturday and Sunday of this month bring disaster. (75) One cannot plant bananas and manioc roots on this vintana. (76) Children born in Adijady have an evil, ugly and dangerous character. They do not like to see old people. This dangerous destiny must, therefore, be removed. Then the child will have the great experience of seeing the grandparents, parents and sisters and brothers reach a great age.

Adijady is the vintana of the witch-doctor. His house must, therefore, be situated in the north-western part of the village. Thus it is easy for strangers to find his house. If he does not build his house in the correct part of the village, his medicines and divinations will be useless.
We have seen that it is not enough to mention the name of a vintana month, as its beginning, middle and end may have different meanings. (77) Adijady’s beginning is, in many ways, an evil vintana. It is a vintana of tears and sorrow. If one builds a house on this day, there will be much sorrow. It is the same with Adijady’s end, which has an evil, sharp destiny. It is only Adijady’s middle which is a good day for the building of houses, as it is a day of fruitfulness and fertility, a destiny causing that “it will not stop before it is full” (tsy mitsaha-tsy feno). It gives full corn-bins, riches and other good things. Therefore it is a good day for the building of houses. From this one will see that it is not sufficient to say (like Tant. Andr. I. p. 33) that Adijady is a fortunate month for the building of houses. From my observations I have learnt that two of these three days are taboo days with regard to the building of houses. Only Adijady’s middle is a building day.

25. Adalo’s beginning (mouth) is called Adalo’s cry, and it is an evil destiny. It always rains on this day, even if it is in winter time, which is the dry season. It is also a destiny with strong wind. (78) People born on this vintana will be dumb. In order to remove this evil destiny, they strike a piece of iron, or they beat the drum when the child is being born.

26. Adalo’s end is a very good destiny for the turning of corpses, for the dedication of a new house, and for recreation journeys.

It is not good, however, when it stands alone. It must be united with Alohotsy’s mouth (beginning). Any business must, therefore, start on the one and end on the other of these two days.

It is an excellent day for weddings, if they start in the afternoon of Adalo’s end and continue till the next day, which is Alohotsy’s mouth (beginning). The first destiny is far too heavy and would, therefore, have an unfortunate influence on the marriage. The other day is too light, and would make the marriage too light, i.e. it would easily be dissolved or destroyed. These two destinies balance each other, and together they give the marriage the necessary solidity.

Adalo’s end is a day for the making of war fetishes. On this day the diviner gives his reply to important questions.

According to Tant. Andr., Adalo is in general a vintana of sorrow and much weeping. (79) Undertakings started on this vintana will not be completed, because it is too slow. The verb milalo is used to illus-
trate the character of this vintana. It has the meaning “to pass closely”. In its negative meaning this verb is similar to Adalo (lalo — Adalo), and thus the meaning of its destiny is clear to the native mind pre-disposed to taboo since childhood. An undertaking begun on this day will only “pass close” to completion, without showing satisfactory results.

(80) This vintana is unfortunate for the starting of a new house.

Adalo’s place in the house is the place of honour for visitors. It is honoured and respected because it is by the western part of the northern wall of the house.

When removing the evil of this destiny, they use the steam drops from the lid of the pot as exorcism. These are called “the pot-lid’s tears” (ranomason-takotra). The steam comes from the leaves of the Amiana tree (Uerea radula), which are boiled in the pot. These leaves have long, sharp hairs. The distilled drops on the lid are then the means of taking away the evil of the destiny.

(81) Wednesday and (82) Thursday of this month are especially bad, according to the Antanosy interpretation. As a general rule, all the people who are born in Adalo will be vagabonds. It does not matter on which day of the week they are born. They will not stay on at the same place, and they will always run after women. Girls born on this day, will run after men as soon as they are old enough. Men and women will spend all their money on drinking, they will trouble others and get their food from them. (83) All that is planted on this vintana will be destroyed, and it will not pay to do any work. The owner will only run around, neglect his fields, and be exhausted. (84) If he is in debt and has to sell cattle in order to pay, he must not do this in Adalo. This will only bring sickness and destruction on the remaining cattle. “If you sell cattle on this vintana, nobody will buy from you later on, because this vintana will lure the cows, so that they one day will disappear in the forests, or they will be plundered and stolen.”

Adalo is similar to Asorontany. (85) It is taboo to marry in Adalo (according to Antanosy), as the wife will not stay with her husband but only run around with other men, and this will cause a lot of trouble. The vintana causes her never to like her own home, as she only “passes by”. The verb mandalo is similar to Adalo and means “to pass by”. Thus it becomes very unfortunate to marry on an Adalo-day. The
weaknesses of this destiny can be taken away by removing the taboo.

27. Alohotsy's mouth (beginning) is the lightest of all the destinies. It is necessary to hang stones from the roofs of the houses where children are being born (cf. Adimizana's middle and Alakaosy's end). Children born with this destiny will be dumb. In order to prevent disaster, they beat the drums when children are being born. (cf Adalo's beginning). This destiny is evil if it is not connected with the previous destiny. The previous one, Adalo's end, is evil in the morning and good in the afternoon, from about 12 o'clock till evening. Alohotsy's beginning, however, is good in the morning. If the afternoon of the one day is combined with the morning of the other day, they will make a good destiny, a destiny "without illness", a benefit to health. In the same way one gets a good destiny for weddings, as the marriage will be lasting.

28. Alohotsy's end is neither good nor bad. People with this destiny stay quiet on this day. One should not worry about it, but one should not treat it lightly.

In Tant. Andr. Alohotsy is called "uneven dwelling" (*tsy marimponenana*). Its place is east of the end post on the northern wall. On the wall inside the house, next to the Alohotsy place, hangs a willow basket containing utensils. These are put into the basket and taken out of it very often. Throughout the day there is no peace and stability at this place, and Alohotsy is therefore called an uneven and unsteady dwelling.

Alohotsy is a very light destiny. "Light" is in Malagasy *maiavana*. This word has, however, many meanings, and we shall have to divide them into two classes with regard to the vintana interpretation. This destiny is light in a good sense of the word (*ankatsarana*), and it is, therefore, a day for the building of houses. It is easy to work on this day. It is also a good day for weddings, and will not bring illness on the family (*andro tsy maharofy*). However, it is also light in a bad way (*ankaratsiana*). This one can see from the sacrifices which must be made in order to remove the unfortunate and harmful lightness of this destiny. For this purpose white stones (*vato kilony*) and pieces of some hard wood (*hazo mafy*) are used. These pieces are taken either from the Famaho tree (*Dichrostachys tennifolia*) or from the
Fig. 2

Opposing destinies
Fig. 3
Destinies which agree
Harara tree. These things are buried in the ground, east of the end post of the northern wall. The sacrificer (ny mpisorona) says: "I sacrifice this hard tree in order to make the home firm and immovable, I sacrifice this white stone and bury it at the Alohotsy place, so that the people can live permanently and never start moving around." One must also wear a white string of beads, which is called "wild boar which is never sick" (Lambotsimarofo). This will prevent illness. Furthermore one must breed white fowls, which will be sacrificed during prayers.

Alohotsy is the fady vintana. (87) Nothing must be done on the two Alohotsy days. This is a rule both for nobles and for all the other people.

As a general rule, (88) children born on Alohotsy Friday will not be allowed to grow up. They must be placed out in the fields to die.

Some of the people contact the ombiasa in order to have this vintana changed, but this is very expensive. Parents of a Friday child will have to pay a fee "worthy of nobles" (tahon' elo): precious stones, a gun with a red stock, red oxen, and valuable finery (samisamy). If the parents are able to produce all these things, the ombiasa can have the vintana changed. If not, the child will have to be left to its fate. This child is dangerous in that it will kill its father if it is born on a Friday, at Alohotsy's beginning, and its mother if it is born at Alohotsy's end.

There are certain factors which must be taken into consideration if one wants to understand the vintana system.

1. Opposing destinies.
2. Destinies which agree.
3. When the day and the month have the same destiny.
5. The Rohontany circulation.
6. The division of the day.

The opposing destinies (vintana mifanohitra) are the ones which are over against each other. By drawing lines between the places of the 12 months on the walls of the house, all the lines will cross the middle point of the house, which is the central post, and thus all the opposing destinies will be seen (see fig. 2). Alahamady and Adimizana are opposite to each other, and in the same way Asorotany and Adijady, Adaoro
and Alakarabo, etc. This means that they oppose each other, are at war with each other, “injuring each other” (mifandratra). They are enemies, which can never be united.

Here the destiny of people comes into the picture. (89) A child may be born on the Adimizana day, whilst its father was born in Alahamady. Then the child’s vintana will automatically be in opposition to its father’s vintana. The child is a threat to its own father. (90) Or a child may be born in Adaoro whilst its mother was born in Alakarabo, and the same enmity will arise. According to L. Vig\textsuperscript{18}, this opposition must be counteracted by means of sacrifice and exorcism. A cut is made in the left ear of the new-born baby and in the ear of the one in the family who has the opposite destiny. The blood is then mixed and smeared on both of them. Such children are hidden until this ceremony has been performed.

When a young couple are going to get married, the families are immediately interested in their destinies. If they have opposing destinies, the marriage will be refused. (91) In such a case marriage is taboo. Two opposing destinies can never be united. People with such destinies are also so different, as far as their characters are concerned, that they can never be happy together.

(92) A son who is going to build a house for himself must not do this on a day which is against his father’s destiny. If he does, it will be understood that he wants to see his father dead, so that he can have his inheritance. (93) The foundation of a new family tomb must not be made on a vintana day which is opposed to the vintana of the chief of the family.

As distinct from these destinies, there are destinies which agree (vintana mifanaraka). These are found (see fig. 3) by drawing those lines from the house-corners which pass closest to the centre post without touching it. Alahamady agrees with Asombola and Alakarabo, Adaoro with Adimizana, Adizaosa with Adijady, Asorotany agrees with Alakaosy and Adalo, etc. The reason is that they are not placed quite opposite each other, but more by the side of each other. We may call them positive vintana, as the Natives arrange all their work according to them. Practically applied, these vintana are of vital importance to
the economical and social life of the people, as shown in the following examples.

A man has Asorotany as his vintana. He will not start sowing, planting, building or have his son married on an Adijady day, this being in opposition to his own vintana. He may do it in Alakaosy or Adalo, because they agree with his vintana. No work will be successful if it is done on a vintana which is against the vintana of the one starting it.

Children born with a vintana which does not oppose the vintana of the parents, sisters and brothers, are not subject to special investigations provided that the day is not evil for other reasons. Such children will have the opportunity of growing up, as they "do not butt their parents".

When the month and the day have the same destiny, it is said that "the vintana carries the month" (ny vintana mitondra volana). When, for example, (94) a child is born on one of the three Alahamady days, and it is already in the Alahamady month, the destiny's power is doubled, and thus it is more dangerous. If the birthday is at Asorotany's beginning, or at Alakaosy's beginning, and one is in one of these two months already, the child will be a very great danger and threat to parents, relatives and all the people in the village. It is hard to get a diviner who is willing to change such a destiny. If it is a vintana which usually brings rain, and it is already the rain-month, this day will have very heavy rain.

Joint destinies: These occur when (95) a child is born on the birthday of someone else in the family. The first one to be in danger, in such a case, is the master of the family, the child's father. The mother and the sisters and brothers are also in a dangerous position. The child with its vintana has collided with the destinies of the others in the house, and something must be done in this critical situation. The problem can be solved only by the diviner. According to L. Vig,\(^\text{19}\) the father would have to hand the child over to somebody else, who would then bring it up. When grown up, it might return to its parents. (96) Sisters and brothers who have joint destinies will have to be separated and brought up by different people.
By studying the joint destinies and their meanings, it becomes clear that an individual’s destiny is looked upon as an integral and immovable thing, a part of the individual himself. The destiny means also the individual’s definite position in life. If others are born with the same vintana later on, this integral and immovable position is threatened. Another person enters one’s precious domain, and one will have to take up the fight in order to protect oneself. The opposing destinies and their self-defence must be looked upon in the same way. Let us look at this matter from a realistic point of view. As an isolated phenomenon, and without any personal engagement, the opposition between two destinies is a rather irrelevant question. What makes the situation very present is the people themselves, their precious lives, their promising future, the desired peace in the homes, the valuable rice-fields, the cattle which rest so peacefully in the fold. It is these and innumerable other things, in short, the high hopes of life itself, which are relevant to such a great extent. The cynosure is the newborn son, who is entitled to inheritance, the precious child of the mother, and the pride of the grandparents. These are the important things, not the vintana system in itself. And this is what the Natives think of in a vintana situation. We must, therefore, never separate systems and doctrines from the individuals themselves, who are always engaged in the present situations. Only by remembering this can a realistic presentation be achieved.

The Rohontany (or Rontany) circulation refers to a perpetual mystical power that circulates around the house for 28 days without cessation. The 28 destinies circulate around the house 12 times, as there are 12 months in a year. Rohontany passes each of the 28 destinies. The Rohontany circulation becomes, therefore, the vintana which is in force just there and then. We may call it the dynamics of time. It takes the colour and the character of each day’s vintana. One must be careful not to go against this circulation. It is always moving against the sun. Rohontany moves southwards from Alahamady towards Asorotany, then westwards towards Adimizana and so on until it comes back to Alahamady. Visitors must not come straight from the North and then walk along the western side of the house, as that would be against Rohontany. They should walk in a curve at the
eastern side of the house and come from the South around the Adimizana corner, and then in through the door on the western wall. One may walk in front of or after Rohontany, but never against it. Rohontany would then face that person and destroy him in one way or other. (97) It is, therefore, fady to walk against Rohontany. The same is the case when a visitor comes to a village. To enter the village straight from the North and then walk in at the western side, is prohibited. The diviners watch carefully over this rule, and they expect others to do the same.

(98) When a corpse is being brought out of the house, it is not permissible to move against this circulation. If it is brought out through the western door, the situation is as follows. The door is between Adimizana and Alakarabo. Rohontany moves round the south-western corner of the house and then northwards. If Rohontany has not yet passed the door, and has not moved beyond Alakarabo, it is fady to carry the corpse out of the house, because one will be overtaken by Rohontany, or one might meet it, and this would have terrible consequences. The length of time one will have to wait for Rohontany varies, and some people are more careful on this point than others. From the time it is at the eastern wall until it has passed Alakarabo in the northern direction, one must be on guard. It may, therefore, take several days before a burial can take place. It all depends on what time death occurs in relation to Rohontany’s circulation around the house. In addition to this one will have to take into account if the day is otherwise a good one for burial.

The bride’s journey to her new home is of great importance. (99) If her village is situated north of her husband’s village, she and her company must not move straight southwards. They must make a big detour and enter the new house from the South.

The division of the day into different vintana:

It is not only the month and the week which have definite destiny values that must be observed. The same is the case even with the hours of the day. The day starts with sunrise and ends with sunset. As already seen from the vintana calendar, both the month and the year are based on the movement of the moon. When calculating the vintana hours, however, it is the sun which gives the time. The Natives
have several ways of calculating this, which have nothing to do with
a European clock. All the same the method is quite good.

We shall not deal with the popular ways of calculating time, but we
shall see how it is done by the diviners. They may also differ, but here
is one method which they use. The first rays of the morning sun
which pass through a window or a hole in the wall, make a sun mark.
The diviner marks this out, and as the sun rises, he marks out the rays
of the sun on the wall. He also observes the shadows regularly.

The sun is of importance not only for giving light and warmth, but
for the work which is to be done as well. In this connection there are
some rules about what one may do and what one ought not to do.
It is of great importance at what time of the day a thing is done, or a
thing happens. By studying the vintana division, the Natives learn
what is good and what is bad, harmful or useful.

According to L. Vig20 the day is divided into 28 destinies, which
are the 28 vintana. The first destiny of a day is at sunrise and is called
Alahamady’s mouth (beginning). Then the calculation follows round
the house until sunset. The last destiny of the day is Alohotsy’s end.
People are careful not to start any important work before one of the
evil destinies of the day has passed.

Tant. Andr.21 gives a slightly different picture of the vintana of the
day. Here all the 24 hours of the day are taken into account. The
movement of the sun determines the different sections of the day, but
the night hours are divided by other means. This calculation starts at
midnight and is set in relation to child-birth. The night is divided by
means of animals’ habits and sounds, and also by people’s eating times.

(100) Children born at midnight will become witches, because that
is the time the witches go out.

Those who are born at dawn will become able labourers, and not
slug-a-beds.

Children born at sunrise are lucky, as that is the time when the
spirits disappear, the spirits’ hour (andron-dolo).

(101) People who come into the world at the time the cattle are being
scattered on the pastures in the morning, will become poor. Their
riches will be scattered like the cattle.

It is fortunate to be born later in the morning, because then the sun
is rising higher and higher, and one will “rise” in power and honour.
Those who are born at noon will also have a good destiny.

The children of the afternoon are also fortunate, as that is the time for the sun to "visit the house", i.e. it comes through the western door.

(102) Those who are born when the sun is about to go down will have their property scattered all around. Just like the slanting sun, their riches will slant. If, however, they are strong otherwise and good at earning money, they might resist this power and become rich.

Those who are born at the time when the herdboys round up the cattle, in order to drive them home in the evening, will have the ability to lay up riches.

A little later the calves are tied near to the wall of the house, by the Assombola place. That is a very good time for being born, as one will become rich. Assombola has much to do with money.

To be born exactly when the sun goes down is fortunate, because that is the time for the fowls and other domestic animals to be taken in. Riches will "go in" to one's house. Those who are born at eating times in the evening (very fandry) are also lucky, as the whole family is assembled at those times. In the evening they rest on the floor, happy and satisfied. The children will neither become poor nor bad. (103) To be born when a third of the night has passed is not so fortunate, as one will be inclined to be sleepy and lazy, and therefore always poor.

(104) From sunrise in the morning until noon, burials must not take place. The sun itself has a very powerful vintana. Before the sun has reached its zenith it is risky to have burials, as this powerful vintana will interfere and cause the death of people. From the time the sun begins to descend, however, and until it is dark, burials may take place, as long as it is not (105) too late at night. It is only the burial of twins which may be conducted very late. This will be dealt with in the chapter on burial taboos (ch. VIII, no. 15).

The phases of the moon have a special vintana meaning, which must be taken into consideration on every important occasion. (106) A tomb must not be built at the new moon, as that will cause it to be filled quickly (Ny fasana tsy aso atao amin'ny tsinam-bolana, fa haingana feno). The increase of the moon will cause the increase of corpses in the grave. (107) Burials at full moon will have the same result.
The waxing moon, however, may also bring happiness. Business and the clearing of ground will give good results if done when the moon is waxing.

(108) One cannot start the building of a new house at the wane of the moon (Tsy azo atao ny manao trano amin'ny rava volana). The wane is called the destruction of the moon, its death (fatim-bolana). Houses built at this time will not last.

(109) The feast of the turning of the corpses must not take place at the wane of the moon, but only when the moon is waxing. The feast has in all respects a good aim: the increase of crops, of prosperity, and of children. The phases of the moon, therefore, influence many things and undertakings.

It has already been mentioned several times in this chapter that in some circumstances the evil destiny must be removed. Only relatives are allowed to be present at such a function, which is kept very secret. In its broad features it is very much the same in the different tribes. We shall only examine how the ceremony is conducted in one of the tribes.

When the Antanosy people want to have an evil destiny changed into a good one, they contact the ombiasa, as he is the only one who can do it, provided that he is willing. It is not always, however, that he can take the responsibility, as certain vintana are too powerful to be interfered with. The parents of the child give him cattle, and the colour of the cattle must agree with the colour of the child’s vintana. In Asombola it must be a white ox, in Alahamady a red or red-brown one, in Alakarabo a black one, in Alohotsy a red one, and in Adalo an ox with big white spots. The ceremony consists of three parts: The slaughtering, the ombiasa’s speech and sacrificial prayer, and the quartering and distribution of the meat.

The slaughtering is done at the eastern side of the child’s house. The entrails of the beast are taken out, and the child is placed on top of them; they then become a cathartic remedy.

When the ombiasa is about to deliver his speech, he first comes out through the western door, walks round the house, passing Adimizana and Alakarabo, and stops at the Alahamady corner. There he shouts: “Where shall I throw this child? If I throw it eastwards, it will destroy the fishing in the ocean. If I throw it westwards, it will destroy the
work of those who breed cattle, sheep and goats. And if I throw the child southwards, it will destroy women and children. Let it be thrown into the Alahamady vintana, because she is the mother of all the vintana, and she is able to carry what is heavy and difficult." This is an exorcism. Immediately after this he prays to Andriananahary\textsuperscript{26} and the ancestors, asking for the blessing which is needed by the child, the parents and all those who are present. To these Higher Powers he also explains the child's evil destiny and the day on which it was born. Then the child is bathed in water spiced with leaves from Falinandro, Voafaria, and Tsatsandro, which are different kinds of trees. Some of these leaves are carefully pounded in the rice mortar, and the child is smeared over with this green porridge. The same is done with the parents. This will protect them against the dangerous vintana, so that it will not take vengeance on them in the future. (110) The parents are not allowed to keep the dish in which the child was bathed. This dish must be given to the ombiasa.

From the meat the head of the ox is given to the ombiasa, the hindquarters are kept by the parents, and the rest is distributed to the people of the village. From now on the child has got a harmless vintana, the fear is taken away, and the parents can bring up their child in peace.
CHAPTER IV

Plant taboos

(1) To sit in the doorway when the rice ears are shooting is prohibited, as that would impede the process (Fady ny mipetraka am-baravaranana amin'ny fotoana iteram-bary, ka mahasarota ny tera-bary)\(^1\). When the rice shoots ears, it “gives birth” (miteraka). The door of the house is compared with the gate of birth, and if one sits in the doorway, one prevents the rice shooting ears. The primary association is most probably not “rice-birth” but child-birth. All the grown-ups know about this taboo, but it is especially turned towards the children, who may thoughtlessly sit down in the doorway. Then they are seriously scolded by the parents. People are fractious and wakeful at this time, and they watch the development of their rice very closely.

(2) In summer it is not the custom to shout or make a noise near the rice-fields (Tsy fanao ny manakora eo akaiky ny tanimby amin’ny fahavaratra)\(^2\) Such noise would only call down showers of hail.

(3) A taboo says: “Do not allow grass or straws on the floor when the rice is shooting ears, because that will cause disorder in the rice field” (Aza mamorovoro trano rehefa miteraka ny vary eny an-tsaha, fa misavorovoro ny tera-bary)\(^3\).

(4) An analogous taboo is to put a grass wreath into the fire place in the evening at the time the rice is “pregnant” (Tsy fanao ny manao halana hatao otrikafo, rehefa bevohoka ny vary)\(^4\). This is a little ring of twisted grass, which the women have on their heads when fetching water. In the evening the fire is covered with ashes after something dry has been put into it. If a grass ring is used, however, it will make the rice field tangled, and the harvesting will be difficult.

(5) Stones must not be rolled down a precipice at the time of harvest. (Aza manakodia vato amin’ny fotoana fijinjam-bary)\(^5\). The Natives are
very careful in this respect. The stones are not placed at random, but it is *Andriamanitra* himself who has placed them there. If they are pushed down the precipice, they will cause heavy hail to destroy the crops.

(6) It is taboo to crush white stones when the rice is “giving birth” (*Fady ny mamaky vato karanana, raha miteraka ny vary*)⁶. Here and there in the field one can find white quartz stones, and they are brittle. White stones are compared to the big ruinous hail stones and this similarity is dangerous.

(7) In the same season it is taboo to transport stones (*Fady ny mitari-bato amin’ny tera-bary*)⁷. The stones mentioned here are stones used for the building of tombs. There is far too much noise and turmoil during this transport, and it is not decent to do such work when the rice is about to “give birth”.

(8) Nothing green must be burnt in the summer, as that would mean death to the one doing it (*Tsy azo atao ny mandoro zava-maitso amin’ny fahavaratra, fa mandrodana ny tompony ho amin’ny fahafatesana*)⁸. In other places it is stated that hail-showers will punish the people by destroying their rice, or that they will be struck by lightning and killed. Some state that it will bring famine. The same disaster will happen if people, during the time the rice shoots ears, cut and bring into the village the following plants.

(9) *Zoxoro* (*Cyperus aequalis*). This is tall marsh grass, which is used in the making of brooms and mats. The tradition says about this grass: “Our ancestors ordered us not to cut *zoxoro* when the rice turns yellow. If one does this, he trespasses upon the taboo, and hail will destroy his crops. That is why our ancestors as their last wish ordered us, their descendants, not to do this.” (*Ny razanay nampifady anay ny mandidy zoxoro amin’ny mena vary. Raha misy manao isany, dia manota fady izy, ka tonga ny havandra min’ny tanimbariny. Noho izany dia nohafaran’ny razanay, mba tsy hataon’ny taranaka hatramin’ny fara mandimby izany*)⁹.

(10) *Hazondrano* (*Scirpus corymbosus*)¹⁰, a marsh grass which is used in the making of mats and hats.

(11) *Herana* (*Cyperus latifolius*)¹¹, a kind of grass which is used for thatching roofs.
(12) *Vinda* (*Cyperus alternifolius*)\(^{12}\), used for making mats.
(13) *Harefo* (*Eleocharis*)\(^{13}\), used for mats, hats and baskets.
(14) *Haravola* (*Stipa*)\(^{14}\), used for baskets.
(15) *Rindra*\(^{15}\), a stiff grass used for the making of mats. In Vakinanka-ratra they are so strict that if a man brings *rindra* grass into the village during the times the rice is shooting, the people are allowed to cripple him for life. It is taken as if this presumptuous opposer of the taboo tries to call forth destroying hail storms, and thus picks a quarrel with all the inhabitants.
(16) *Hisatra*\(^{16}\), a kind of reed which is used for making mats.
(17) *Ampanga*, a fern\(^{17}\) which is used as firewood in places where wood is scarce. In addition to being the name of a plant, *ampanga* means also “accusation”, “charge”. One who cuts this plant will be charged before the Higher Powers, and thus cause rough weather at the time the rice ripens.
(18) *Saonjo* (*Colocasia antiquorum*)\(^{18}\), a cultivated plant with big dark-green leaves. The root is used for food and is similar to turnips. The leaves are used as vegetables. During the ripening of the rice, this is taboo.
(19) *Mangahazo* (*Manihot utilissima*)\(^{19}\), a manioc, which is cultivated everywhere, and is one of the most important articles of food. The young leaves are used as vegetables, but they are forbidden during the rice time.
(20) *Voasary* (*Citrus*)\(^{20}\), both wild and cultivated lemons.
(21) *Anantsinahy* (*Bidens bipinnata*, or *leucantha*)\(^{21}\) also called *anantsipolitra*, a small, wild plant, which is eaten as a vegetable. When the seeds are ripe, they will easily stick to the clothes as they have two little crooked spikes. People say that this plant attracts the lightning, and one must, therefore, not eat it in a thunderstorm. I have also heard in different places that one who eats this plant will be killed by the lightning, even if it is not his intention to be killed. Here is a Malagasy play on words which needs some explanation.

The first part of the plant’s name, *anana*, means vegetables. The other part is *-tsinahy*, which is compounded of *tsy* and *nahy*, “not willed”, “without intention”. It can be illustrated with an example from everyday life. A man has eaten forbidden food with someone, without knowing that it was *fady*-food. When the man who gave him
the food tells him what it was made from, he will be so ill that he may die. If he does, the people will say that he died *tsy nahy*, i.e. willy-nilly. In this way the taboo figures with the fixed formula: *Asa mihinana anantsinahy, fa ho fatim-baratra tsy nahy*: Do not eat *anantsinahy*, because then you will be killed by the lightning, even if you do not intend to be. We have also the expression “to make a point of dying” (*ny minia ho faty*). That is what one does when eating forbidden food on purpose. Whether one does it on purpose or without knowing that the food is taboo, one will be killed by lightning. This taboo is often imposed by the *ombiasa*. If someone has been killed by lightning, this plant will often be referred to as the cause of death.

(22) The Rafia palm (*Sagus ruffia*)\(^{22}\). The fibres of this plant are used for the weaving of clothes, and the thick, light branches are used as poles for carrying goods and for the making of rafts. From the young shoots in the middle of the crown straw hats are made. It is prohibited to cut these shoots at the time of rice-ripening.

(23) In the same way it is forbidden to cut young shoots of bamboo\(^{23}\). It is especially in the big primeval forests on the East Coast that one can find bamboo. In the hot season they shoot very fast. In Marolambo the following explanation of the bamboo-taboo is given: “The hard and yellow grown-up poles are not considered, but only the young shoots which grow up from the soil in the hot season. They are “children” and “youth” with a strong growth-odour, and these qualities “attract the lightning” (*mitari-baratra*), or as it is also said: “They are hated by the lightning” (*halam-baratra*). The prohibition against cutting them is a common agreement amongst the inhabitants, and it is confirmed with curses and the swearing of oaths (*fianianana*). One who brings young bamboo poles into the village in the hot season must pay a certain money fine, and in addition to this, he gets a good warning. The money is shared equally between the families of the village. If he does not pay the fixed fine, he will be driven out of the village and expelled from the family. There are many different interpretations of this taboo, but they are all to the effect that the destruction of these young shoots will prevent the growing of the rice plant. In addition to this, the rice field will be destroyed by storms, and the people will be killed by lightning. The rules about all these plants have one thing in common: they must not be cut during the rice
harvest. The rice is cut, but rice is the most important food, and is also called "zanahary" and "renibe" (grandmother). Reeds and grass have less honour (voninahitra)\textsuperscript{24}; if they are cut before the rice, they get an undeserved priority, and the honour of the rice is destroyed. Consequently the breaking of the taboo will cause devastating weather during the harvest, and thus there will be famine.

Another point of view is that if one cuts these plants before the rice harvest, it is like harvesting the rice before it is ripe, and then rain and hail will destroy it. The social hierarchy does not only exist among human beings, but also among the plants, because the plants all have their special functions and importance, which have been given them by Andriamanitra. — Other important fady are:

\textbf{(24)} To use a rice-straw as a flute. (\textit{Fady mihitsy ny manao farara tahom-bary})\textsuperscript{25}. There are two causes of this taboo. The one is the pulling-out of a rice-straw, which means the destruction of the rice grains. The other one is the flute-sound. That reminds one of the big shrieking hail stones which come whistling down.

\textbf{(25)} To push the rice-pestle down on the ground, because that brings famine (\textit{Fady ny mitoto tany, fa mahamosarena})\textsuperscript{26}. People will have to eat soil instead of rice.

\textbf{(26)} To carry the spade home from the field in such a way that the sunlight gleams on it. That would attract the lightning. (\textit{Fady ny mitondra angady mitselatselatra, fa mahatari-baratra})\textsuperscript{27}. The reflection on the blade of the spade is similar to a flash of lightning.

\textbf{(27)} To leave the spade out in the field at night (\textit{Fady ny mametraka ny angady any an-tsaha amin'ny alina})\textsuperscript{28}. There is more bewitching from the spade than from thieves whom one might fear. Here is an example: A man is thrifty and prepares his rice-field before his neighbour, who will than envy him and become angry. It is easy to get hold of poisonous witch-medicine. During the night the handle is smeared with this poison, and next morning when the farmer starts working again, he gets sick and will die if he does not get to the witch-doctor quick enough to be cured.

There are strict rules about how to behave during thunderstorms. I shall mention a few of them. It is forbidden:

\textbf{(28)} To run away quickly, or to pass someone in a thunderstorm is not the custom. (\textit{Tsy fanao ny manday, na mialoha ny olona raha...}
mitselatra ny andro). This means hurry and speed. To run fast creates "breath of life" (mahabe fofon'aina), and the lightning is challenged and will then follow after one.

(29) To pick-axe the soil when rain is approaching (Ny mamaky tany amin'ny famaky raha avy ny orana). This means that the lightning will strike down into the soil.

(30) To sit together with someone back to back (Ny misanamboho raha mangotroka ny andro). This position means relaxation, and is no sign of respect for the angry powers. It challenges them.

(31) To lie flat on the back when there is lightning (Ny mitsilany raha mitselatra ny andro). This is the position of the dead, and it is therefore a direct challenge. In addition it shows no sign of respect.

(32) To whistle (Ny mifioka).

(33) To pound rice. Both the sound and the movement remind one of thunder and lightning.

(34) To hold something made of iron or copper.

(35) To wear something of red material. Red is the colour of lightning.

Other rules must be remembered when the rice is growing and ripening. It is not permitted:

(36) To walk with a basket, which is turned upside down, on the head (ny misarotro sobika). The basket should be used for carrying corn and foodstuff, not as an umbrella.

(37) To catch fish with plant-poison. This is a very old method. There are different kinds of poisonous plants which can be used for this purpose. The Sakalava use the sap from the Laro tree (Euphorbia). This tree has no leaves, but close-packed thorns, which are about an inch long. Both the thorns and the sap, which looks like milk, are very poisonous. The bark is stripped off, and the sap is collected into dry snail-shells. At night the fisherman goes out to the ocean. In a creek where he knows there are fish and crabs, he mixes the poison with clay and sand, and puts it into the pools. About ten minutes later the fish float up with the abdomen above water. Fish from 20 to 40 pounds are caught in this way.

In 1952 I met a Mikea out at the coast, south of Morombe. He carried a string of fish and big, fine crabs, which he had caught in the above-mentioned way. He was shy, like all Mikea, but my bearers
called to him, and he calmed down. He was, of course, afraid, seeing a white man, and knowing also that his method of fishing was against the law of the Government. However, this wild man gave me some of his catch, and we roasted it immediately in a fire. It was delicious, and none of us felt any ill-effects.

In the Inland they use the leaves of a kind of agave which is called *Taretra* (*Fourcroya gigantea*). This plant is often used in hedges round plantations and villages. The leaves are thick and grow like a wreath up to about a yard in height and have a long thorn at the top. These leaves contain a poisonous juice. They are pounded into a pulp and put into a river or a brook. The fish then float up and are caught by hand. This method destroys the fry and is therefore prohibited by law. However, it is not this law made by the French authorities which first and foremost makes the people respect the taboo, but it is the belief that these poisonous plants are inclined to attract the lightning. And if there is thunder and lightning, there may also be destruction.

38 To make the threshing place ready before the rice is ripe. This will cause the lightning to strike down. (*Fady ny manao famoloana, raha tsy masaka daloho ny vary, fa mandatsa-baratra*)

39 To lay out new rice for drying when still waiting for more to be cut. (*Ny manahy vary vao any an-tsaha, ka mishy mitsinja ny tsy tonga*)

40 To let water into some of the harvested rice-fields before the whole rice-harvest is finished. (*Ny tanimbaria efa niadiana vary tsy aso idiran-drano, raha tsy tapitra daholo ny vary*)

41 To sing short snatches of songs in the autumn will cause famine. (*Ny mihibar tapi-tanana amin'ny fotoam-pijinjana dia fady, fa mahatonga mosary*) One way of singing is to clap the hand quickly and repeatedly on the mouth and make a sound like yodelling. In this case it will only invoke the famine, even if it is done by a child.

42 To clean the rice at the threshing place before all the rice has been harvested. (*Fady ny mikororoka vary any an-tsaha, raha tsy mbola voajinina ny vary rehetra*) That would be like a challenge to rain and lightning, and to stir them in this way would prevent the rest of the rice from being harvested.

43 When the farmer is about to start the cutting of the rice, he must not make mention of this directly, but must say that he is going
for a walk to have a look at the fields, or that he is going to plant sweet potatoes. (*Raha hampaka-bary, dia tsy avy hatrany manao hoe: hijinja vary, fa: hitsangatsangana, na hamboly ovimanga*)⁴⁴. In the Inland and on the East Coast the sweet potatoes are being planted at the time the rice is harvested. There may be several reasons for the secretiveness of the harvesters at that time. One important reason is that they want to keep rain and bad weather away. Silence means camouflage of the intended work, and then one can be certain of good weather.

These plant taboos are applied only during this critical time, and they are not linked with the permanent plant taboos. Neither need they have anything to do with the many different storm fetishes made by the witch-doctor. We should, however, bear in mind that the general rice taboos and storm taboos are never contradictory to the witch-doctor's "meteorological" fetishes (ch. XII).

It is evident from what has been said above that the farmer is not only concerned with planting, weeding, watering etc. and then leaving the growing and development of his crops to itself. All along he is engaged "spiritually" in what is going on. By means of strict taboos for himself and his family, he will assist and encourage the sound development of his rice fields, especially at the time when the rice is "pregnant", when it "gives birth" and when it is being stored. In the same way he will prevent unfortunate weather and obtain good possibilities for growth by means of symbolic actions and rigorous restrictions.

Peanuts (*voanjo*) are cultivated in many places. They are sold to the oil mills, where they are crushed and pressed to extract the oil. For home purpose they are roasted like chestnuts. Among the Tanala and Betsimisaraka peanuts are in many places taboo. They find that the nuts lying on the ground remind them of fowls which lay eggs on the ground and not in their nests. (44) Peanuts are, therefore, taboo for women who are pregnant, as they will cause miscarriage⁴⁵. The stalks, which spread from the nut on the ground like strawberry-stalks, are not liked by women. If they eat peanuts, their future children might get more than five fingers on each hand, and the same thing might happen with their toes.

When the peanut-stalks creep on the ground⁴⁶, they remind the Natives about "grovelling" before the colonising power, and that hurts
their national feelings. (45) Peanuts are, therefore, also detested for this reason.

Once when I was travelling by boat on the Manambolo river on the West Coast, I had an experience of how serious this taboo may be. Four Vazimba went with me in order to show me the caves in the mountain where people live. We stopped by a cave to prepare a meal. I roasted some bananas in peanut-oil, and shared it with my men, who enjoyed it very much. On our way home one of the men asked me what sort of oil I had used when roasting the bananas. When I told them, one of them appeared much shaken. His face became grey and he looked quite desperate. Peanuts were taboo to him. I tried my very best to explain that as a European and a stranger, I did not know that it was prohibited to eat peanuts. I also calmed him down by assuring him that I would take the whole responsibility for his health and life. When I met him the following day, he seemed to be over his difficulty, and was quite happy. How he had come to the understanding that he would not have to die for having taken food roasted in peanut-oil, he did not explain.

In the large grass fields of Vakinankaratra one may find places where several paths meet. At such a fork one will often find peanut-shells. They are a sort of offering with the purpose of giving a rich peanut harvest, so that the stalks may be long and give much fruit, just like the paths which spread in different directions. (46) One must not step on these shells.

(47) The tobacco taboo (Fady paraky) can be found in some places, but it is not very common, as tobacco is an old and very popular means of pleasure, mostly in the form of snuff. Here is one example: “In our family it is not permitted to use tobacco. Our ancestors not only forbade the eating of tobacco but they cursed the one who did so. The origin of this taboo is as follows: long, long ago there was a terrible famine in our village. Several of the inhabitants suffered death through lack of food. Those who were dependent on tobacco sold the little food they had in order to get tobacco leaves. They suffered, as well as their wives and children. When the authorities of the village saw this misery, they pronounced the following imprecation (nanao tsitsika): ‘As far as our children and descendants who use tobacco are concerned, let them have no future, may they never get what they need for their living, whether they go northwards, southwards,
eastwards or westwards, let them be destroyed. This shall be in force, and it concerns our children and descendants for generations, and for ever.' This taboo is still in force”, says the narrator from Betafo.

And here is a similar example⁴⁹: One evening the Sakalava robbers came to the village to rob and plunder. One man was so busy making snuff out of his tobacco leaves that he was not aware of the robbers. Whilst all the others escaped, he was caught by the robbers and sold as a slave. When he returned home to his people many years later, he made the following rule for his family: “None of us shall be permitted to use tobacco, because that is what led me into disaster and made me a slave, and nearly put an end to my life.”

There is no reason for doubting the authenticity of these stories. A family of the Zafindriamanana clan in Tsaratanana of Ifanadiana district has a similar tobacco taboo with a clear historical origin, and this taboo is still in force. Among the young people of to-day, there are certainly many who like to be “à la mode” and smoke cigarettes like the Europeans, but this is looked upon as a breach of the old established rules.

⁴⁸ Hemp-smoking (Ny mifoka rongony)⁵⁰ is done only secretly as it is prohibited by the State, but it is much older than the French colonial administration. Like the tobacco-taboo it is connected with the ancestors’ commandments (didin-drazana). The stories about the origin of this taboo are very similar to those of the tobacco taboo: a man becomes the slave of hemp-smoking, which makes his family poor and unhappy. The smoke of hemp-seed is such a strong narcotic that it dulls the man completely. He becomes slack and lazy and has no feeling of responsibility. He becomes short-tempered and capricious and beats his wife and children. He involves himself in quarrels and fights, so that the village council will have to take steps against him. As long as nothing disastrous occurs, nothing is done, but as soon as the smoking leads to disaster in one way or the other, they agree to make the smoking of hemp a taboo. The story will then go from father to son and will always be accompanied by a strong warning.

There can be no doubt that these taboos have a clear purpose. They protect the health of the people in general as well as keeping the individual and the family from harm and injuries. As such they are a preserving factor of the society.
CHAPTER V

Animal taboos

a. Domestic Animals

Cattle

When deciding whether a cow or an ox should be raised or slaughtered, one must consider these things: firstly the colour of the animal, secondly its form, and thirdly its temperament.

The cattle which must not be raised are:

(1) Cattle with white legs (omby fotsy tongotra)\(^1\). The white colour makes the animal valueless, and what is even worse, it will despise the owner, “make him white” (hamotsifotsy azy). This taboo concerns especially young people who are going to found a new stock. If the first heifer calf has white legs, the whole business will be unsuccessful. It is of vital importance to these young people that the start is good. Another man, who has at least ten cows already, may keep such a calf. The white-legged calf is called “the hanger-on”, “the addition” (ny ambiny). The calving takes place in the grazing land or wherever the cow happens to be, but this white-socked calf must not come into the cattle-pen before the witch-doctor has sprinkled his “silver-water” around the pen. The water is made by putting a silver-coin into a dark-blue bowl containing pure water. It is consecrated by means of prayers. In addition to this, he burns incense by the entrance of the pen. All this makes a good protection both for the owner and for his stock, and also for the cattle-fetich which is buried at the edge of the pen. This kind of calf is taboo to the cattle-fetich.

(2) Cattle with white hooves (omby fotsy kitro)\(^2\). The white hooves spoil the animal and make it ugly and dangerous. The calf is, therefore, killed as soon as it has been born.

(3) Cattle with white humps. (omby fotsy trafo)\(^3\). The same is the case when both sides of the head are white (omby fotsy takolaka).
(4) Cattle with white stripes along their back (omby vaky voho)⁴. This means a cloven back, which again figuratively means that the property (the herd) will be split. It will not be reliable. This calf will simply ruin the owner.

(5) Cattle which have white muzzles, because that creates dead capital. It ties the property (Tsy fanao ny miompy omby fotsy vava, fa ho voafehy ny harena)⁵. It is just as if the animal has a nose-bag, and is not free to grow and develop in the natural way. At the same time the owner and his family will be in a similar position, as there will not be any progress in work and business. The calf must, therefore, be killed.

(6) A beast with a white tail which has a ring-mark (omby fotsy rambony omban'ny mihonkon'antsy)⁶. It is not only the fateful white colour of the tail, which makes the calf a taboo-animal, but it is much more the ring, which is the symbol of something which never ends. In this case it means an unbroken chain of misfortunes. In order to counteract this unfortunate effect, charms in the form of amulets, made of silver or copper, are worn. The ends of these rings are never joined. These amulets are not merely finery and old heirlooms. They have the power of cutting the chain of coming misfortunes.

(7) Red cattle (omby mena)⁷. It is said that red cattle bring misfortune on the owner, especially in the form of lightning. People who have fetishes against fire must not raise red cattle. The colour is in general dangerous, because it is the colour of power. Only the witch-doctor can master it, and he often makes use of it to cause mischief. It is the same with dark-brown cattle.

(8) White- and red-spotted cattle (omby vanda mena)⁸. It looks as if the main colour is pierced through, and this is dangerous. Everything that is pierced, be it the colour of animals or of material, is a symbol of decay, defection and fraud. There is an old saying which goes: Red-spotted cattle are red-spotted riches (Omby vanda mena, ka harem-bandana mena).

(9) Cattle of whitish-brown colour. These will destroy the owner (Omby tsatsaka tsy azo ompiana, fa manolaka ny tompony)⁹. This belongs to the domain of the dangerous red colour. There is also another explanation. The whitish-brown colour of the calf is connected with a kind of lizard called Androngo. This lizard has the above-mentioned
colour, and is even called *Tsatsaka*, which means whitish-brown. (10) It is a peaceful animal, liked by all the people, and nobody kills it. It lives in the house, and eats flies and mosquitoes. It also works as an alarm-clock by making some croaking sounds at dawn, giving the people the signal for getting up. A calf with the colour of this lizard steals something important from this protected taboo-animal, and has, therefore, an evil and dangerous destiny, and must be killed.

(11) Cattle which are quite black. They bring poverty. The black colour is compared with the black fields which have been ruined by locust swarms; and in addition to this, black is the slave colour.

(12) Cattle of three colours (*omby telo volo*). Their appearance is far too equivocal to bring happiness.

(13) Cattle with different coloured hairs intermingled (*voronomby*). It is said of these: “We do not raise this kind of cattle. Once there was such an ox here. It was dangerous and butted its owner. It also butted the other cattle in the cattle-pen, so that they all died. The owner took offence at this, called his adult children and said: ‘I shall never again raise cattle which look like this ox, because it nearly killed me, and has made me a poor man. Let the one who raises such cattle be killed. This shall be a rule for us and our descendants.’ This rule is still in force among our people, and we are convinced that if we accept such an ox among our cattle, they will all die.”

The verb used to explain this taboo is *mamorovoro*, to make something entangled, such as a tangled skein, and it is also used about spreading something in all directions, for instance about cattle which are scattered in the fields or in the forest. The root is *voro* (more often *vorovoro*), which reminds one of the expression used for cattle with different coloured hairs thus intermingled (*voronomby*).

(14) In Betafo, cattle that have white markings on the belly (*omby soratra*). This taboo is connected with an old story about one of the Betafo ancestors. Once, when crossing a ford, he was caught by a crocodile. He was pulled down into a large hole, but just then an *omby soratra* came and stepped into the hole. The man escaped through the hole and was saved from a dreadful death. When he came home he made his last will thus: “I swear by *Andriamanitra* and all our ancestors that those of our family who eat meat from *omby soratra* will be cursed. May they be caught by crocodiles in the ford. The
Omy soratra saved my life, and omy soratra shall, therefore, be taboo in our family in all eternity”. Here I should like to mention that the expression “eternity” in Malagasy has a limited meaning: “As long as there are descendants in the family” (mandrakizay doria). When such a calf is born, it will be killed and buried at once. The meat must not be eaten. Sometimes even the mother cow is killed. Though reluctantly, the meat may be sold to people who have not got this taboo, but it is sold very cheaply. The man who kills such a taboo cow must be strong and courageous.

An important point in this connection is that a cow which has given birth to a “prohibited calf” has wronged the taboo (nanota fady), and consequently both of them must die. This shows that even animals may break a taboo and suffer the consequences.

(15) Dappled cattle. These are not used in the feast of turning the corpse, because it is said that their appearance changes as they grow up (miolla tantana)15. They will cause property and riches constantly to change, and bring, therefore, uncertainty, whilst cattle of one colour bring solidity and safe economical conditions.

(16) Cattle of the Fitatra-bird’s colour16. This is a family taboo which is well founded by the bird-taboo. If a calf has this colour, people will immediately think of the old story about the bird, which saved one of their relatives in a wonderful way. It is called “the ancestors’ bird” (ny voron-drazana), and no domestic animal has the right to have a similar colour, as that would be like stealing from the bird’s sacredness.

(17) Cattle without horns (omby bory)17. This is a very common taboo. The signs of prize-cattle are well-developed horns, and big humps. Without horns they are not proper cattle. Bory means “something which has no protrusion”, and is a disapproving expression about something which is lacking. Cattle without horns are so rare that they are looked upon as unnatural. Such cattle will bring poverty on the owner, and the calf must be killed. It is neither sold nor eaten. It is also a taboo to women who want children. In Betafo district it is said that those who eat the meat from hornless cattle “intend to die” (minia maty). It is tantamount to committing suicide.

It happens, however, that hornless cattle are protected. They will not be typical breeding-stock, but it is prohibited to have them killed.
Here is one example\(^{18}\): A man was caught by a crocodile, which pulled him into a hole at the river side. Whilst the man was in the hole, two hornless oxen fought over this hole, and one of them stepped into the hole. The man grasped a leg of one of the oxen, and was saved in that way. When he came home, he assembled the whole family, and swore solemnly that such cattle should be protected animals in all the future. Nobody must kill them, or sell them, and nobody must taste the meat, even at the common meals with people who did not have this taboo.

(18) Cattle with horns that are not well developed. There is something wrong with such animals, and they are made taboo (*Omby malemy tandroka tsy axo ompiana, fa omby fady*)\(^{19}\).

(19) A cow which has given birth to a dead calf. It must not be allowed to live, as it will ruin its master (*Omby maty anaka tsy avela ho velona, fa manolaka ny tompony*)\(^{20}\). It is not only a poor breeder, but it weakens the owner in his struggle to feed his family. Women who eat meat from such a cow will easily miscarry.

(20) Sterile cattle (*omby bada*)\(^{21}\). These fall in the same category. They represent doom and degeneration, and must, therefore, be killed.

(21) Harelipped calves (*omby sima*)\(^{22}\). Such are unnatural, and are not able to take food from their mothers. This defect can be inherited, and such an animal would not be a good breeder. The deformity will also be transferred to the owner. For this reasons such calves are killed as soon as they are born, and then buried.

(22) A cow that gives birth to two calves. This is against nature, and both the cow and the calves must be killed (*Omby miteraka kambana tsy maintsy vonoina*)\(^{23}\).

(23) Cattle which return and drink their own urine. These must be killed, because it is taboo to do this (*Omby miverina misotro ny rano fivalanany tsy maintsy vonoina, fa fady*)\(^{24}\).

(24) Sacred cattle

Among the Masikoro in the Belo-Tsiribihina district, there are certain cattle which cannot be slaughtered. They must live until they die a natural death. They are well-shaped cows and oxen, of a red colour, with big white specks on their flanks and on their cheeks, a white blaze on the forehead and a white tail. They are called *Dabarà,*
and are used when healing people suffering from *tromba*, a kind of possession by spirits. When one of their number is suffering from this disease, the whole family walk out into the field to the herd of cattle, and select one *Dabarà*. This animal is then carefully and ceremonially brought home. Relatives and neighbours are called, in order to assist in the curing of the possessed person. This is done by means of demon-dancing. At this great feast, which is called *Bilo*, the people dance, drink, and beat the drums. During the dancing the ox is brought to the *Bilo*-place, usually next to a large tamarind. Liquor is then poured over the hump and down the sides of the ox as well as on its head. The patient drinks from what is running down. If the sick person is cured by this, the ceremony is repeated a few weeks later, after which he or she bathes in the river. A great feast of thanksgiving will then follow with sacrificing of cattle.

*Dabarà* cattle must be treated with great respect and care, because they are sacred. Usually they are with the other cattle, but when the herdboy drives them home in the evening, he must not beat the white-spotted one. Neither must he scold it. To kill a *Dabarà* is strictly prohibited. A *Dabarà* cow must not be milked, because the dogs might touch the milk, and thus make the animal unclean. The dog will then become a special taboo-animal to the *tromba*-cattle.

The same sacred cattle, called the cattle of *Zanahary*, are also found among the Antanosy and the Vazimba people.

During the Royal time in Imerina, the custom of having sacred cattle was very common. These were called "*omby volavita*", which means "cattle, money, ready". The cattle which have "ready money" are the ones with the big white specks, reminding one of bright silver coins. These coins were not only used as currency, but also for taking away misfortunes and in ritual purgation. As such they are used even nowadays. The name is a glorification of the animal.

In Tant. Andr.\(^{25}\) we are told that the same kind of cattle were brought to the Royal Castle. These animals were the people's gifts in homage to the Royal House, and they were called "*ny hasina*", which means "the sacredness". They were turned over and tied, and then the people decorated their tails with different kinds of beads, like *voahangy*, *vakamarina*, and *vakan-tsileandoza*. On their ears were put rings (*kavim-bola*). Then the King (the Queen) prayed: "I, the King,
who am standing here, pray to you, all my ancestors, for blessings and happiness. Hear me, Andriamanimitra, and all my ancestors on the twelve sacred mountains! Make my kingdom prosperous, increase my power and authority, make my kingdom everlasting, and grant me the privilege of ruling as long as I live”. After this prayer, the ox is “awakened”, made free of the ropes, set up on its legs, and given back to the herdboy. This is called “a living sacrifice” (sorom-belona), as the animal is not killed. One was not allowed to beat this ox with a “dead tree” (hazo maty). It must only be a “living tree”, a green twig, because this would make the kingdom last for a very long time.

It is not cattle only which are used as “living sacrifices”. I have been told by the Mikea that they also use this kind of sacrifice, especially in very serious circumstances. If a father has a son who is seriously ill, he will go to his own sacred tree, taking with him the biggest and fattest hedge-hog he can find. Then he ties the animal to a branch of the tree by means of a string, after which he goes down on all fours, and cries to five or six different gods and his ancestors for help and for the healing of his son. When the prayer is over he carefully sets the animal free and lets it disappear into the bush. This is “the god’s hedge-hog” (tambotreky Ndriananahare). If one should happen to come upon this same hedge-hog later, it would be sacrilege to kill it, because the boy’s illness has been transferred to the animal, which is now carrying the misfortune (mitondra ny loza). On top of this the animal is a sacrificial gift to the Higher Powers.

In addition to the ancestors’ laws about the colour of the cattle, and about the specially sacred cattle, there is a comprehensive system concerning (25) sacrificial animals, which in most cases are cattle, these being the most important. This system is connected with the vintana system, but it has its own general rules as well. If, for instance, a red cow has been sacrificed in a critical situation, and death and disaster has been prevented, red cattle will become taboo to the family concerned, because it is the animal that saved them. In the same way cattle of other colours may become taboo-animals.

The witch-doctor has, as a rule, a large stock of cattle. Most of them are selected animals with symbolic colours, and people are afraid of his cows. The herdboys take care that cattle do not get into his pastures, these being dangerous territory. The witch-doctor has always a herdboy of his own, to whom he has given strict instructions.
Other domestic animals

The pig is a very common domestic animal. Many of them are all black, others are all white, and others again are black and white spotted. The animals walk around freely in the village, but they are kept away from the crops. During the night they are kept in a provisional pig-pen or in a little enclosure. If pigs are being stolen in the village, people take their pigs into their dwelling-house for the night. They are fed with maize, manioc and leavings, and otherwise they eat whatever they can find.

(26) Some pig-breeders are not allowed to keep stub-tailed pigs. Such a pig has not got sufficient tail to get a nice curl in it, and will, therefore, bring poverty on the owner.

(27) If there is something wrong with the bristle, for instance curled bristle, or if it grows forward, the pig must not be used as a breeder, and the meat must not be eaten.

(28) A sow which eats its own young ones must be killed immediately (Kisoa mihinana ny zanany tsy maintsy vonoina avy hatrany). Such an action is against nature, and the animal will be looked upon as dangerous.

(29) The pig-taboo is one of the witch-doctors' special taboos. They detest not only this animal, but even everything connected with it: meat from pig, or meat roasted in fat from pig, women who have pig's fat in their hair, and the smell of burnt bristles.

With regard to the Royal Court fetiches in Antananarivo, pig was taboo to Rakelimalaza, Manjakatsiroa, and Ramahavaly. These fetiches disappeared long ago, but in Imerina and in Vakinankaratra the witch-doctors still maintain the taboo. It is also a rigorous taboo to the Vazimba-spirits, and thus to their old graves. The boys who herd the pigs must always keep them away from these graves. This is more important than keeping them away from the rice-fields and the plantations. The tradition says that pig was a rigorous taboo to the Vazimba people at the time they lived in Imerina. This taboo plays an important part in the Vazimba worship as well. Those who still sacrifice and pray at these old graves must adhere to the rule never to eat pig's meat.

In the Betafo valley there are many minor clans, whose ancestors came from Andramasina in Imerina several centuries ago. (30) Their ancestors looked upon the pig as an unclean animal (bibi maloto),
and this taboo is kept even to-day\textsuperscript{30}. I have collected quite a number of stories about certain incidents confirming the taboo. Most of them are about a man who took pig’s meat and became mortally ill. Before his death he cursed the pig, and forbade all his descendants to eat any meat from a pig. A common conclusion of these testamentary imprecations is that the one who takes pig’s meat will become a leper. This taboo has still considerable influence, because it contains “the power of the ancestors” (\textit{ny herin-drazana}). In many places the pig is looked upon as an unclean animal in itself, irrespective of incidents confirming this, because this animal walks about freely and even eats human excrement. This aversion to the creature is so strong that it may result in an absolute prohibition.

(31) The goat taboo is quite common. Among the Betsimisaraka and the Tanala people there are very few who breed goats. It is a taboo from the ancestors\textsuperscript{31}. The Natives say that the goat is different from the cow and the sheep, it has a beard like a man, it has a stub tail pointing up, whilst the other animals have tails which are turned downwards, and are much longer. Its movements are quite unpredictable, and the strong smell of the goat is “hated by the lightning”. They do not take much notice of the fact that the goats are “hated by the lightning” because the herdboys during a storm usually assemble their goats under a tall tree and thus attract the lightning.

On the West Coast goats are very common, but even there this animal is \textit{fady} to several families, and is referred back to old family decisions.

This taboo is often connected with the \textit{Alakaosy vintana}. In the column “Causes of illness and misfortunes” in the Chart on page 36 one will see that in the \textit{Alakaosy} month it is a goat from the West which brings misfortune. The reason for this may be that the last three letters of \textit{Alakaosy} are \textit{osy}, i.e. goat. This month is in many ways the \textit{vintana} of disaster, and the inclusion of “\textit{osy}” makes the goat a taboo animal. (32) In certain places among the Sakalava it is not permitted to use the word \textit{osy} for goat, but only the word \textit{bengy}\textsuperscript{32}. Most probably \textit{osy} has become a taboo-word, because of the dangerous \textit{Alakaosy vintana}. 
(33) Sheep taboo. This is often connected with certain fetiches. When a great man or a village chief wants charms for eloquence or cleverness, the doctor tells him strictly not to eat mutton, or he will make a fool of himself in a gathering, bleating like a sheep. In the same way a young man who is going to make a wooing speech must not eat mutton, or he will be unsuccessful when asking for the girl. The sheep is looked upon as a stupid, cowardly and weak animal. Robbers and soldiers must not eat mutton, because that would work against their charms of courage and perseverance.

Dog-taboo. There are dogs in practically every village. They are nondescript curs, and no one breeds pedigree dogs. In addition to being used as watch-dogs, they are used for hunting wild boars as well as in the search for hedge-hog.

(34) It is taboo to sell a dog. This taboo is confirmed by a historical event. Long ago one of the ancestors shared his property between his three sons. The youngest one got only a dog, and he took it with him when he left his home to seek employment elsewhere. He walked through difficult and dangerous places, but the dog gave him comfort and help. As time passed, the man became prosperous and mighty. On his death-bed he called all his children and took their oath that they would never sell a dog. “My dog accompanied me faithfully during the difficult years when I struggled hard in order to earn my living. It was always my faithful friend. Cursed be the one of my children or descendants who sells a dog” (Voaozona, na ny zanako, na ny safiko, na doriako, izay mivarotra aika).

Many years ago it happened in Ambatomiady village of the Ambatolampy district, that a huntsman fell down a precipice, and lay absolutely helpless. His dog, however, ran to his home and called the other people, and the man was rescued. Just before he died a few years later, he asked that his dog, when its life came to an end, should be wrapped in a red silk lamba, and be buried beside his own grave. Even to-day people of this man’s family cannot sell or kill a dog. It must live until it dies naturally.

In Mandritsara village and canton of the Betafo district it is prohibited to kill a dog. The reason for this is that very long ago a watch-
dog warned the people that robbers were coming. They immediately prepared their defences, and put their enemies to flight.

Dogs may, however, be taboo for quite different reasons. In the Vohipeno clan of the Antaimoro tribe at the East Coast the dog is a general taboo. Once one of the neighbouring tribes came to fight against the Antaimoro. The village was surrounded by a wall. The enemies besieged the village, and a dog showed them a secret entrance. Thanks to the dog, the village was conquered and plundered. (35) With angry imprecations the inhabitants decided that dog should be excommunicated from then onwards. When people have spread out paddy rice on mats in the sun, and a dog happens to pass these mats, it will be chased away with sticks and stones, and the rice must be thrown away, because the dog has made it unclean, simply by passing.

It is a very common apprehension that dogs can infect and destroy sacred places, like tombs and places of sacrifice. If they relieve themselves on or next to such places, a purification sacrifice must take place, in order to restore the sacredness of the place.

There is one kind of fady which is more strict than any of the others. It is called sandrana. Among the Antaimoro, the eating of dog's meat is this kind of taboo. If a stranger, who stays in the village over-night eats meat from a dog, the house in which he slept must be burnt down as soon as he has left the place. If the rumours come out that one of their own has taken dog's meat, the village council will immediately start investigations, and if they find that the rumours are true, the man in question will be expelled forthwith from the village. It may also happen that the mass of the people drive the culprit away before the council has taken the matter up. They do not kill him because they are convinced that Andriamanitra himself will see to that.

The Antaimoro also count the hedge-hog and the Tona-snake among the sandrana-animals. (In Merina this snake is called Dona. It is the biggest of all the Malagasy snakes, and belongs to the Boa family (Pelophilus Madagascariensis).

There is absolutely no forgiveness for one who breaks a sandrana, no sacrifice can atone for this transgression, and no witch-doctor can offer his help. There is only one result of the transgression, and that is death.
(36) In Ambodrifiakarana, in canton Belazao, of the Antsirabe district, there was once a black dog which bit a man badly, and from then on it was prohibited to keep a black dog in that family. Generally the Natives are afraid of dog-bites, as there might be dogs suffering from rabies.

(37) It is prohibited to step on a dead dog, as this will expose one to hydrophobia (*Fady ny manitsaka fatin' alika, fa ho voan'ny tandromotra*)\(^{35}\).

(38) It is not the custom to kick a dog\(^{36}\), as that will cause the foot to swell up. I have, however, often seen dogs beaten with sticks if they try to enter a house, which they are not allowed to do.

(39) To step on a dog’s grave will give one hydrophobia (*Ny manitsaka tany nandevenana alika dia mahatonga tandromotra’ alika*)\(^{37}\). The cause of this terrible disease is the spirit of the dead dog (*ny lolom-ben’alika*).

(40) If a bitch gives birth to bitch-puppies only or dog-puppies only, it must be killed because it will bring disaster to the owner (*Alika ambosotra miteraka vavy daholo na laky daholo tsy azo ompiana, fa vonoina, satria manimba ny tompony*)\(^{38}\). This is something outside of the normal, and is against the principle of life — the male and the female equally apportioned. One may also be afraid that the bitch is bewitched.

The double nature and qualities of the dog cause the taboos to differ a great deal. The good qualities of the dog are its obedience and faithfulness as a watch-dog, and its ability in hunting. The bad qualities are what it has in common with wild animals, and especially that it can give people the dreaded disease hydrophobia. The dog is not honoured and praised and respected as much as the cattle. Usually it is looked upon as something inferior. (41) To call a man a dog (*Ny manalika olona*)\(^{39}\) is very rude abuse and a serious defamation. (42) One of the worst cursings in Malagasy is, for instance, in self-defence to say: “If I have done this, may my ancestors be dogs”\(^{40}\). The accusers will never accept such an evil way of defending oneself. They will in the name of the village council demand a retraction of what has been said, and the guilty one will have to provide a big ox as an atonement sacrifice to the ancestors, as they are the ones who have been profaned.
(43) There are very few cat-taboos. The cat is a common domestic animal; the meat of cat is used as food, and is even looked upon as a delicacy. Among the Sakalava, however, cats are not eaten. Here is a cat-taboo which is based on the enmity between cats and rats⁴¹. The rats are angry with the cats because they are always chased by them. They take vengeance on the cats in the following way: if people eat cat’s meat, it is believed that the rats will gnaw their bones in their graves when they are dead. In this way the rats will force people to get rid of the cats.

_Fowls_

(44) “If you have a hen which crows, you must sew it into a basket and throw it into running water, because it presages misfortune” (Raha akohovavy maneno no anananao, dia jairo anaty sobika izy, ka ario an-drano, fa milaza loza)⁴². If it crows like a cock, it is something unnatural and unpleasant. It is also called a hen which bewitches (akoho mamosavy), and they think it has connection with the spirits, and that it foretells death and disaster. It becomes “animal taboo” (bivy fady).

In Belanitra, in canton Soanindrariny of the Antsirabe district, they cut the head off such a fowl, and throw it away. The meat cannot be eaten. In Belamosina, in canton Mandritsara of the Betafo district, as in many other districts, the same taboo is present. The origin of this taboo is as follows: “A little boy played out in the field at evening time. A black laying hen crowed. People became frightened, and asked each other: ‘What is this? Something wrong must have happened! A hen crowing in the evening!’ Not until the following night did the boy come home trembling and frightened. He told his father that he was about to be eaten by an animal (lanin’ny bivy). Then his father proclaimed: ‘If anyone finds a laying hen which crows, and does not kill it, may he become a leper (aoka ho boka izy), because it was in connection with the hen that the misfortune happened’”. This incident is the cause of the taboo in that place. The expression “to be eaten by an animal” is quite common when children are frightened. They believe that there are supernatural, ugly beings, which will take them, and then they are in mortal danger. “Bivy” does not only mean animals,
but also "the unusual", — a supernatural being. In Andonabe of Marolambo district it is said that a hen which crows "breaks its own taboo, because it wants to become a male". In its abnormal inclinations it opposes its natural purpose.

(45) A cock which crows after sunset must be killed (Akoholahy maneno maty masoandro tsy maintsy vonoina). It foretells misfortune, because it crows at a wrong time. It is buried alive in a marsh, or its head is crushed with the pestle (ny fanoto). It was this implement which was used when putting witches to death in olden days. In Antanifotsy, the legs and the head of the cock are cut off with a blunt spade at cross-roads. The head and the legs are thrown away, but the meat may be eaten.

(46) One must not eat a blind hen (Fady ny mihinana akoho poa-maso). It might be blind on account of illness or because of fighting. To eat the meat from such a fowl may have bad consequences. One might become blind, or lose the ability to work. Whatever kind of work a transgressor of this rule takes up he will remain poor. "It will become nothing", they say, and this refers to the hen which has nothing, i.e. no eyes. Nothing leads to nothing.

There is another cause of blindness in hens, which is common all over the Island, and which is connected with an official ceremony. If the inhabitants within a certain area are constantly troubled with thieves, they feel insecure, and suspect each other of theft. To put an end to this trouble, all the inhabitants are gathered at the riverside. No strangers may be present. The most prominent man renders an account of the unsatisfactory situation, and beating the water with a stick, he says that they all have agreed to put a stop to the thefts. He takes a hen and plucks out its eyes, and torments it in every possible way. (47) In a dramatic voice he then makes it clear to everybody, that the one who carries on stealing will be treated like the hen, and that it will be taboo to steal anything from others who live in their area. He calls on Andriamanitra and the ancestors to execute the punishment on those who may trespass upon the taboo. This agreement is called "beating water" (velirano). The tortured hen must not be killed. It will, until it dies by itself, be a deterring example to the breakers of the theft-taboo. This "beating water" is an effective way of making laws, and as a rule they are respected and obeyed, sometimes more
strictly than the laws given by the Colonial authorities. This taboo, however, does not mean that one must not steal from people who live outside this area.

(48) It is also forbidden to eat chicks that have died in the egg. *(Fady ny mihinana zana-borona maty an-karany)*\(^\text{46}\). Terrible misfortunes will overtake those who do this. Pregnant women especially must not eat such, as that would mean giving birth to a dead child, and also because it is a terrible thing in itself. It would be the same as if she ate her own still-born child.

(49) A dwarfish hen must not be raised, because it will make people lepers *(Akoho zeny tsyazo ompiana, fa mahaboka)*\(^\text{47}\).

(50) A tufted hen must not be raised *(Akoho satroka tsyazo ompi-ana)*\(^\text{48}\). It is not like other fowls. The feather tuft on its head reminds one of a cock, and it must, therefore, be killed.

(51) If one looks at the fowls in a Malagasy village one will soon discover that there are few black fowls. The people do not like the colour. Only well-off people who have a lot of fowls may keep black fowls. The main reason, however, is that black is connected with a destiny which brings misfortune. This may come from a black hen. In such cases, black fowls are used for sacrifice, to take away the misfortune. Long ago in Mandritsara, in the Betafo district, there was a little boy who became very ill. The mother called the witch-doctor, who came late at night. He asked immediately: “Where is the black hen?” They had just one, and it was brought to him. “Kill it!” he said. This was done, and the blood was smeared on the boy’s breast. After this, the witch-doctor said: “None of you must keep black fowls, and none of you must eat them, because it was this black hen which brought the illness on the boy. Now the misfortune which was meant for the boy is transferred to the hen”. From then on they have not eaten black fowls there.

Here is another example in which a witch-doctor long ago imposed the same taboo on the people\(^\text{49}\): “We are not allowed to eat black fowls, because the *ombiasa* has imposed this rule on us. If somebody is sick, he says: ‘Bring a black hen, and let us go into the valley to kill it. There are still some ties holding the sick one, and they must be loosened. This sacrifice only can save him. From now on it will be a
strict taboo for you to eat black fowls, because the one we are going to sacrifice is the redemption of life (avot’aina).’”

Apart from the destiny colours, a fowl may be a taboo animal in connection with a certain incident. A story will show how this may happen: (52) “We are not allowed to raise grey speckled fowls, because that would make us lepers and kill us (Tsy mahazo miompy akoho vangavanga misadiadiaka fotsy izahay, fa mahaboka mahafaty). An old woman staying with us had syphilis wounds all over her body. One day as she was sitting outside in the sun, a speckled fowl hacked her wounds. She cried loudly and cursed (niozona) the fowl. Her pains increased immediately, and she died a short time afterwards. The relatives were very horrified at this and they killed the hen. Then they determined with a solemn oath: ‘If any of us or any of our descendants raise grey-speckled fowls, may they be lepers, and may they experience the terrible death of our grandmother.’” The old woman had been bewitched by the fowl, and this bewitching killed her. The curse which led to the taboo did not only hit the one fowl, but all fowls of the same colour in all the future.

(53) Fowls which have a red belly but otherwise are black or white, must not be raised, because they will make it difficult for people to make a living. (Ny akoho mena lafika, fa ny ambony fotsy na mainty, tsy axo ompiana, fa mandafika ny fitadiavan-karena.) Lafika means underlayer, the thing on which one rests. The verb mandafika (root: lafika) means to make an underlayer or a bed, for instance, to put grass under a mat on which one is going to rest. Figuratively it means to bewitch, e.g. to lay out dangerous charms for people so that they will fall down. Warriors and robbers especially use the ill-famed fetish “Trap and Much-Underlayer” (Fandrika sy Belafika), in order to lay a trap for the adversary, thereby making him fall down on his death-bed. This connection gives the verb mandafika a comprehensive meaning “to destroy, to kill”. On the top of that, a red underlayer reminds one of the red shroud and a burial. If we consider all these different points, it becomes clear that fowls with red bellies are dangerous.

(54) The same is the case with a red hen, but not with red cocks. Big, red cocks are very popular as they are used in cock-fights. Good
fighting cocks make fine sport, and considerable sums of money are staked at the big cock-fights. The owners may carry off a handsome profit. Such a fight may last for several hours. If it is not finished the same day, it will continue later until one of the cocks is absolutely finished, bloody, torn, and half-dead.

(55) It is taboo to raise fowls which have a feather formation similar to that of the kite (papango). They will destroy the property of the owner (Fady ny miompy akoho volom-papango, fa manolaka harena)\textsuperscript{53}, behaving like kites and destroying objects, not exactly like the kite, but indirectly, by preventing the owner from being successful in his undertakings.

(56) Red-speckled fowls (akoho vanda mena)\textsuperscript{54} are taboo for the same reason as white- and red-spotted cattle (no. 8, q.v.). When the witch-doctor sells wealth-fetiches, he often says that the fetich taboo is red-spotted fowls, which means that the damaging colour of the fowl will counteract and weaken the fetich, which has the opposite purpose, to make riches. If the owner of this fetich has red-speckled fowls, or if he eats the meat of such fowls, he "wrongs the fetich taboo" (manota fadin'ody). However, it may not only weaken the fetich, but even cause it to turn against the man and hurt him.

(57) It is the ombiasa's fady to breed cocks which are similar in colour to lightning (Fadin'ny ombiasa ny miompy akololahy, mivolombaratra)\textsuperscript{55}. Such cocks have a vintana which is more powerful than his own, and they will, therefore, overcome him. The unfortunate colour and shape of birds and animals indicate their vintana. If their vintana is more powerful than the vintana of the owner himself, they will be dangerous to him. Consequently such animals must be made taboo.

(58) A hen which eats its own eggs must be killed, because it eats its own children (Akohovany mihinana atody tsy maintsy vonoina fa mihinana ny zanany)\textsuperscript{56}. Such a hen is cruel and will bring misfortune on the owner and his family. It would be perilous to keep it.

(59) "Do not eat an infertile egg, because this will ruin property" (Aza mihinana lamokan'atody, fa mamdamoka ny harena)\textsuperscript{57}. It is a barren egg, which does not produce a chick, and thus it is a sign of something which is defective. The verb used to explain the meaning of the taboo is mandamoka: to give an action a negative result, to ruin.
The root of this verb is the same as the first part of the expression lamokan'atody, a barren egg. As an illustration of this we may take lamokan'ovy, which means potato-leaves under which there are no potatoes. The meaning is clear: the barren nature of the egg will be transferred to the man who eats it, and consequently all his struggle will only lead to disaster for himself and his family.

(60) A hen which fouls her eggs must be killed, because she offends the taboo (Akoho mandoto ny atodiny dia vonoina, fa manota fady)\(^58\). Such an action shows that the hen is evil-tempered, despises her own product, and opposes her own taboo. There is no atonement for animals which break taboos.

(61) Abnormally big eggs must not be eaten. They bring big misfortunes. A child in the family may soon die, or the grandfather may suddenly pass away\(^59\). The combination child—grandfather belongs to the fixed formula in order to make the taboo more effective and respected. The grandparents are more of a father and a mother than the parents themselves, and they call their grandchildren their children. The taboo is formed very effectively. To the Natives nothing is more precious than the grandfather who can live with his descendants. The big egg, however, is far too big, meaning something so rich and valuable, and bringing so much success and prosperity that it is dangerous. Too much blessing is capricious, and nobody knows the meaning of it.

(62) It seems apt here to mention the custom of not taking money which one finds on the road\(^60\). Such money must be left behind. To keep it will bring misfortune. The danger in this is that it was found by chance, and the owner is unknown. The piece of money becomes dangerous, and one should have nothing to do with it. This way of thinking is like a supplement to what is said about the big egg. The element of chance is overpowering. It is a custom to bring such eggs to the old Vazimba tombs as a sacrifice. It is quite common to find shell from big eggs on a little mound of stones on the mountain tops of Vakinankaratra and of Imerina. Those are the old places of sacrifice, which are used even nowadays. When the eggs are given to the Vazimba spirits, they will bless the man and his family, and give the right balance as far as prosperity is concerned.
(63) Small eggs cannot be used as food, because they bring poverty (*Atody kely tsy azo hanina, fa mampiditra fahantrana*)\(^61\). In addition to this inevitable poverty, the women will give birth to small and weak children, and the cows will give birth to miserable calves. One who walks very far will fall down dead on the road if he eats small eggs. Hens laying too big or too small eggs must be killed, because they are of ill omen (*biby mandoza*).

Geese, ducks and turkeys are a very important domestic livelihood. The Natives themselves say that these birds have come from overseas, and that they therefore are not as peculiar to the locality as cattle and chickens. Comparatively few taboos are connected with them, and they are practically never used in exorcisms and sacrifices, being too new in the country. Goose is called *gisa* from the English “geese”.

(64) Young people may not breed geese. Only grey- and white-haired people can do this\(^62\). It is the grey or white colour which shows that the *vintana* of these animals is far too powerful for young breeders, as these youngsters “have green hair” (*maitso volo*). Old people may do it because they have the same colour as the geese, and on top of this their age gives them a *vintana* which is powerful enough to master the *vintana* of the geese.

Most probably the domesticated ducks have also been imported, as the Natives never rear domestic ducks from wild ones. Duck is in Malagasy *kanakana*, from the French “cane”.

The name of turkey, *vorontsiloza* (“bird which is not misfortune”), shows that there is nothing dangerous in its character, and it is, therefore, no taboo animal.

It is a distinctive characteristic of all animals which have been imported in comparatively recent times that they are generally not subject to the usual taboo regulations. Some regard them with misgiving or indifference, others keep them, if they can show a good profit.

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**b. Wild Animals**

Wild boar taboo. Apart from certain fetishes which are connected with the wild boar (*lambo*) there are rather few wild boar taboos.
This animal is praised for its strength. The Tanala people, who know this animal very well, say that it is practically never ill. The meat is delicious if it is not too old or lean. The witch-doctors use the canine teeth as charms. At the entrance of many Tanala villages there is a stake on which the jaws with the big teeth are threaded. The hunters use specially trained dogs, and the wild boars are killed with spears.

The Vazimba are very good at hunting wild boars. (65) When a wild boar has been killed, it is prohibited to take it home to the mountain cave where they live. The hunter’s family is called, and the animal is quartered and consumed on the spot. The cranium is then put on a stake outside the cave. Once I believed that this was just a hunting trophy, but it is much more than that. Stakes with wild-boar crania have a frightening effect, and they protect the plantation from being destroyed by animals during the night.

When the Vazimba who live permanently in their villages are going to hunt wild boars, they must first ask the lord of the wild boars for permission to kill them. The forest gods have the following names:

**Kidondo**: The one who makes strong booms (like beating something hollow).

**Ravoantany**: The one who is sullied by dust and soil.

**Rahondrekitse**: The black storm cloud, which remains constant.

**Rapapangobelatse**: The kite with extended wings.

**Ravorotihy**: The one who is dressed in ragged mats.

The oldest one of the huntsmen calls on them, saying: “We cry unto thee. We are — he names the hunters — and we are going to hunt wild boars. Here are our dogs (he gives their names). Make us successful in our hunt, so that we may catch some.” For every god that is mentioned, he beats a tree-root with a stick. This is a custom of sacrifice, which is also used at ordinary sacrifices of oxen. Instead of the sacrificial animal, a root is beaten. (66) It is not permitted to go hunting before having obtained the gods’ permission. When an animal has been killed, a thanksgiving is expressed, which at the same time is a notification to the Higher Powers. Then they say: “Here is thy wild boar, Lord *Kidondo*, which thou hast given to us. The wild boar is stepping over the red liane (the fire in which the animal is
rolled when the bristle is burnt off), the dog is stepping over the white liane (the bowl from which the dog eats). The wild boar is dead for ever and ever. Hear us, Kidondo! Give us the same luck in our hunt to-morrow." The animal is quartered where it was killed. The heart is roasted on the spit and shared among the hunters. The smell from the roasting and the soul of the animal is received by the forest god. Parts of the hind-quarters and the intestines are given to the dogs. The hunters’ families are then called. The head of the family gets the right half of the head and the right hind leg. The rest is distributed among the hunters and their families.

In Ankazomanga of Miandrivazo canton and district, the inhabitants are Vazimba, but they long ago left the mountains and live permanently like the others of that district. They have kept their old custom of hunting, and they always pray for permission before starting on a hunt. When they have killed an animal, they put their spears down on the ground as a sign of thanksgiving, and they call on the forest gods to receive the sacrifice. The hunters eat part of the animal, but they always see to it that there will be something for their families.

When the Mikea hunt wild boars, 2 or 3 hunters usually go together, taking several dogs with them. They may follow the dogs for 2—3 days. After the kill, the wild boar is quartered and brought to the sacred tree in the forest (ny hazo manga), where they usually pray. Then all in the hunters’ camp are called, and the animal is roasted and eaten there. Afterwards they run around the tree, dance, sing and are happy. It is not often that they have so much meat. It is not allowed to bring anything to the camp. The head of the wild boar is given to the dogs which have been in the hunt. Some hunters cut off a little piece of the animal’s skin, dip it in the blood and wear it on a string round their neck. It is used as a strength amulet, and refers to physical strength (tanjaka) as distinct from spiritual power (hery).

The reason for the hunting of the wild boar being connected with certain rules is not that this animal is looked upon as a specially sacred animal. The reason is simply that as a wild animal it belongs to the gods, whilst the domestic animals belong to people. It is the divine right of possession of the wild animals which is the chief characteristic of the hunt taboos.
Lemurs

Among the mammals in Madagascar, lemurs preponderate both in number and in variety of species. There are at least ten different kinds of lemur (Lemuridae) in the wooded districts. The most common names for this animal are Maque or Maki, i.e. Snout-ape, or Fox-ape, as it has a very prominent snout. With some variations in the different kinds, the skin of the upper lip and around the nostrils is smooth. It has comparatively short, but solid arms, small hands, and the fingers are somewhat lumped together. Some of them have a long claw on the forefinger. The hind legs are long and strong. The woolly fur is thick and soft. If there are no specific restrictions, the Natives eat all kinds of lemurs. Among the Vazimba who are still troglodytes, and among the Mikea, the meat of lemurs is very common food. They are caught in snares and traps, or killed with sticks and stones. It is even more common to shoot them with blow-pipes and bamboo-arrows.

(67) Tsitsihy or Tsity (Cheirogaleus Coquereli) is light grey\(^65\). A peculiarity of this animal is that it builds its house in different ways in the different seasons. In spring-time it stays in the hollow trunk of a tree. In the hot season it stays high up in the trees, and in the cold season it buries itself underground. There it lies dormant until the spring sun in September warms up the soil. When it creeps out of its winter lair, it is fatter than it was when it started on its long sleep.

It is known for its beautiful, round eyes, and consequently it is admired by the Tanala women. Women who are with child take the liberty of eating it, because they want their children to get Tsity-eyes. When they eat it, they say: “Excuse me, Sir, for eating you, but I am going to have a child.” This apology is in fact an admission that the lemur is taboo.

(68) Fanaha (Cheiromys Madagascariensis) is also called Aye-aye. It makes a sound like “Hay-hay” and this has given it the onomatopoetic nick-name. The Europeans have accepted the name, so that Aye-aye is now quite commonly heard. It differs from the other kinds of lemurs in that it has a very peculiar and comic appearance. It has big ears and a downy fold on its forehead. The second finger is long, with
a claw which it uses when hooking caterpillars out of rotten trees. It also drinks with this finger by moving it so fast that the water runs like a constant stream into the mouth. When eating birds’ eggs, it kicks a little hole in the shell, puts the forefinger into the egg and licks it. The Aye-aye is nocturnal, and it hears absolutely nothing during the day when it is sleeping. In the evening, when the organ of hearing is opened, it hears so well that it can sense the movements of the caterpillars by holding the ear close to the bark. The sense of smell is also very acute and helps it to find the caterpillars. In the night it can see well and moves without a sound. The male and the female are always together.

Though the Aye-aye belongs to the smaller species of lemur, the Tanala and the Betsimisaraka are afraid of them, and believe that they have supernatural powers. There is a story about two brothers who were hunting lemur. They came across an Aye-aye. As soon as they saw the animal coming out of its nest, they were bold and imprudent and wanted to shoot it. It looked so strange and funny that the older brother nearly split his sides with laughing. The younger one took his blow-pipe and sent an arrow which hit the Aye-aye. The lemur, however, took the arrow out and threw it down. The boy sent another arrow, this time into its back, and the lemur threw the arrow down again. The third arrow hit the leg of the animal. This time it was badly wounded and fell down and was kicked to death. The boys brought the strange animal home, and all who saw it, had a good laugh. The fur was burnt off, and everybody got a piece of meat. The elder brother, who had laughed so much, got the head. When he had satisfied himself with the meat, he wanted to crush the skull in the rice-mortar, but it was so hard that he did not manage it. He struggled hard and laughed, and all the others laughed with him. The next day they all got dysentery, and many died a few days later. The few survivors wondered what could be the reason for this terrible disaster. The witch-doctor solved the problem by saying that it was the revenge of the lemur’s spirit, an explanation that was accepted by them all. They determined that from then on nobody would be allowed to mock, deride, kill or eat the Aye-aye.

(69) *Aeahina* or *Vahina* (*Avahis laniger*). It is also called *Matorianandro*: the one who sleeps during the day. The colour of this animal
is grey like the soil. The inner side of the leg is white, and it is, therefore, also called "the white-legged" (*ny fotișpe*). The hind-legs are so long that when it sits, the knees reach over its head. They stay so deep in the forests, that it is only the honey-gatherers who come across them. During the day they can be seen in very tall trees embracing each other and looking like grey, woollen balls. They return to the same tree every morning. When people come to the place, they do not run away, but watch them curiously with large, shining eyes. This kind is tamer than any of the others. It is not at all attractive with its long legs and red eyes, so that people are not interested in shooting it. If a man shoots an *Avahina*, his wife will get ugly children.

(70) *Babakoto* (*Lichanotus brevicaudatus*), in the Tanala dialect *Hendrina*, is the biggest of them all. It is grey, with a short tail, and very dark brown eyes, which in a way are quite expressive. The face has a good-natured and sympathetic expression. The limbs are large and strong, and it is as big as a child of 6 years. Its shape is so human that there is a common belief that it is the progenitor of the family. Its name means Father-*Koto*. It is not thought to be the progenitor of mankind, but of the extended family, or of the clan. I have never heard of a Native who dared to kill it, and certainly not of anybody eating it.

A Tanala told me a strange story\(^67\): "A man who was deep in the forest, collecting rubber from the *Herotra*-liane, came to a giant tree where a liane was hanging free in the air. It was growing downwards from a very thick branch very high up, and it had become fixed to the ground. As was the custom, he climbed to the top of the liane. Now he could get a great deal of the white, sticky rubber by cutting the liane, and then climb down. He cut the liane, which fell down, but he discovered to his horror that it was impossible to climb down the thick, slippery stem and started to shout for help at the top of his voice. Thus he was sitting until sunset. Just then a big *Babakoto* appeared. It came closer and closer, swinging itself from one branch to another until it was next to the man. It took the man by the hand, helped him down and then disappeared. It was all done so quietly and elegantly that the man was deeply impressed. With great delight and astonishment he ran home and told his people what had happened
to him. Obviously everybody’s oath was taken that they would not do this animal any harm, and this concerns everybody in our family.” This story is well known in many places in the Ifanadiana district.

(71) In some places the eating of lemur is forbidden. One story tells how a man had caught a lemur in a trap, but the animal was still alive and was brought home. One of the children asked that it should not be killed, to which the father retorted: “Are you crazy? Do you think it is a domestic animal?” Then the child asked for permission to skin it, and this was granted. The poor animal was skinned alive and then sprinkled with cayenne pepper and held against the fire. The tears streamed from its eyes and it cried bitterly, but the children only laughed at it. It was roasted and eaten. Some time later the children got ill, and they all died. The lonely and unhappy father then decided: “Those of my family, and their descendants who torture lemurs and amuse themselves thus, and those who kill lemurs and eat them, may they be destroyed and have no descendants, because this lemur wept, but the children were merciless and made fun of it. If, however, in the future one should happen to do such a thing inadvertently, do not kill him at once, Andriamanitra- Aww-aw!”

According to Malagasy beliefs and conviction the animals have souls (ambiroa), which live after death, like human beings. After death, however, it is not called soul (ambiroa), but spirit (angatra), and this word is only used about the beyond. From the word angatra the verb manangatra is formed, which is used about the spirits of the departed ones revenging themselves on people. This revenge is even more present when it is a human-like being, like the lemur, which is revenging itself, than if it is another animal. The lemur, however, only revenges itself if it has been mocked at alive, or if it is killed in a cruel way. The consequence is always misfortune in one way or the other.

I have heard many cruel lemur-stories, where the poor animals have been skinned alive, sprinkled with cayenne-pepper and then roasted. In a village by the path leading from Ambohimanga du Sud to Ambo-sitra, I came across some people who had burnt small trees in order to encircle lemurs. Some of them were burnt to death, others were caught alive, and the dogs played with them. I do not think that the
Malagasy people are more cruel to animals than other people, but they have a sadistic pleasure in torturing animals. This insidious inclination and temptation gets the better of them, and they have no feeling of remorse until something disastrous has happened as a consequence of their torturing the animal. Then they become frightened, and a new taboo is made.

As we have seen above, there are several reasons for the lemurs being taboo:
1. The belief that they are the progenitors of the clan.
2. The fear that their dreaded qualities will be transferred to babies.
3. The fear that the spirit of the killed animal might revenge itself.
4. Gratitude when the animal appears as a benefactor.

In the huge primeval forests in Marolambo district, lemurs are very common, and they are taboo as follows: In Tsingarivary of Ambodirinonoka canton, the following are taboo: Simpona, (Indris, or Procercus diadema), Babakoto, Razaka, Gidro (Lemur mongoz), Varisasy (Lemur varius variegatus), Avahina. In Ambodiramiavonina of Androrangavola canton: All kinds of lemur. In Ambatomitsangana of Andonabe Sud canton: Simpona, Razaka, Babakoto. In Andonabe of Andonabe Sud canton: Avahina, Babakoto.

(72) There are different kinds of wild cats (kary)⁶⁹. They are typical beasts of prey, and they take a great many fowls. The witches are supposed to be in alliance with them, and they make use of them during the night on their evil trips. This is one good reason why people do not eat the meat of wild cats.

(73) The Malagasy lynx, fosa (Cryptoprocta ferox) is a dangerous beast of prey⁷⁰. It is greedy and aggressive, and it can take little children who walk alone into the forest. It takes a lot of piglets and fowls. This animal is hated and feared and is as a rule not eaten by the Natives, who fear that the nature of the lynx will be transferred to them.

(74) Hedgehog is quite common food and even looked upon as a delicacy, but to some families it is an animal taboo. In Sahamadiso, canton Fisakana of Fandriana district, there is an old, deserted village

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8 — Taboo
with the name of Ankadimarina. Long ago, when this village was founded, a deep ditch was dug around it. Such fosses (hady vory) can still be found in the Inland. On the edges and in the bottom of the ditches cactus and thickets of brambles and thorns were planted. They gave a good protection against robbers. The village gate was often guarded during the night. One day when the settlers had dug about 8 yards down and were having some food down in the ditch, a pack of hedgehogs came right up to the men, who found this somewhat strange, and an older man advised them to move off as soon as possible. A little later the soil slipped in a huge slide, and if the men had not climbed out of the ditch, they would all have been buried under the soil. The soil is always loose where hedgehogs live, because of all the holes they dig in the ground. There was just one thing that occupied the thoughts of these men now: the wonderful way in which their lives had been saved. They had been warned by the animals just in time to escape disaster, and they decided to make the hedgehogs taboo to themselves and to their descendants.

There is no reason for doubting that this story is true. The old ditch can still be seen. The descendants of these settlers moved to a little village not very far off, and they still strictly keep this taboo. It is not only that they must not eat hedgehogs, but when they by chance come across a hedgehog, they run away and keep their eyes away from it in fear and anxiety, because it is a precursor of misfortune (biby fambara losa) for the whole family.

Many of this family have settled far from their home-place, some of them even in other parts of the Island. If, for instance, two of this family meet without knowing each other, and one of them says: “I am a Betsileo from Fandriana, my taboo is hedgehog”, the other one will easily find out that they are relatives and may reply: “You are an Ankadimarina-man”, and a good connection has been established. This is one of the many examples that could be given of an animal taboo being an important “emblem” of a certain family.

The hedgehog, however, is not only a warning animal and a taboo as such. By curling itself into a ball instead of fighting, it shows that it is a coward. It has a timorous nature, and is therefore made a taboo to all who have war charms or robber charms. It is also a taboo for women who are pregnant. (See ch. XII, no. 17, ch. XIV, no. 9.)
(75) All kinds of snakes are taboo, because the ancestors’ spirits are believed to dwell in them and they are, therefore, sacred animals. The appearance of a *dona* snake in a village causes a peculiar diversion in the daily round. Everybody runs to meet it, and greet it with veneration and honour. By studying its movements and the expression on its face, one of them may find out that it bears a similarity to his own grandfather, who died many years ago. This is especially the case if the snake has a scar, special wrinkles, or a wart on its head. He cries out: “O, my grandfather, O my grandfather!” Honey, milk, or even a small portion of rum is set before it. A hen is killed, and the *dona* drinks its blood. The village chief begs it to help itself, declaring that all people are happy and thankful for the visit. Then he supplicates it to leave them peacefully when it returns to its home.

(76) The crocodile is also sacred, the reason being the same as with the snakes. If a crocodile waddles peacefully into a riverside village, it will be beckoned and coaxed. A hen with tied legs or a kid will be set before it. Sometimes a cow is slaughtered and large pieces of the meat tossed into the gaping mouth. The beast is addressed, usually in such term as these: “Dear grandmother (grandfather), we are very glad that you visit us. Here are the gifts we are able to offer you at this moment. Do not harm us, give us your blessing, and when you make your way home to the river, go in peace”.

*Birds*

The birds may be divided into three classes: I. Birds of fortune. II. Birds of ill-omen. III. Birds of prey.

In class I are found:

(77) *Kibobo* (*Turnix nigricolli*) is a species of bustard quail. It is protected, and it brings peace. In many places people are not allowed to kill it or to eat it, and there are many stories about how this bird saved the lives of people. Here is one story from the Betsimisaraka tribe: “Our ancestors fought a lot and killed many of the neighbouring tribes. In one fight, however, many of our people were also killed, and others had to flee, pursued by the enemies. They hid themselves in the forest next to a plantation. Some *Kibobo*-birds were
sitting in the trees. The enemies threw stones towards the trees to find out if there were any people hiding there. ‘There are some there’, some of them said. Others said: ‘No, it is only the wind moving the branches.’ They threw more stones, and the Kibobo-birds flew up. The enemies then took it for granted that there were no people there; they left the place, and our people were saved. When they came home, the chief called everybody and said: ‘The Kibobo-bird saved us. Accursed be those of our children and childrens’ children who kill and eat this kind of bird! May they not become people! When they take care of their children, may these pine, when they plant rice, may there be no harvest. Cursed be the one who eats this bird from now on’ (Ny kibobo nahavonjy anay. Zanaka, ka zafiko, indrindra fa ny fara mandimby ahy, ka hihinana kibobo, dia aza manjary olona, zaza tesaina aza velona, ary vary ambolena aza maniry. Voaozona hatramin’androany izay mihinana io vorona io). This is the reason why this bird is protected at our place. The one who kills it and eats it will be punished.”

(78) It is only in some places that the sparrow (Foudia Madagascariensis) is protected. Then it is usually connected with an old story about a sparrow which saved the lives of people. Here is one from Vakinankaratra: “We do not eat sparrow because our ancestors were saved by them when robbers came to our home place. Our people hid themselves in the tall Vero-grass (Andropogon hirtus). Immediately a flock of sparrows alighted just there. When the robbers saw the birds, they left the place because they thought that the birds would not be there if the people were in the grass. Thus our people were saved, and they took each other’s oath that the sparrow should be protected, and that everyone killing or eating sparrow should be cursed. “Let them become lepers if they eat this bird, may they be cut to pieces by the enemy, may they be sold as slaves, may they be without children, and may their families die out.” (Raha fara sy dimby mihinana fody, ho boka, potehin’ny fahavalo, lasa andevo, kizo fara, lany tamingana).

There is no discussion if this taboo should be kept or not, because it is the mighty voice of the forefathers which is still ringing in their history, and the story is told by parents to children through the generations.

(79) Sohihy or Soy (Nectarinia souimanga) is a sunbird of a shining blue-grey colour, with a long, curved beak, which it uses when it
sucks honey from the flowers. It is a very beautiful bird, which does no harm, and it is, therefore, loved by the people. There are many stories showing how this bird has saved the lives of people. In Sahamadio, canton Fisakana of Fandriana district a dead Sohihy is always wrapped in a red lamba and buried.

(80) *Hitsikitsika* is a species of kestrel-hawk (*Tinnunculus Newtonii, gurn.*). It likes to stay in the village, is fond of humans, and makes its nest under the roof. It catches rats and mice, and it even fights with the kite, which often takes chicks. This bird is therefore a useful animal and is called “servant” (*mpanompo*). There are many old stories about its services. Here is one: An old grandmother was looking after the chickens, whilst the others were out working in the fields. The kite came to seize the chickens, but the *Hitsikitsika* came to the rescue and chased it away, and all the chickens were saved. The woman was so happy that she made all the inhabitants of the village promise that nobody would do any harm to this bird. “If anybody kills it,” she said, “he must wrap it in a silk lamba and bury it.” This promise is still kept in her family.

In other places it is said that the breaker of this taboo will become a leper if he eats this bird.

Here is a story about a kestrel-hawk which saved a little child who got lost in the forest. The parents were searching for the child in the forest, but could not find it. Then they heard a *Hitsikitsika* crying “Itsy, itsy”, which means “over there, over there”. “Listen,” said the man, “it is a bird saying ‘over there’”, and they went closer. Then the bird cried: “Io, io”, “it’s there, it’s there”, and they found the child in the thicket. They were so happy that they turned towards the bird and thanked it for helping them to find the child. Then they called everybody in the village and cursed all who killed this bird, saying: “Those of our descendants who kill the descendants of the *Hitsikitsika*, may they get children who are different from other people, may they be conquered by the enemy, and may none say that they belong to the living” (*Ny taranakay izay mamono ny taranaky ny Hitsikitsika, dia hiteraka izay tsy hitovy amin’ny olon-kafa, ho resim-pahavalo, tsy hatao hoe velona*).

(81) *Sorohitra* (*Alauda hova*) is the Malagasy lark. It does not sing as much as the European species, but it is well-disposed, does no
harm, and is loved by the Natives. It is a good messenger as well, as seen in the following story\textsuperscript{77}. When the Natives were rulers of the land, a soldier was sent as a guard to the West Coast. When he had finished his service and was on his way home, he came to a cross-road where he did not know which direction he should take. At that time there were only paths, and a lonely traveller could be attacked by robbers. He prayed to \textit{Andriamanitra} for help. Then a \textit{Sorohitra} passed, flying in the direction of one of the paths. He followed the same path and found his way home. When he came home, his people were very happy. He told them his wonderful story, and he charged them (\textit{nanafatra}) that they all should make a vow to \textit{Andriamanitra} that none of their families would ever eat lark. "This taboo is still in force," says my informant.

It is a common belief that anyone who eats lark will become a leper\textsuperscript{78}. If anyone plays with a lark, he must let it go and pay a fine to the village chief. A little child, who catches one of these birds receives a gift from its father as an inducement to let it go free.

A lark lays her eggs on the ground, and this is dangerous to pregnant women. A pregnant woman who eats larks' eggs will miscarry. The standard expression for this is "to lay eggs on the ground" (\textit{manao atody an-tany}) — and not in the nest.

(82) The \textit{Fitatra} bird (\textit{Pratincola sybilla}) belongs to the warbler family. Here is an example from very olden times of the origin of this taboo\textsuperscript{79}. Once the whole village was attacked by robbers. The people fled and some of them hid themselves in a thicket. When they had been there for some hours, some \textit{Fitatra}-birds descended there. When the enemies saw the birds, they did not search for people in that spot. Their history says gravely: "Our ancestors were saved by these birds." From then on until this day, nobody in this village is allowed to frighten, throw stones at, kill or eat this kind of bird. The man who told me this story is convinced that it is not made up. It is not a Malagasy custom to make up stories, when they deal with something so important and serious as taboo. Another thing is that this bird has good meat which is quite common food among most Natives. It has no special flavour which would cause any spontaneous aversion among people. There are, therefore, no natural or external causes of the
prohibition from eating it. The historical foundation is the decisive cause of the taboo.

(83) *Vorompotsy* (*Ardea bubulcus*) is the white egret. This is a very useful bird to the cattle owners. It stays near the cattle in the grazing land and eats the little leeches and gadflies which worry the cows. A herdboy on the West Coast or in the South when searching for his cattle will always look for the egret first, for the grass may be so high that he cannot see the herd. To kill an egret is tantamount to killing a friend and a helper. The children are taught from an early age that they must be kind to this bird and respect it.

(84) *Tsintsina* is a species of fantailed warbler (*Cisticola Madagascariensis*). It is kind, good-tempered and helpful. An old story shows this clearly: A married couple went from one witch-doctor to another in order to get a fertility charm, because they had no children. None of these charms helped them. On their way home one day, the man caught a *Tsintsina*, and this one he cooked for his wife. When she had finished her meal, she felt that she was with child, and they were very happy. Then the man decided: “None of my children or their descendants shall eat *Tsintsina*, because that will make them lepers.” Since that time none has dared to eat this bird, but the family have conscientiously observed their ancestors’ taboo.

(85) *Kitanotano* is a snipe (*Gallinago nigripennis*) and a taboo bird. It is good-tempered and has saved many from robbers just by its presence.

(86) *Kankafotra* (*Cuculus Rochii*, or *Cuculus poliocephalus*) is the Malagasy cuckoo. It does not say “Cuckoo” like the European species, but “Ho-ho-ho-ho”, the sound being high at the first ho, and then sinking gradually at each of the following “ho’s”. It is in the spring that it starts calling, and it is a sign that the time has come for starting the work in the fields. It announces a new season, and the people have given its name a popular interpretation by changing it a little. They call it *Taon-kafa*, which means “another year” or “next year”. In this way it gives strong advice to work hard in the fields. “If you do not manage to get the corn into the soil during the time the cuckoo calls, you may just as well leave it until next year, or another year, or take the responsibility of a poor harvest.”
(87) Toloho (*Centropus tolou*, or *Coucal centropus*) also belongs to the cuckoo family, but it is another species. It can be heard very far off when it is calling, and the sound is strange and piercing. The first "ho's" are slow, and then they increase quickly and finally trill out in the air, without much variation of melody. There are stories about this bird too, saving people in distress and danger. In Ifanadiana district, the Tanala say that it foretells rain. Its habitat is usually a marsh or the course of a brook. It is not permitted to kill any of this species of cuckoo, and one must not mimic them.

(88) The Malagasy crow (*Corvus scapulatus*), in Malagasy *Goaika*, is black with a white ring around the neck and a rectangular white mark on its breast. People have experienced innumerable miracles (*fahagagana*) in connection with this bird, and here is one example:

"We do not eat crow in our family, because one of our ancestors was vouchsafed a sign (*fambara*). Once a child was ill. Our grandfather went to the witch-doctor to fetch medicines (*fanafody*). On his way he encountered a crow which flew over his head, and he said to it: 'Give me a sign. If the child is going to be better, sit down on the road.' The crow sat down in front of him, and the man proceeded on his way to the witch-doctor. When he had got his medicine and was on his way home again, the same crow flew over his head several times. He said for the second time: 'If the child will become healthy again, sit down on the road ahead, but if it is going to die, fly away.' Again the crow sat down on the road, and the man hurried to his home. On the way he met people who could tell him that the child already was better. A little later the child was quite well again. Then he called all his children and grandchildren and said: 'From now on nobody must eat crow, neither we nor our descendants, because it brought good news to me on the road.' It is because of this story that the crow is a taboo to us. We look upon it as a remarkable sign."

This story has certainly been made romantic in order to make the taboo more effective, but there is no reason to doubt its historical authenticity.

For a crow to appear as a messenger of happiness or as an omen of a miracle is exceptional. In general there is quite another reason for this bird being taboo. The main reason is its habit of eating carcasses. Therefore, it belongs in a way to the birds of prey, even if this is not a usual classification.
The birds in class II, the birds of ill-omen, in different ways foretell future disaster.

Vitsy or Vintsy (Corythornis cristatus) is a species of crested kingfisher. Its habitat is near water and brooks. (89) This bird is taboo because of its name. Vitsy means few, contrary to many. When they fly, there are never many together, and thus people do not like them. This bird reduces the population. If a married couple eat this bird, they will get few children, which is a misfortune. It means also few head of cattle and little money\(^86\).

(90) Takatra (Scopus umbretta) is the tufted umbrette, allied to the storks. It is a bird of ill-omen as its nickname “Bringing disaster” (Taka-mandoza) implies\(^87\). This is shown by the following story\(^88\): “Many years ago an umbrette flew over the village. At that time a man died, and the people said: ‘This bird foretold calamity; let it be prohibited to eat it.’ From then on nobody ate umbrette”. Its nest is immense, and the bird works long and hard to build it. Anyone who destroys an umbrette’s nest will become a leper.

(91) Vorondolo (Strix flammea) is the screech owl, and the name means “the bird of the ancestors’ spirits”. This bird brings the message of disaster from the dead ones, and it augurs the future and quick death of people. It does not make it better that it is out only during the night, and is said to be the friend of the witches. When the witches dance on the graves, the owls are with them\(^89\).

(92) Vorondreo (Leptosomus discolor) is the Cyrombo roller. People are afraid of this bird, because it foretells death if it flies over the roof of the house. The last part of the word, -reo, means in popular etymology ireo, and is the plural demonstrative pronoun “those”. They cry “reo, reo, reo”. Those who hear it take it as a fatal warning\(^90\).

(93) Class III, the birds of prey, includes:

Papango (Milvus aegyptius), the kite, Fihiaka (Polyboroides radiatus), a species of long-legged hawk, Voromahery (Falco minor), the South-African peregrine falcon. These birds are not eaten for two reasons. They are noxious animals, because they take chickens, and they eat carcasses (Tsy fihinana izy ireo, fa mihinana faty)\(^91\).

(94) It is forbidden to destroy birds’ nests, partly because the birds are struggling so hard to build them. A more important reason is that the nest symbolises the home of people. To destroy a nest is dangerous
to one's own home, it will "dry out the family" (mahari-para ny fiankaviana). It is a very common taboo to pregnant women, as the nest, the laying of eggs, the hatching, all remind one of the woman's biological function and central place in the home.

The different signs from which the Natives draw their conclusions may be divided into two categories. The one category consists of accidental signs, like a bird crossing one's path, something strange happening, in short, things of which people are not the cause. We may call them accidental, spontaneous signs.

The second category consists of signs to people who are in a difficult or dangerous situation. Then they ask for a sign. If such and such a thing happens, it will mean this or that. As they cannot master the situation themselves, they will not take the decision personally, but they leave it to the Higher Powers. The result, be it successful or not, is then looked upon as the decision of Andriamanitra himself.

We should, however, take notice of the fact that it is usually at important moments, and just before important undertakings and difficult decisions that the signs are to be observed. It is in critical and exciting times that these birds of omen appear, exactly when they are most needed, and the strange portents and miracles then give a release from the inner tension and excitement.
CHAPTER VI

Building houses
and founding villages

There are certain rules which must be followed when a new house is going to be built, and many of them are very detailed, having an important aim. The house must be well-built and warm, the people living there should be happy and stay long, get many children, be prosperous and always have a respectable home (trano mihaja).

We have already touched upon the building of houses in our dealing with the vintana system. In this connection we may refer to chapter III.

It is a general rule that a house must be built in winter time. (1) If one builds in spring or summer, there will be bad crops.

(2) The foundations of a house must not be laid on a day which has the same destiny as the owner’s birthday, as he will not be able to stand the power of the house (Ny trano tsy azo aorina amin’ny andro nahaterahana, dia ny vintana izany, fa tsy maharitra ny herin-trano, hono, ny tompony). Here we have a practical application of the joint-destiny taboo, even concerning an inorganic thing, a house. The power (ny heriny) of the new house means its vintana-power. This will be so contrary to the man’s vintana that he will be destroyed by the vintana of the house. The day on which the foundations are laid becomes the vintana of the house in the future. This again throws light on the question if those who are going to live in the house will be happy or not. The house gets its own vintana, its characteristic advantages and disadvantages according to the way in which it has been founded, and this vintana will have a certain influence on those who live there.

The site of the new house is a very important matter. The following description of the way of choosing the site is from Vakinankaratra.
The villages are spread around in the valleys, at the foot of extinct volcanoes, with black, fertile soil, or at the edges of long plains, which are cut into rice-fields, looking like a chess-board. Mountain ranges form a background to the landscape, their even lines broken here and there by mountain tops.

The houses are of the same kind as in the Inland in general (among the Merina and Betsileo people). They are built of stamped soil, of sundried soil-bricks, or of burnt bricks made by the Natives themselves, and the roof is covered with thatch or flat tiles. Wooden houses are not used, because wood is very scarce. The walls inside and outside are plastered with sticky soil and cow-dung. The houses often have a first floor. The ground-floor is stamped soil covered with mats. Each floor has two rooms, a little kitchen and a larger room, which serves as bedroom and sitting-room. One of the rooms is often used as a store-room for grain.

Young, energetic people must often leave the village because it is overcrowded. They will then found a new village. First they must find a suitable place, perhaps in a valley where they can plant sweet potatoes, maize, and beans, and where there are marshes or slopes suitable for rice-fields. In addition to this there must be a brook from which water can be led to the rice-fields. However, even if all these things are there, the ombiasa must be consulted. It is of vital importance to find "a site which does not destroy" (tany tsy manolaka), and there might be many things that make a site dangerous.

(3) One must not build a house on hungry ground, because it is one’s own satiety one is after (Tsy azo atao ny manorina trano amin'ny tany noana, fa fahavokisa na tadiavina). Hungry soil means the poor, moist low-land. The house will then stand too low and on poor soil. These unfortunate qualities will give hunger and poverty, even if the land is good otherwise. In addition to this it must be remembered that the dead ones do not like a house which has been built on hungry soil, and they are, therefore, not prepared to give their blessings. The harvest will be poor, and there might be famine in the future.

(4) "A dead valley or a valley with a dead head will not give prosperity, and what is dead will carry the house" (Tsy ao amin'ny lohasaha maty, na lohasaha maty loha, fa tsy mahavanon-karena, ary ny maty mitondra ny trano).
The head of the valley is the upper part of it. If there are only quagmires and swampy water there, the valley is "dead", without the "living water" of a running brook (rano velona). This will bring death on the settler. It is also understood by the people that such water is dangerous to health. Thus we see that this fady combines the practical with the symbolic when indicating the circumstances which are unfortunate to those who would live in such a spot.

(5) An ombiasa will never advise people to found a village or to build a house at the mouth of a valley, as neither the house nor the people will be able to stand the power of the valley (Tsy eken'ny ombiasa ny manao trano, na tanàna mifanandrify amin'ny lohasaha, fa tsy maharitra ny herin'ny lohasaha, na ny olona na ny trano). The spirits dwell in the valley and in the deep gullies, and they bring misfortune. Furthermore, the cold winds there are also unfortunate. This wind and the slope down the valley has another, undesirable power. Fertility, riches, health and happiness will not stay, but will move down the valley and disappear. Another reason is that people living in the valley will not be able to discover robbers and enemies in time, and this was very important at the time when the Natives ruled the country and gangs of robbers were common. In short, a valley is a very powerful thing, having a powerful vintana (vintana mahery). The house is, therefore, placed a little way off the line of the valley. If, however, there is no other site for a house, arrangements may be made so that the house can be built there all the same. A tall stone is erected according to instructions from the ombiasa, and sacrifices and exorcisms are conducted in order to take away all that might be dangerous to people. Such a stone is often erected at the mouth of the valley, and it is strong and big enough to deaden the dangerous power of the valley.

This "male stone" (vatolahy) becomes the protector of the valley, turning off its evil vintana. This kind of stone is also interesting in that it in a way forms its own category. Practically all over Madagascar one can find these tall monoliths and smaller stones. One category consists of stones which have been erected in honour of great and mighty men, or of kings of olden times who had visited the place. In Sakary canton along the road leading to Tsitondroina of Fianarantsoa district, I have seen monumental stones from seven to ten feet high at intervals of a few miles. They were erected in honour of king
Andriamanalimbetsileo when he travelled through that part of the country.

Another category is the family place of sacrifice, which is also called "the male stone". It is usually a very tall stone which has been erected in honour of a mighty family chief. In addition to this several smaller stones are laid near it. Many of them have been erected in commemoration of Malagasy soldiers who have been buried in France. These serve both as memorial stones and as places of sacrifice.

Thus we get actually three categories: — Memorial stones, sacrificial stones, and "the protector of the valley", which the settlers erect at the mouth of the valley.

People say that without this stone the wealth will be drawn out of the valley (sarihiny’lohasana ny harena). This means that the valley's own vintana will work against them and make it impossible for them to prosper.

The same principle and way of thinking are followed when a man is going to build a new house in a village, and this house will be next to a great man's house. The man asks the ombiasa to erect a stone between his house and the other man's house. A man from Anjamanga of Ambatolampy district, who informed me about this, says that the reason is the mighty man's vintana, which is too powerful for the new house. The hardness of the stone will protect the new house by "stopping" the other's vintana.

In connection with the settlers' valley, we shall mention more examples of the power of nature.

(6) You must not build a house over against a steep, protruding rock or mountain peak, because the house will not stand its vintana (Asa manao trano misanandrify amin'ny vohitra mitrangatranga, fasy mahaleo ny vintany ny trano). The power of the mountain peak is too strong for the house, i.e. for those who live in the house, and the place is taboo to the building of a house. Very often there are old places of sacrifice on these peaks, and this makes them even more powerful.

(7) Do not build a house over against a waterfall or a lake, which gleams in the sun (Asa manao trano misanandrify amin'ny riana, narano mitselatra). A waterfall is sacred and dangerous, because the Vazimba-spirits dwell there. Now and again the ombiasa goes there,
when he feels that the spirits call on him, and this might be any time of the day. Then he sits down near the waterfall, if possible under the curtain formed by the falling water. There he contacts the spirits and talks with them about future disaster, and there he also learns what kinds of charms he should use to ward off such disaster. Furthermore he is informed about medicines to be used in the different situations. Through such a direct contact with the spirits the ombiasa gets new religious power. Only he may go to the waterfall. To others it is a dangerous and frightful place, and people are not able to withstand its supernatural forces. When the falling water gleams in the sun, this is a sign of the supernatural powers which stay there.

(8) It is taboo to build a house over against a landslide which is fairly new (Fady ny manorina tranandrifin'ny tany vao nikoanakoa). The precipice will “consume the people” because of its terrible power. Here they think not only about the danger of new landslides, but also of the power of the precipice itself, in that it will draw people into the chasm and destroy their property.

When a malevolent ombiasa or witch wants to kill one of the people in a village, or to bring disaster on a family, he very often takes soil from a precipice and makes a charm of it. This soil he then secretly puts just outside the door of his victim’s house or on a path where the man will be walking.

(9) One must not build a house or found a village where the river forks (Tsy hatao amin'ny tandrifin'ny sampan-drano). Such a place is often boggy, with fever-mosquito and cold mist. It is an unhealthy place. These natural causes, however, are not enough to make it a taboo-place for the building of houses. The ombiasa swears that people who settle there will not be able to thrive. The home will be destroyed, the women will leave their husbands, and there will be no children. The cause of all these misfortunes is not the fever-mosquito nor the boggy land, but the fact that the river forks.

The undivided river, which leads the water safely over falls and through rapids, is the symbol of unity. If the river is divided, the unity is broken. Exactly the same will happen in a home, if one settles in such a place. The precious unity of husband, wife and children will be broken by divorce. If divorce happens repeatedly, it is looked upon as a misfortune, and it may cause unrest and trouble in the village,
and will certainly destroy the peace of the home. It will be impossible to make a living, because money and property will be scattered, like the water in a delta.

There are villages with the name of Antsampandrano, which means "where the water divides." In the eastern part of Ambatolampy district, by the border of the forest, there are such villages. And the same is the case in Ambohimanga du Sud (Ifanadiana district), but then there are special reasons for founding villages there, for example, orders from the colonial administration. There might be a French gold-prospector or planter who has ordered his labourers to settle there. A European founds a new village according to his own ideas, and he considers the practical and economical advantages of a place. The river branch means nothing to him. The taboos have no effect on a European. If such a village has been founded by the Natives, we can take it for granted that the ombiasa has made the people erect a stone, which will counteract the destructive power of the delta.

The house must have a certain orientation towards the family tomb. (10) It is strictly prohibited to build the house in such a way that it will be just outside the corner of the family tomb. *(Fady mihitsy ny manao trano mifanandrify amin'ny zorom-pasana)*. Both the house and the tomb have the door on the western wall, and they are built in accordance with the vintana system, and with the four destiny corners. If the tomb already lies in a south-eastern direction, its diagonal Asorotany—Adjady will be in line with the corresponding diagonal of the house. This is dangerous, because the vintana of the house will be in opposition to the vintana of the tomb. Consequently the living will be in conflict with the dead, and it will be intolerable to live in the house. This difficulty can be avoided by placing the house a little out of line with the tomb, thus giving the house and the tomb a different orientation.

(11) Another very rigorous taboo is to build the house (village) due north of the family tomb *(Fady mihitsy ny manao trano avaratry ny fasan-drasana)*. In order to have a clear understanding of this taboo, one must remember the following. When the Natives sleep, they lie with the head towards the North or towards the East. The noble families of the Masikoro clan at the West Coast form an exception in this respect. They sleep with their heads towards the South, because
1. Woman selling medicinal charms in an Imerina market-place

2. Post for circumcision rites in a Sakalava village
3. *A Betsimisaraka village*

4. *Antaisaka funeral cortège*
their ancestors came from that direction, according to the tradition. Otherwise it is a general rule that the man lies with his head towards the North. His sleeping place is by the eastern wall. His wife and children sleep south of the fireplace. They usually sleep with their heads towards the East. (12) It is prohibited to lie with the head towards the South, because then one will be like a witch. That is how the witches lie when asleep, and they usually do the opposite to what other people do.

Another thing one must know is that the corpses in the tombs are placed in the same way as the sleeping position of the living. If the house, then, is built due north of the tomb, people will sleep with their feet southwards, and that would be as if they were kicking their sacred ancestors, and that is also what it is called in connection with this taboo (mitsipa-doha razana). The house must therefore be placed in such a way that this dangerous position in relation to the tomb is avoided.

In connection with the sleeping position, (13) I may mention that it is taboo to lie with the head westwards, because one then will kick the sunrise.

The South-Betsileo people still believe that after death the soul goes to the sacred mountain Ambondrombe in South Madagascar. (14) Exceptional cases are found in certain villages of Fianarantsoa and Ambohimahasoa districts where it is fady to place the corpse with the head northwards, because that would make it impossible for the soul to reach the sacred mountain. Therefore the head must point southwards.

(15) A house must not be built in such a way that it stands lower than the family tomb (Tsy azo atao ny manao trano ambanin’ny fasan-drazana). If this is done, the living will be pressed down by the spirits of the dead (Tsindrian’ny avelon’ny maty ny velona). Then those who live there will feel a constant pressure on themselves, and feel that they are worried by the dead ones of the family, and they will have no peace. People are, therefore, dissuaded from using such a site.

The topographic conditions differ a great deal. I shall only mention the hilly country in the Inland and the East Coast. In these places one can see both villages and tombs occupying one and the same mile-long hill. When looking carefully, one will discover that the tombs
are always below the villages, never above. One will also see that the villages are not in line with the tombs, but a little bit to one side of them, and sited obliquely.

If there is another village below, and on the same slope, this village will be situated below the tomb of the above-mentioned one, which is taboo. However, as long as it is the family tomb of the other people, danger is not so great. To be on the safe side, they erect a stone between the village and this tomb for protection. When there are several villages in the same limited area, all the inhabitants are more or less related to each other, and even if the tomb which is above the village does not belong to the village, it might have the corpse of some relative, and then an erected stone is of great importance.

However, even if all these rules and taboos are seriously taken into account, the Natives feel that something more must be done to protect them from the consuming power of the tomb. There are different methods of protection which are used. In Antsirabe district it is a custom that the ombiasa buries different things in the ground at the side of the house which turns towards the tomb. He uses the “living stone”, which is a white quartz (vato velona), and has been consecrated beforehand. Together with this stone, leaves from the Aloe plant Vahona, some straws of the tall Famoandrano grass (Panicum jumentorum), some honey, and a broken knife, are all buried. The functions and active power of these things are:

1. “The living stone” will counteract the power of death. Its purpose is, therefore, the same as that of the erected stone which is between the village and the tomb.

2. The Aloe-plant is extremely bitter. The shiny and sticky juice is also used in other connections, as medicine. Here it symbolises the bitterness of sorrow and regret. When this plant is buried, the things which it represents are buried with it, and they will not worry the living.

3. The honey is a sacrificial gift, which will satisfy the dead ones and make them keep quiet in the tomb and not return to the village or to the home, and thus destroy the peace there.

4. The famoandrano grass is a very common means of chasing away evil.
5. The broken knife (*tapak'antsy*) will cut the connection between the living and the dead, so that the living will be able to live in peace.

When using these five things in the ceremonial way, the *ombiasa* conducts exorcism of the dead, so that they shall not disturb the people who are going to live in the new house. We may also say that he binds death as the evil power, and that he excommunicates it from the living.

As this is a very perilous and complicated ceremony, which brings the *ombiasa* into danger of death, his fee may be very high. He will always ask for things which will correspond to the value of the service:

A cockerel which has just learnt to crow, an undivided silver dollar (*vola tsy vaky*), a large *lamba* (*lamba sasapahadiminy*), a new-made spade (*angady tsy afak'arina*), and a dish of which the reverse side is blue (*lovia manga voho*).

The symbolic meanings of these gifts are:

1. The cockerel which has just learnt to crow, stands for the unfolding of the vital power, the masculine principle of life.
2. The silver dollar is complete and untouched as distinct from the coins which are cut into smaller pieces. As a fee it must be whole and as such represent perfection and fullness.
3. The *lamba* is about 5 yards of material of standard width, cut into two equal parts and sewn together. This is the official size of a man’s *lamba*. It is new and a complete piece of clothing.
4. The spade “on which there is still some charcoal”, is new and has never been used, and as such it is a useful tool.
5. The blue colour of the dish represents what is good and valuable.

All these things have their clear symbolisms. They are valuable things transferring the values of life on to the new house, and on those who are going to live there. All these values are transferred during the ceremony of handing the gifts to the *ombiasa*, who receives them as a mediator, and instrument of the ancestral spirits.

Thus we understand that there are very many things to be considered when a new house is to be built or a new village is to be founded. The site must be in the correct relation to the valley, to waterfalls and
lakes, to mountains and the cold winds, and to altitudes. The movements of the birds are observed very closely, especially when they return home in the evening. There are many kinds of birds which have their fixed routes. When they return at sunset, they do not fly over the mountain tops, but pass through gaps and cross the valleys. (16) Such gaps are called "the birds' passage" (*ny fihoaram-borona*), and houses must not be built there¹⁶. The birds do not stop or rest in the gap, but they only pass through. The wind may blow coldly through such gaps. Together these factors mean that nothing stops or stays in the mountain gaps. Neither people nor cattle would ever be happy there. Happiness and wealth will disappear with the birds and the wind.

In the village itself one must build a house in a correct relation to the other houses, especially to the house of one's father.

(17) It is taboo for a son to build his house north or east of his father's house (*Fadin'ny zanaka ny manao tranon avaratra na atsinanan' ny tranon-drainy*)¹⁷.

(18) In the same way it is taboo to build a house which is larger than the father's house (*Ny manao ny traony lehibe noho ny an'ny rainy*)¹⁸. If he should happen to do such a thing, he must give his father a great gift as an excuse, provided that the father is willing to receive the gift. In most places a son will not be permitted to build larger than his father, because it is taken as a sign of neglect of the father's authority. The father's *vintana* and his authority combined form an inflexible power, which will be far too strong for the son if he dares to build his house larger than that of the father. This taboo is not from the *ombiasa*, but it is handed down from the ancestors.

The houses in a village are never sited in a haphazard manner, but according to a fixed plan, provided that modern circumstances, for example the colonial administration, have not made this impossible. (See fig. 4.)¹⁹

When the witch-doctor has found the happy and fortunate day, the people concerned meet at the site in order to be present at the "foundation stone" ceremony. He digs a hole in the middle of the site and four holes for the corner poles. Then he takes a black fowl, cuts its throat and then holds it over the holes in order that the blood may drip into them. After this he takes the spade again and hews the soil
No. 1: House of the chief, where the first wife also lives.
» 2—3: Houses of his second and his youngest wife.
» 4: Rice-granary.
» 5: Sacrifice-poles.
» 6—9: Houses of the chief's younger brothers, in order of age.
» 10—14: Houses of the chief's 5 married sons. No. 10 belongs to the eldest son.
» 15—19: Houses of workers and widows.
» 20: Rice-pounding place.
» 21—26: Hen-houses belonging to the western part of the village.
» 27—33: Rice-granaries.
» 34—37: Hen-houses belonging to the other inhabitants.
» 38: The sacred Tamarind tree.

Fig. 4
Plan of a typical Sakalava village
in the two southern angles of the site. Then he throws turf and soil southwards, saying in a passionate voice: "Now misfortune and disaster have passed that way" (Lasany no loza amin'antambo). He throws soil northwards from the two northern holes, saying: "May happiness and luck return to the house" (Averinany soa sy ny tsara). What he really does by all this is to exorcise all evil from the house and to call on what is good. The southerly direction is the direction of disaster. All places facing southwards are cold and barren. Happiness comes from the North, from the direction of the sun and the warmth.

When a village is to be founded or a house built, an animal is slaughtered in the middle of the open space. This might be a fowl, a sheep, or an ox. This sacrificial custom is called "the gift for the new village or house" (asanda ny tanana na tranon vaoao). The real meaning is that the animal is the substitute for a man, and that death will be taken away as much as possible from the village (house). The fixed principle is followed: one life is taken instead of another one and compensates for it. The word which is used for the gift, "asanda", has in the active form the meaning "to give into the bargain", always in order to obtain something special. This interpretation of the meaning of the sacrifice is more comprehensive: the new building site belongs to the sacred ancestors. Long ago the land within a large area belonged to them, and the new village will therefore be on the ancestors' ground (tanindrazana). In order to obtain the ancestors' permission to build there, an exchange must take place, animals must be sacrificed. This interpretation is not contrary to what has been said above, but only supports it. When the foundation is made in this way, the inhabitants have a legal right to live there, from a Malagasy point of view, and nobody can take this right away from them.

Now another question arises: who should start digging? Quite a few taboos must be taken into consideration when deciding this.

(19) The digging of the trench for the foundation must not be done by one whose father still lives (Fady ny mihady tany voalohany amin' ny fanorenan-trano, raha mbola velon-drany). This is a rule which is followed in the Inland, where the houses are built of sun-baked soil-bricks or oven-baked bricks. In the forests on the East Coast and among the Tanala people the houses are built on poles embedded in the
ground, on account of the humid climate, and the floor is about a yard above the ground. In South and West Madagascar as well as in Bara wall poles are also used, but in these areas the climate is dry, and the floor is, therefore, level with the ground. However, whether ditches are dug for a foundation or holes are dug for poles, the taboos are more or less the same in the different places and among the different tribes. If the son, who is the builder, is the first one to dig, this is the same as if he were digging a grave for his father, and thus wanting him to die. When the father starts the digging, it signifies his authority and patriarchal right. It also shows the blessing of having a father among the living, and it will give the son a long life, if all the taboo rules are followed. In time the son will have the great experience of being with his children when they are going to build houses for themselves, and thus the blessing will follow the family through generations.

(20) It is not the custom that young men start the digging of the foundation. Old, white-haired men must do this, because the young men will not be able to stand the power of the earth, and they will die young (*Tsy fanaon’ny zatovo ny misantatra mihady ny fototra voalo-hany, fa tsy maintsy olona mipi-bolo, na zokin’olona ihany, fa tsy maha-ritra atolaky ny tany ny zatovo, ka maty tanora*). The earth has its own power, which may be dangerous when starting on a venture as important as the digging for a new house. Young people would be destroyed by this, but old people have much more power of resistance. Another important advantage of having old people taking part in the work is that the people who are going to live in the house will reach a ripe old age. The house will last for many years without becoming shabby or tumble-down.

When the old man who has the privilege of starting the work has dug for a while, anybody may carry on. Very often the whole family take part in the work, and even other people in the village may join them and help until the house has been completed. When building houses they usually help each other.

The way in which the digging is done is also of importance, for instance among the Antanosy people. (21) It is taboo to stand upright when digging holes for the corner poles (*Fadin’ny mpihady zoro trano ny mitsanga*). One must sit (*mipetraka*) when using the spade. It is a common expression for prosperity that “the riches sit”, “have sat
down”, this being the opposite of “the riches go”, which means economical ruin. Those who sit when digging will cause the economic position to be steady and the house to last.

As an analogy we may mention that the ombiasa always sits when burying the charm of riches, Hazary, in the house.

In order to supply peace and security in the house, a fetich is made, its name being “calming” (Fanony). This is a noun made from the verb manony, which means to calm, bring to an end, referring to storms and high seas. The purpose of the charm is to protect the house against fire-raisers and everything that might destroy the peace. The kinds of wood which are used are the following:

1. “Great hindrance” (Betambana). This will keep all malevolent people away, so that they cannot do any harm.

2. “The thing that destroys the enemy” (Ripapahavalo).

3. “It does not reach” (Tsimipaka). The enemy, the disaster, will not reach the house.

4. “It does not hit” (Tsimihatra). The evil will not hit those who live in the house.

5. “Calming” (Fanony).

6. “Tie” (Fehiny). It will tie all together in unity.

7. “The Chameleon tree” (Hazotana) (Phyllanthus casticum). This is a small, bushy plant, with tough and hollow-stemmed branches. It is used when making baskets, and also as medicine. A porridge is made from the saw-dust and put on boils and swollen fingers. The second part of the word, -tana, means both chameleon and “the keeping of” and is interpreted by the Natives as protection from losing their property.

8. “The chameleon’s mouth” (Vavatana). This has the same function and purpose as the above-mentioned one. A chameleon will not let go what it has caught. In the same way the fetich will help people to hold on their property.

9. “The property of the village” (Fananantanana) is a bush which can help everybody to wealth and power.

10. “Strong, mighty man” (Manilahy) is a kind of fern (Mohria caffrorum), which has a pungent smell. The Natives make tea of the leaves, and it is used as medicine for malaria. In this connection it gives health and power.
11. "The one who is not obeyed" (*Tsitoavina*) is a small bush with narrow, thin leaves. This plant protects the people of the house from oppression.

Twigs from each of the seven last-mentioned plants are cut into seven pieces, making 49 pieces of wood. In addition to these, a tree called "Rest" (*Fialantsasatra*) is used. This tree has large, shady branches, and it gives a good resting place. The one who is going to fetch a piece of this tree must stop seven times on his way. The piece of wood is cut into seven parts and mixed with the 49 pieces. Seven is a number of disaster. All these things are then buried under the house.

In order to protect the security of the house, a fire-fetich is made (*ody afo*). This will quench any fire which might break out in the house.

The one who is making such a fetich must wear a string of black beads on his arm. The black beads will make the fire black and dead. He uses the following kinds of wood:

1. "As if it were water" (*Toarano*). This will turn the fire into water. If the grass-roof or cloths in the house start burning in spite of this, the reason is that the fetich taboo has been broken, and then one must cry: "Water! water!". By crying this, one will force the fire to turn into water.

2. "The tree from a watery and fertile place" (*Tandonaka*). The primary root "lonaka" is similar to *lona*, which means to make a thing wet. *Lonaka* means fertile land with plenty of water. The primary purpose of the fire-fetich is the quenching of fire, and therefore something from a watery place must be used. The *Tandonaka* tree hates those who want to set fire to the house, and consequently it uses all its power to quench a fire.

3. "The thing that cannot resist the foaming water" (*Tsileondriaka*). *Riaka* means a foaming brook, and, figuratively, the breakers at the coast. This wood will make the fire powerless, so that it will be easily quenched, if it should happen to break out. At the same time it will cause fire to break out in the house of those who try to set fire to the house.

All the pieces of wood are then smeared with the contents of the stomach of a young black ox. This is explained thus: the fire and the water are enemies. The dwelling house is identified with water. The
enemy, which is the fire, will then be conquered. The black colour is also used about the colour of the water. There are several villages with the name of "Black water" (Maintirano). It is a beneficial name, because there is found deep, black water which satisfies the needs of the people, and a village which has such water will not be destroyed by fire. In this case we have both a real, a practical, and a symbolic argument for the name of the village. The black ox will counteract the fire, and for ritual purposes the contents of the stomach (ny taim-boraka) are usually used. None of these things, however, would have any effect if they were not initiated. To the initiation belong a young, black ox (sakan'omby mainty) as already mentioned above, and a black cockerel (sakan'akoho mainty). The word sakana signifies that the animal is young. This is similar to another word: sakana, which means hindrance. In the expression "sakan'omby mainty" one can read the meaning "young, black ox" or "hindrance from a black ox". It is the same with the black cockerel. Such peculiar play on words is often used to fortify the fetish.

Another thing which must be used at the initiation ceremony is a dark-blue piece of material, which is called "water-material" (lambarano). The colour resembles the dark blue colour of deep water. The purpose is clear enough.

One should note that in addition to their function of counteracting the fire, these things have a dynamic-religious meaning, i.e. to make the fetish sacred. In Malagasy this is called saran'ody. Sara means a sum of money, which must be paid in order to obtain permission to do this or that, a kind of authorization. At an initiation only valuable things and animals can be used as measure of value. Paper-money is valueless. These animals and pieces of material will even make the house sacred in such a way that it will not be set on fire. If any of the necessary things are missing at the initiation of the fetish, however, the house will not be a sacred one. Even if the means of protection is kept in the house, it will still burn. Thus the things which are used at the initiation are of vital importance.

The animals are killed, and the blood is sprinkled on the pieces of wood, and on the eastern wall of the house. The right horn of the ox is made into a container for the three small pieces of wood. It is decorated with black beads and then wrapped in the dark-blue material.
The *ombiasa* burns strongly fragrant resin in a little censer, and as he swings the horn in the smoke, he shouts: "Hear me, Thou, who turnest fire into water, Thou, who createst water, Thou, whom the fire cannot stand. We approach Thee about fire. Turn the fire into water, for Thou art strong and mighty, and turn thus the house into water. Make now the house moist, make it soaked with water. The roof is not made of grass, but of water, and water does not burn, because it is wet." The horn is then hung up in the north-eastern corner of the house.

As seen from the above, some of the things must be water-producing, and turn fire into water, i.e. into nothing. In many other connections the word water (*rano*) is used about things which are made harmless. In order to encourage the soldiers to attack, the commander says: "Only water! Only water!", and this means that the enemies' shots are harmless, they are nothing.

In the general colour-symbolism, black and red form a strong contrast, in that the black colour of the beads together with the black sacrificial animal make the fire black, they quench it. The taboos of the fetish become automatically the owner's taboos, and here is a list of them:

(22) Neither the owner nor the others who live in the house must take grass from the roof when lighting the fire.

(23) He must not go out of the house with a torch in the evening. This custom is quite common, and it is usually done in order to chase away the spirits in the dark.

(24) He must not breed red cattle or (25) red cocks, because they have the colour of the fire.

(26) He must not use pillows containing feathers, nor (27) eat wing-bone, nor make soup of it. These last two taboos are meant to protect the peace and security of the house from instability and "flapping here and there". Furthermore, walls and roof must be smeared every month with the contents of the stomach of a black ox, and with the blood of a black cock, all with the purpose of insuring the house against fire.

Other measures to be considered in order to make a good home are as follows:
(28) The owner himself must not light the first fire at the fire-place. His father must have this privilege, and he takes fire from his own house and brings it to the new fire-place. If his father has passed away, he must get another man who has sons and a proper home to do it.

(29) The first meal must not be prepared by the owner himself, neither must it be done by his wife. Only the father must do this, thus making sure that it will be a blessed meal.
CHAPTER VII

The Malagasy tomb

A new tomb is built according to the vintana system, and we shall, therefore, have to refer to the vintana interpretation of the 28 days and of the seven days of the week (chapter III). Autumn and winter are the most suitable times for the building of a tomb, but it might also be done during spring and summer. (1) When the rice is shooting, however, the building of a tomb is prohibited, and the work must be stopped. Otherwise, the work (at the tomb) will attract thunderstorms and hail-showers (Rehefa tonga ny fotoana fambolena, na mitera-bary, dia tsy maintsy mianonana ny mpipai-bato na ny fanaovana fasana, fa mampikotroka ny andro ary mananvandra). Planting means life and growth, and when the rice shoots, “it gives birth”. These things are, therefore, contrary to the building of a tomb, which has to do with death. This is so strong that it will bring destroying storms at this very critical farming season.

It is also of importance that the digging of a grave should be done at the correct times of a day. (2) This must not be done in day-light, but only in the evening and the night, so that death shall not find the way to this place (Tsy azo hadina ny fasana amin’ny antoandro, fa amin’ny hariva na alina, mba tsy ho hitan’ny fahafatesana ny lalan-kombana amin’io toerana io). The path leading to the tomb is dangerous and detested, and it must, therefore, be camouflaged by the darkness of the night. This will make one feel more free from the danger of death.

There are some rules about the place to be selected for a new grave. First, its site must be located in the right relation to the house and to the village. The grave-chief will have to see to this. The ombiasa, however, is the only one who can give advice with regard to the site, and
this may be a very big problem. We may safely say that nothing is more difficult for the Natives than the selection of a site for a new tomb. If the tomb is built in a wrong place, it will become an insatiable enemy, which will claim people in the prime of their lives. If the tomb is correctly placed, however, it will become a haven for old and superannuated people, for those "who must die of old age", as it is said among the Natives. (3) No site east of the village is allowed to be used for the building of tombs. At the eastern side of the house is the place of worship and sacrifice. The importance of sunrise, with its all-embracing power and influence both physically and psychically, is impossible to describe. I shall only mention that all work which is done at sunrise is supposed to give increase, either in a good or in an unfortunate way, and it is with the latter meaning that the taboo comes into the picture.

(4) A new tomb must not be built north-west of the village, because that is the place of the dangerous Adijady's vintana.

(5) Do not build a tomb north of the village, as that is the place of joy, whilst sorrow is at the south side of the village. (Aza manao fasana avara-tanâna, satria fifaliana no eny avaratra, fa ny eny atsimo no fahoriana). All hills and places facing northwards are warm and sunny, and villages are usually situated like that. A tomb must be built south-east or south-west of a village.

Another thing which must be considered is the grave-door in relation to the house of the grave-chief. (6) It is impossible to have the stone door facing west, because that would be similar to the wooden door, they say, and the living stay together in one place, the dead stay together in another place (Tsy havela hiankandrefana mahitsy ny varavarambato, fa mitovy amin'ny varavaran-kaso, hono, ka ny iray velona no monina, ao ny iray maty, ka tsy azo atao, fa fady). The house-door, or the wooden door, must always face westwards. The door of the tomb, the stone door, must also obligatorily be on the western side of the tomb, but it must not face due westwards but a little bit oblique. There must be no similarity between the living and the dead. Therefore it is a rule that the tomb must be oblique to the house, and not in line with it. In addition to the strict marking of the distinguishing line between the worlds of the living and of the dead, the taboo has also another very important purpose, i.e. to avoid collision by having similar
destinies. If the tomb is placed exactly like the house towards North, South, East and West, it would get the same vintana as the house, according to the 28 days.

The consequence of letting the door of the tomb face due west would be that some of the family would die before the first feast of turning the corpse took place. Such a feast is held when the tomb is finished, and if the necessary things for the ceremony are available. It is this constant and threatening danger that the taboo warns against. The Natives are convinced that if the two doors have the same destiny, the dead ones will win, because they have a powerful destiny (mahery vintana ny maty). The dead ones are always the more powerful, whilst the living are weak and easily destroyed. It is also a very common opinion that the tomb, and especially the door of the tomb, have an overwhelmingly powerful vintana, drawing the living towards the tomb, and thus causing death in the village. Another reason for letting the door of the tomb face in another direction than the door of the house is the course of the sun. The sun goes from the East and towards the North and then westwards. If the tomb-door is facing south-west, there will be a shifting from the West towards the South, and the southerly orientation will be different from the course of the sun, which goes down in the West. This is also in harmony with the life-giving northern direction, with its warmth and life, and where the sun has its course, and with the southern direction which means cold and long shadows. This is an area which is detested by the living, because it is the area of the tombs and the dead ones.

The problem is solved in the following way: by making the door face south-west and not due west, one will prevent the door of the tomb from having the same destiny as the door of the dwelling house, and thus avoid a disastrous collision.

The fear of the tomb’s power is further affirmed by the following: (7) a tomb must not be built at the end of a valley, because it will draw the living towards itself (Fasana tsy azo aorina eo ambavan’ny lohasaha, fa manintona ny velona). This refers to an inhabited valley. A tomb at the mouth of a valley will dominate the whole valley and thus all who live there. Its dominating position is even more fortified by the fact that the name of the lowest part of the valley is “the valley’s
5. Wooden coffins in a Tanala cemetery

6. Family tomb in Imerina
7. Antandroy family tomb

8. Coffins in a Vazimba cave
"jaws" (vava lohasaha), i.e. the tomb will consume every living creature existing in the valley.

(8) A tomb must not be built on hungry soil, because then it will always be searching for people. (Tsy azo asiana amin’ny tany noana ny fasana, fa mitady olona mandrakariva)⁷. (See ch. VI, no. 3.) If the tomb is built on this kind of soil, it will be hungry, i.e. it will be desirous of satisfying itself by consuming the living.

Another thing to be considered is the tomb’s shadow. The large family-tombs in the Inland are built up to nine feet high above the ground, and they may be six feet or more deep. Near some of them big stones have been erected. (9) It is prohibited to build in such a way that the shadow of the tomb reaches the village (Fadina, mba tsy hahatratra ny tanàna ny aloky ny toerana misy ny fasana)⁸. The shadow of the tomb has a disastrous power, and if it touches the dwellings of the living, there will be great danger.

(10) The Natives are very careful that the tomb is situated so that it cannot be seen from the village. If it is constantly in view, bitter and painful memories will be aroused. Among the Tanala people in Ambohimanga du Sud, this is a very strong conviction. Together with this belief there is another feeling which dominates the minds of the Natives: the fear of the tomb’s desire to consume.

The last-mentioned point is clearly affirmed from Ambohimasina of Betafo district. Here the tomb must be placed in such a way that it cannot be seen from the village, as the tomb is always eager to carry off young people. If no other site is available, one must bury the charm Fanony (Tsy hatao amin’ny tsinjon’ny tanàna, hono, ny fasana, fa faly haka ny tanora mandrakariva ny fasana. Nefa raha voatery tsy maintsy hatao amin’izany toerana izany, dia tsy maintsy hasiana Fanony)⁹. This charm consists mainly of two things: a “dead” spade (angady maty, efa tsy miasa intsony), which must be so worn out from use that only a little bit is left of the blade; and a “dead” axe (famakymaty). This must be so old that there is no more steel left on it. The meaning of these worn out tools is that just as they are useless for work, death will be without tools or means to take people’s life, — it will be powerless.

In connection with this and related taboos, I should like to point
out that the tombs are often hidden and out of the way. In order to explain this phenomenon and its purpose more carefully, I shall give an account of the characteristics of the sites. Among the Tanala and the Betsimisaraka people it is practically impossible to see any sign of tombs from the road. They are some distance both from the road and from the village, but the distance may vary. The places are surrounded by bamboo, palms, thickets and tall trees, like a kind of a burial grove. The trees are always wild ones, never planted by people. The path leading to the place is usually overgrown. Because of the very humid climate on the East Coast and in the forests, trees and plants are vigorous and green all through the year, and the paths are quickly overgrown. (11) It is also an obvious taboo to clear the path, as that would be the same as clearing the way for death. The more overgrown and invisible the tomb, the better is the chance for the family to be healthy and happy.

There are three kinds of tombs among these two tribes. Some have their tombs in mountain caves. Others dig out a grave in a hill, under a broad, protruding flagstone. (There are also soil graves, but they are not common. Such graves are about 7 feet long, 3½ ft. wide, and 3½ ft. deep. The walls and the bottom are made of thick planks. Over the corpses are placed planks or poles, which rest on the wall-planks. After covering the grave with soil, flagstones are put on top of it, and over this again is a thatched roof.) The most common place for a tomb is on top of a little hill, where there is no water. Here the wooden coffins stand in rows with a space between to divide the families. The coffins are large, made from hollowed-out giant trees, and rest on trestles. As already mentioned, there are many trees at the site in order that the tomb may not be seen from the road or from the village. The place is, of course, protected against the burning of rubbish, and must not be cultivated. It often consists of only a little copse, surrounded by cultivated land. (12) Such a copse forming a cemetery is sacred, and nobody must go there except on occasions connected with burials. (13) It is prohibited to collect firewood there, (14) as well as to hunt. If we compare the dwelling-places of the living with those of the dead, we find great differences with regard to sites. The people’s houses are in the open, so that they are easily seen from the road, but the tombs are hidden by trees and thickets.
If we go southwards to Antaimoro, Antaifasy and the Antaisaka tribe, where the family tombs are big stone or wooden houses on the ground (*kibory*), with iron or grass roofs, we find the same phenomenon. The tomb is hidden in the forest, which is sacred and therefore taboo. The same custom is found among the Antanosy people, but the Bara tribe uses caves in the mountains.

In South Madagascar, among the Antandroy and the Mahafaly people, the construction of the tomb is influenced by the scarcity of wood in this area. The tombs vary in size from about 9 to 60 square feet. They are dug down to about 4–5 feet below ground level, and the coffins rest on the bottom of the excavation. From ground level slabstone walls are built up to a height of about 4 feet. On top of the coffins are piled boulders and large stones, right up to a level of the top of the wall, and these are crowned with sun-dried ox-crania, big ox-horns, suitcases and bags. It is all offered as equipment for the dead ones. The tombs are generally far from the village where the relatives live.

Another type of tomb among the southern tribes is a collection of soil-graves. Around every grave there is a wooden fence about three feet high, which is decorated with wooden figures of sea-birds, wading-birds, a man fighting a crocodile, some huts, oxen with big humps, a river boat, and billowy designs picturing the waves of the sea. Not all these figures can be found on the same fence, but I have mentioned the different ones which can usually be seen on the grave-fences. In addition to the above-mentioned figures, there are some grotesque human figures with conspicuous sexual organs and prominent busts. These figures are placed on the top of the fencing. This variety of wood-carving has a comprehensive meaning. The main purpose of it, however, is to honour and praise those who have been buried there, and to tell about their lives and work.

These two types of tomb, the big stony grave and the one with a fence around it, are also found on the West Coast among the Sakalava people, and from what I have seen, the soil-graves with fences are usually surrounded by thickets and bushes and, therefore, invisible from the relatives’ village. It is first and foremost the relatives who are concerned. The tombs of others are not included in the taboo, and it is of no special interest if they are visible or not.
The tomb-sites of the Mikea people are not localized. One of the reasons for this is that they are nomads. When they cannot find more food within a certain area, they move their camps to other places, leaving no trace of their sojourn except the remains of their fireplaces. They camouflage themselves in every possible way and are very careful not to draw the attention of other people. The unmarked graves must be seen as part of their characteristic secrecy. As very little is known about this clan as yet, I shall explain their burial customs in some detail.

When a man has become so old that he feels that he will soon die, or when he is so ill that he has lost all hope of recovering, he leaves his fireplace and creeps into the thicket as far as possible, either in the dark of the night, or during the day when all the others are out hunting or gathering food. In the thicket he collects thorn-bushes, which he places in a ring around himself. In the forests of Morombe and Manombo district there is an abundance of thorn-bushes, some of which have thorns of up to 1½ inches in length, and many of them are poisonous. The ring of thorn-branches will keep everybody away from him, even his closest relatives. A Mikea insists on dying alone, away from his camp and people. This is a very old custom. He dies from hunger and thirst or exposure, because he brings absolutely nothing with him to his last resting-place.

The life in the camp continues as before, even if they find the fire out and the hearth deserted. Two things may happen to the corpse of the man or woman. It may be consumed by wild dogs, lynxes, vultures, or ants, or it may be buried by some Mikea who happens to pass by. The Mikea always carry a little spade and a wooden shovel. This is then used to dig a grave, and the corpse is buried without any ceremony whatsoever, after which the man silently leaves the place. A patch of brown, sandy soil is the only sign of the grave, but this is soon covered with blown leaves and plants. All traces of the mortal remains are rubbed out when a Mikea dies, with one exception only. This is of an historical nature and concerns the tomb of the forefathers of the tribe. The sacred ancestors of the Mikea people are Foebosy and Horano. Their tombs are marked with a little pole made of a very hard wood called katrafay. This pole is replaced when it becomes rotten. These two graves are very low mounds, with no adornments other than the little wooden poles.
There are three reasons why the Mikea people have no fixed burial places. Firstly, as stated, they are nomads, which makes it difficult for them to have such places. Secondly, they have an intense desire to be isolated and not to leave any significant mark of their stay, which a fixed burial place would have to be. Thirdly, they want to die alone outside the camp, because the living are afraid of ghosts. If one dies alone in an unknown place, the others who live in the camp have nothing more to do with him, and at the same time they are protected against the taboo-impurity, which naturally follows death. The dwelling places will then remain more "pure". The unmarked burial place becomes a protection to the people of the camp from the dangerous power of a fixed burial place. The Antandroy have a custom which is similar to that of the Mikea people. The one who is about to die is carried out of the village and placed between trees and bushes, where he dies.

The burial places of the Vazimba tribe in the Bemaraha mountains are entirely hidden, high up in mountain caves. The entrance is covered with lianas and thickets. Another type of burial place is under a high, protruding mountain wall. The comparatively small coffins are placed on the ledges. Such is the place where the forefathers of the Vazimba, Andrianavoavo and Ampelamana, are buried. The place is so well-secreted that only the chief of the Kabijo family knows the way there. He is responsible for the place, and his responsibility is inherited by his eldest son.

Such mountain graves are still used by the Vazimba who live in caves, but those who have moved out of the mountains and live in villages have more and more adapted the custom of the Sakalava, using the big, square, stone tombs which we have mentioned above.

If we consider all these different types of grave, we find that they have something in common. They are hidden by trees and thickets, but if the vegetation is poor, the family tomb is placed in such a way that it cannot be seen from the village by the relatives. This is in accordance with the above-mentioned taboos. There might be several reasons for this, but a main reason is that the people want to avoid the dangerous power of the tomb by hiding it. If the tomb can be seen from the village every day, it will arouse memories and a feeling of insecurity. The fact that the tomb cannot be seen from the houses
where the relatives live reduces its dangerous power. This necrophobe attitude is very strong among the Natives, and they have these strict and absolute taboos in order to protect themselves.

The marking of the four corners is called "to tread the grave" (manitsa-pasana). This work is the privilege of the ombiasa and forms part of his duties as well. Others have not the savoir-faire, nor are they powerful enough to resist the danger of it. In some places, however, it happens that someone else "treads the grave", but then it must be an old, grey-haired man, preferably the oldest man in the family. This absolute claim is seen from the following:

(15) The young ones cannot be asked to make the first cut of the spade, not even a single cut, as long as a very old one can do it. When the work has been started, however, the young men may carry on the digging (Tsy azo ampisantara ny zatovo, na dia iray bainga aza, fa ny lahianitira be ihany no misantatra, vao mandrotsaka ny tanora)\(^{10}\). If this strict rule is not obeyed, my informant explained, the young people will die before the old ones, but if it is obeyed, the old ones will die before the young ones, as it ought to be. The one who starts the digging needs great power of resistance, and it is only the old, grey-haired people who have this power. Young people are far too weak for such a dangerous task. (Cf. ch. VI, no. 20.)

The ombiasa goes about his work in the following way: he first makes a mark with the spade where the door of the tomb must be. Then he makes marks for the four corners. When doing this, he paces out the distances, finds the directions, writhest hither and thither, mumbles something unintelligible, whilst the crowd looks on, impressed by his actions. When he cuts the turf with the spade, he does it with such conviction and certainty, that it is as if he defies everything between heaven and earth. Now he has taken into consideration the site's relation to the village and to the house of the builder of the tomb, to the position of the moon, to the 28 days' vintana, to the meaning of the seven days of the week, to the four directions, to the height of the place compared to the village, and to the position of the place in relation to the valley and the mountains around it. It is taken for granted that he has not observed any unfortunate omen on his way to the place.
At the beginning of the work on a new tomb (*ny fisantaram-pasana*) an animal is sacrificed, usually a hen. This must have hatched eggs, and it must have big spurs (*renin'akoho lava fantsy*), i.e. it must be a valuable animal. The witch-doctor cuts off the head with the spade and lets the blood drip into all the marked places of the site. The meaning of this sacrifice is that the animal takes the place of a dead one in the new grave (*solom-paty amin'ny tany hovakina*).

His compulsory fee for his work is paid in old silver dollars (*vola tsy vaky*) and a brand new china plate (*lovia bakoly vaovao*). There is no question of bargaining. If he does not get exactly these things, he will refuse to do the marking of the tomb. "One will rather give him these things than die", is the blunt comment\(^ {11}\). People are anxious to avoid being on bad terms with the *ombiasa*. Because of his unlimited power they cannot neglect the economic interests of his profession, and they dare not be niggardly when paying him. It is said that "he can life and he can death", i.e. he has power over both of them. What he asks for, he must be given. Otherwise there will certainly be no new tomb.

A very important thing connected with the marking is the acquisition of charms by the family concerned. These are the very famous ones from olden days, which are known all over the Island:

*Tsileondoza*, a chain of reddish beads, similar to agate. Its meaning is "the thing over which misfortune has no power". It protects against misfortunes as long as one lives (*tsy leon-doza mandra-pahafaty*), i.e. until one dies from old age.

*Malaimisaraka*: These are also made of beads and the word means "unwilling to be separated". They are supposed to hinder a bitter separation in the family. These charms, which people wear as necklaces or bracelets, are called *Fanefitra*, which means "the thing which is used to separate". The thing to be separated from the people is death.

Another name for these charms is *Fanidy*, which means "the thing which ordinarily is used for locking", a lock or a bolt. The meaning is that the charms shall lock the tomb, so that the people may retain their lives as long as possible. This name is also used in other ritual practices, as when an *ombiasa* locks a ford against crocodiles.
(16) During the whole time of the building of the tomb, no animal must be killed, be it for providing meat or for any other reason\(^\text{12}\). If this is done, the owner of the tomb will be killed, because it is a breach of the taboo. Any misfortune or mortal illness that might hit him will then be counted as punishment for the breaking of the taboo. We find here the fixed idea that the slaughtering of animals alludes to the death of people. When an animal is slaughtered, a life is taken away, and this may easily take other lives with it, even the lives of people.

An exception to this taboo is the slaughtering of cattle during the transport of the big flagstones which are used as roofs on the graves, and the stone which is to be used as a door. These stones are up to 9 feet long, 3 feet wide and 15 inches thick. They are pulled with ropes from the quarries to the site, 50 to 100 men hauling the long grass-ropes whilst the women sing and dance in front of them. It is demanded that oxen be slaughtered during this transport. The stone takes people away if it is not marked with blood (\textit{Misinda olona ny vato, raha tsy tandrana}), i.e. during the dangerous transport someone will be killed. The tools used in this transport, the grass rope, the wooden rollers, and the iron bar, are so primitive that accidents may easily occur, so much the more as the labourers are barefooted. To be wounded in the foot by a stone splinter is a sign of the stone’s anger and desire of blood. A religious ceremony with much ox-blood is, therefore, necessary for protection. It is the same idea that underlies the Tanala and Betsimisaraka sacrifices to the large trees which they cut down for the making of coffins.

(17) It is prohibited to say “the door of the tomb” (\textit{varavaram-pasana})\(^\text{13}\). Instead one may say: “the house door” (\textit{varavaran-trano}), or “the tomb’s cover” (\textit{ny ringom-pasana}), or “the thing which is not mentioned” (\textit{ny tsy tononia}).

The big stones which are used as roofing are given the name of honour “The large, long ones” (\textit{ny rangolahy}). (18) And the tomb itself must not be called the tomb, but euphemistically “the house” (\textit{ny trano})\(^\text{14}\).

The large stones must be transported according to a certain programme, and the door stone must be the last one to be hauled to the tomb. (19) If this stone is brought to its place before the other ones, it will be impossible to finish the work, and thus it is \textit{fady}\(^\text{15}\). It will look
as if one is in a hurry to finish the door of the tomb, and that would be the same as to hasten the death of someone in the village. The making and fitting of the door must be the very last thing, and it is the most difficult part of the process. It must be cut absolutely flat and square with a pivot-peg at the top and at the bottom, on which it can turn, and it must be fitted in such a way that it will not open or close by itself.

The time for completing the tomb must also be considered. It is a common custom to leave the work for weeks and months for different reasons. Sometimes the owner must stop the work for lack of money to pay his labourers. He might even have to wait for years whilst the family members are saving money for the tremendous expenses. There is, however, another reason for using a very long time in completing the building of a tomb: (20) it is dangerous and even prohibited to complete such a work too quickly. If the work is done in a hurry, this will cause the death of somebody in the family. By making the work on the tomb take a long time, one is making certain that death will not take anybody away in the near future. It is just as if one is bargaining with death by means of taboo customs.

(21) Similar to the above-mentioned taboo is the taboo of finishing the work of a tomb within a year (Fady ny mamita ny fasana amin’ny taona iray, fa tsy maintsy havela hialin-taona). It must not be finished before some time in the following year, and that is a minimum of time. This taboo can be compared to the New Year feast Alahamady. At this feast the people greet each other with the wish that they will live to see the next New Year feast, that the feast will return whilst they are still alive, and that none will die before that time. This is the burning wish of everyone and a fixed formula of the New Year greeting. The same is the case with the tomb building: “May the tomb not be completed this year. May we all in peace and quietness carry on with the work, if this is the will of Andriamanitra (raha sitrapon’ Andriamanitra), because there is no hurry at all about the work”. This is one of the main thoughts behind the building of a tomb.

(22) From the time the work is started until it is completed, it is taboo to the family to eat kidney (voa). The Malagasy word voa means kidney, but there is another word which is similar to it meaning “to be hit by misfortune”. The old people of the village say: “Do not eat kidney, because then you will be hit by misfortune” (Aza mihinana
voa, fa ho voa). (23) When a tomb is finished, it must not stand empty for any length of time. A banana trunk must be put in it. Otherwise it will fetch the living (Rehefa vita ny fasana, dia fady raha tsy hasiana vatan’akondro, ambara-panisy faty ao, fa tonga maka ny velona indray, homo)\textsuperscript{19}. An empty, unused grave desires corpses, and it is hungry until somebody has been buried there. A banana trunk, which has been cut into the length of a man, may serve as a temporary “substitute for a corpse” (solom-paty). Thus we see again the determined wish to protect oneself against the inevitable encroachment of the grave, by means of a substitute. A banana trunk is also used when one of the family is dead and buried far from home. Then the relatives put a banana trunk into the family tomb and conduct a burial. Later on the corpse may be brought home. The bringing home of relatives’ corpses is a very common custom in Madagascar.

In the Inland the initiation of a new tomb is conducted in connection with the feast of the turning of the corpse. To this initiation the corpses of those who have died far away are brought to the family tomb and buried again. In Vakinankaratra they have a special ceremony for such an initiation. The owner of the tomb arranges for someone to drive seven oxen around the grave. Each ox is driven seven times round the tomb, and then the last one of the seven oxen is killed there. The purpose of this custom is to make the deaths few in the family. By letting the oxen walk seven times around the tomb, one gets the impression that the oxen are very many, but that only one is killed. Here the oxen are compared with the many members of the family, and the idea is that only one will die in due course, i.e. the deaths are reduced to a minimum. Seven is the symbol of misfortune and evil. The last ox is thus carrying the misfortune and by doing so is preventing death from coming into the family.

The initiation takes three days, and the whole family is assembled. The owner of the grave must supply a decent number of cattle for slaughtering and must not forget good quantities of rice and liquor. These provisions are not solely for the enjoyment of those attending the ceremony. It is absolutely necessary to kill cattle and to serve liquor, because these things are meant for the dead ones of the family as well as for the living who are present. A new grave will not be accepted by the dead ones if there is not enough cattle and liquor at the feast.
(24) Parsimony in this respect will arouse the anger of the forefathers, and the owner and all his family will look foolish and become a laughing-stock. The long and expensive struggle of raising the tomb will lose its raison d’être.

The building of the tomb may impoverish the man and his family for years, but he does not feel this as a special burden, because he is confident that he will have his reward through blessings and prosperity in the time to come.

Singing, dancing and music by wandering bands are part of the compulsory programme of the initiation. The instruments which are used are drums, bamboo-flutes and violins. Such bands are paid very well, and all the local people take part in the dancing.

The official declaration about the new grave is made by the burial chief. In a solemn speech from the top of the tomb he explains to the people the expenses incurred in connection with the building, after which he declares the tomb initiated in accordance with the custom of the ancestors.

Like all other graves, it must be respected, and it must not be profaned by domestic animals nor by people. If one relieves oneself near a tomb, one will have to pay a fine of an ox, which must be sacrificed. An animal which commits an act of profanity will immediately be killed. Of other taboos concerning the respect for the tomb, I shall mention the following (25): it is strictly prohibited to point at a tomb; this is the ancestors’ law (Ny manondro fasana dia fady mihitsy, fa didin-draxana). Even if one happens to do it unintentionally (tsy satry), one must count the fingers from one to ten, and at the same time spit at the finger tips. By doing this, one will justify oneself and express that one did not intend to insult the tomb, and at the same time one cleans the hand from the breaking of the taboo. If this is not done, people are convinced that the hand will become leprous.

Here is a variation of this taboo:

One who by accident points at a grave, must immediately—say: “Poa! Poa! Poa! My hand is not leprous, it is not leprous” (Tsy boka ny tànana, tsy boka ity). At the same time he must spit at his fingers, starting with the little finger and continuing till he comes to the forefinger, which he used when pointing. If one should have to point towards a grave, one may do it with a bent forefinger.
CHAPTER VIII

Burial taboos

When a member of the family dies, it is a strict rule that all relatives must be informed as soon as possible. There is a very definite way of giving this message of sorrow. On his arrival the messenger must prepare the relatives with some euphemistic expressions before giving his message. (1) It is taboo to say outright that somebody is dead. Apart from the shock involved, people do not like clumsy ways of presenting important matters. Thus the way in which the news is given is very important. Instead of saying that the person is dead, one must say that he is seriously ill (marary mafy), and everybody will grasp the meaning.

When people pay a call of mourning and the deceased must be mentioned during the conversation, one does not refer to it directly, but says "he is gone" (Efa lasa izy), or "he has gone home to his ancestors" (Nody tamin'ny razany izy).

(2) When a Native of the Antanosy or the Bara tribe is very ill, the members of the village community are forbidden to cut their hair. That would be the same as performing the burial in advance. With these tribes it is the custom to shave off the hair on a relative's death. Thus, one would in a way precipitate the death by cutting one's own hair.

(3) It is forbidden to cut the nails of a sick person, because this will usually be done when he is dead.

(4) During preparation for burial the corpse is washed, but one must not empty water over the corpse more than once (Tsy azo averina indroa ny rano atondraka ny faty). The corpse is set upright, and water is poured over it. To repeat this means that death soon will come for another one.
The tapes used for tying round the corpse when it has been swathed must be of a certain number. In Vakinankaratra, for instance, people use either six or eight tapes, these numbers having symbolical meanings. The number six is *enina*, but another similar word, *nenina*, means repentance. From this noun the verb *manenina*, to repent, is formed. Thus, the meaning of the six ribbons is that Death must be repentant of its taking the person away from the living. The number eight has the same function. Eight is *valo*. But another and similar word, *valo*, means regret, and the verb *mivalo* means to apologize. Death must ask pardon of the bereaved for its unmerciful encroachment. These number-symbols are, therefore, not only connected with the traditional apparatus, but have a deeper significance. Their use is, in fact, an adjuration that will chastise Death, and limit its power.

The South Betiako are only allowed to use seven tapes, as seven is the fatal number, as mentioned above.

(5) When the body has been swathed, a mat is put around it with the rough side in towards the body, whereas this side of a mat is taboo for the living (*Fady ny mandro amin'ny voho tsihy*)⁴, who use mats to sleep on. If one sleeps on the rough side of the mat one resembles a dead person, which is fatal. Customs followed at funerals must not be practised elsewhere.

The phase of the moon, the day and the hour of the day when the burial may take place are strictly associated with the *vintana*. As we observed in chapter III, no. 105, burials do not take place late at night, the only exception being the burial of twins (ch. VIII, no. 15).

An inevitable question we meet when discussing burial taboos is: who has got the right to be buried in the family tomb? A tomb is common property within the family. In short, it is the relationship with the family that gives the right to it. If, for example, a group of sisters and brothers have built a tomb together, all of them have the right to it, as have their father and grandfather as well, if they are still living, and their children and future grand-children. The children usually belong to their father’s tomb, (6) not to their mother’s. The chief of the tomb makes the final decision in each single case, and his authority cannot be disputed.
Those who cannot be buried in the family tomb are:

a. (7) A stranger, who for some reason or other has been allowed to live in the village. On his death he is buried in a provisional single grave (aniritra). His relatives will then, if possible, some years later fetch the corpse and take it to the family tomb of the deceased (see pages 140, 164).

b. (8) Those expelled from the family, either because of frequent trespasses of taboos, or for various other reasons.

c. (9) Certain witches (ny mpamosavvy) who may also lose their right if they have been the cause of much damage to the lives and properties of the villagers, or have been a danger to peace and order. Each instance is judged individually. A witch buried in the family tomb is always put with her head to the South, as distinct from the others. If a witch is not buried in the tomb, she is either put in a single grave with her head to the South, or thrown to wild dogs or crocodiles.

d. (10) Those dying on an evil and dangerous vintana day. They are provisionally put in a single grave, and later on moved to the family tomb. This is possible only through the sacrificing of an ox, which removes the taboo of the vintana.

e. (11) Children born on an evil day, and consequently killed in different ways, cannot be buried in a family tomb. Their bodies are thrown away in the wilderness or to the crocodiles.

f. (12) Still-born children are buried in marshes inside big earthen pots. It is said that they cannot be buried in “dry earth” (tany maina), because they are “water-children” (zaza rano). The sequence of thought here is evident. The child is surrounded by water in its mother’s womb. The pot that the child is put into is the big water pot of the house. It is dug into the watery soil of the bog. The child has not lived long enough to get dry after its birth. That is why it belongs to the water, and must have its grave in the wet marsh.

g. (13) Children deformed from birth, for instance those with harelips.

h. (14) All uncircumcised persons (cf. ch. XV, division d—g).

i. (15) Twins. This taboo is more strictly kept by the coastal and the Bara tribes than by the Inlanders. When an Antanosy twin dies, he is not buried alone. By his side is put a banana stem of the same length as the living twin. The stem is called “instead of a corpse”
(solom-paty). The intention is to prevent the dead twin from taking the living one with him. The banana stem prevents this, and it helps the dead one not to suffer loneliness as well. This applies also to those previously buried in the tomb, as they will think that both of the twins have come to cheer them. In this way the parents may keep one of the twins. This custom, however, is an evasion of the twin taboo. According to old laws and traditions twins are dangerous to their parents, and therefore killed immediately after birth, and buried outside the family tomb. This must always take place late at night, because the darkness of the night is a camouflage of the living and a defence against death.

Among the Vazimba twins are buried alive for fear that they will bring calamity on their family. Should a stranger come upon people in the act of doing this, however, he may take them as his own without further ado.

j. (16) The Sakalava do not generally bury childless women in the family tomb (lolon-draza), but in a special grave for the barren (lolo fijo)\(^\text{14}\). A burial of this sort being rather a disgrace, an unfruitful woman may be able to escape it by adopting a child herself, or by having a brother or sister who has got children. Only then can she obtain right to the family tomb as a gracious favour. If her brother (or sister) is childless she will be buried outside the tomb.

k. (17) The lepers are buried outside, but in the neighbourhood of the family tomb\(^\text{15}\). Still, there are quite a few exceptions to this rule, because so many factors are taken into account, such as prestige, wealth, social standing, and compassion for the deceased.

l. (18) Those who die from smallpox\(^\text{16}\). By contracting this disease they have proved that they have trespassed against some taboo or other, and are feared for that reason. Although not the primary reason for the taboo, the fear of contagion may play a certain part.

m. (19) Persons who have married outside their social class. These cases are many and various, but only some of the more common will be mentioned here:

A nobleman is an Andriana, one of the common people is a Hova, and one of the slave origin is a Mpanombo. These three classes are still recognized to some extent, particularly with respect to marriage and burial, even though such social distinctions count for nothing in the
eyes of the Colonial authorities. When the Island became a French colony, slavery was finally abolished, and everybody acquired the same rights and the same status whichever class he belonged to.

Among the Merina nobles misalliance is not allowed at all. If an Andriana woman marries a Hova she loses her right to the family tomb. Their children become Hova and belong to their father's Hova tomb. In a marriage where the husband is an Andriana and the wife a Hova, the children also become Hova. That a nobleman should marry a Mpanompo is unthinkable. If a Hova marries a Mpanompo this makes a misalliance as well. The rule is that one marrying "downwards" (manambady midina) will lose his own social class. The children fall into the lower of the two classes. Every misalliance usually means expulsion from the family, loss of inheritance, and forfeiture of the right to the family tomb.

In some families in Imerina and in Vakinankaratra the rules are not quite as strict. If a woman of the Andriana marries a Hova, it is still considered a misalliance, but she remains a noble and keeps the right to her father's family tomb. The husband does not become Andriana even though he marries a noble. Children of such parentage become Andriana, as they usually fall into the class of their mother. They also belong to their mother's family tomb provided that they marry Andriana. If this first generation of misalliance do not marry "upwards", they will no longer belong to the top class, but to the Hova class. Neither they, nor their offspring may be buried in an Andriana tomb.

When a male Andriana marries a Hova, it is a highly undesirable alliance because he marries beneath his class. In some cases he may keep his right to his father's family tomb, but in some families he may lose the right. His children become Hova without any right to the tomb of their father's family. They are buried in their mother's Hova tomb.

The same rules are followed when a Hova marries a Mpanompo. The general principle for the right social basis of a marriage is that both parties should be Andriana, or Hova, or Mpanompo. The children belong to their father's tomb. The wife has no right to her husband's tomb, but belongs to that of her father. Should the husband decide before he dies that his wife is to be buried in his tomb, this will always be taken into consideration, provided she wishes the same when she
is about to die. In Vakinankaratra the rule is not quite as strict. The wife may be admitted to be buried in her husband’s tomb.

Each of the thirteen categories (a—m) mentioned above forms its own taboos. According to Native practices these taboos have the force of juridical laws concerning the family tomb.

One of the factors that makes these decisions so severe is the belief that the ancestors will not receive anyone who has not got the right to the tomb. The rightful use of it has as its absolute assumption that the tomb has been acknowledged by the sacred ancestors.

Another question in this connection is: how can the living be quite sure of their tomb having been acknowledged? The answer must be the way the taboos are lived up to and obeyed. Only through doing this conscientiously can they have a feeling of security and content. All of these taboos originate from no source other than the very ancestors of the clan, and thus they are expressions of their definite and absolute will.

In order to give an explicit account of behaviour during a Malagasy funeral one must necessarily mention the lamentation as an important part of the obsequies. The relatives do, of course, bewail their dead for purely natural reasons. Apart from that, everybody is expected to cry at a funeral, even those who are not closely related to the bereaved, as a sign of compassion for and sympathy with those who have this heavy burden to carry (fiaraha-miton dra ny mavesatra). In practice, it is the women who do the greater part. They keep on with their heart-rending ululation for hours on end, particularly at night.

There are, however, certain restrictions about showing one’s sorrow in this way:

(20) It is forbidden to cry for soldiers fallen in a battle before the action is over. Even when the war is over, the soldiers cannot be wept for before the oxen for their burials have been slaughtered. The natives give different reasons for these decisions, and these are not contradictory:

1. War means defence of one’s fatherland. Therefore one should not cry, but be proud of those fallen for the sake of the fatherland.

2. These decisions derive from the time of Royalty (before the French occupation of 1895). The Rulers forbade people to mourn or
kill oxen at the burials of soldiers. If they did so, it would mean distrust of the King's power, showing that they were not faithful to him.

3. The third reason is that lamentation for a soldier fallen in battle will bring disaster on those who are still fighting. In a short digression we may observe how this idea is related to a certain conception that applies to many other situations particularly pertaining to the very close rapport between those in the village and the sons and spouses who are far away. The latter are exposed to dangers and temptations, and those staying at home must, therefore, send them many thoughts of sympathy, according to good Malagasy custom, so as to prevent disaster from befalling them in their absence.

The unfaithfulness of a wife during her husband's absence is one of the things that may expose him to calamity, even death. Her absolute fidelity will on the other hand keep him unharmed throughout the war. This also applies when the husband is travelling on business, or to other parts of the Island for various other reasons, or to France for studies. During his absence, be it for months or years, his wife is taboo for other men. The fact that this commandment is broken now and again still does not invalidate the taboo. The transgression is discussed and dealt with as a very serious matter by the family council.

An invisible, but very real connection exists between those at home and those far away. The thoughts and actions of those at home will always influence the one who is absent. Whether they are beneficial to him, such as sympathy and kind thoughts, self-denial and abstinence, or injurious to him, such as his wife's infidelity, or untimely mourning at a soldier's burial, their effects are always felt. Distance is of no account; these ethical and religious influences have no bounds.

(21) During the laying out of the corpse it is a custom that nobody gives any audible signs of sorrow. Among the Antanosy people it is prohibited to cry before the corpse has been washed and wrapped up \((Fady ny mitomany, raha tsy voampandro sy voafono ny faty)\). The reason for having a break in the day-long weeping and wailing is explained by the Natives themselves: those who tend the corpse must have the necessary peace when doing the work. When wailing is heard from a place, people will always come to pay a visit, and thus there will not be enough time for the preparation of the obsequies.
(22) There is an unbreakable law among the Betsimisaraka and the Tanala people that no work must go on when someone has died in the village; this applies to everybody. *(Tsy mahazo manao na inona na inona raha misy maty an-tanana)*\[^{20}\].

(23) Another restriction is that a woman with a new-born baby must not cry at a funeral *(Tsy avela hitomany am-paty ny ampela mitrotro zaza mena)*\[^{21}\]. One is afraid that the child may be killed by the great power of death, through the one who has passed away. The power and desire of the spirits are more dangerous to little children than to others. A mother with a baby ought not, therefore, to take part in funeral rites, even if it is her own husband or child or another of her relatives who has died. The inevitable power of the taboo makes her keep quiet, and she certainly thinks of her dear little baby, who may die if she cannot keep quiet.

The style of dressing the hair is a very important sign of sorrow. Among the Antanosity and Bara people it is a strict order that both men and women must cut their hair short when a near relation has passed away. In some families they must even shave the whole head.

In Imerina and in Vakinankaratra it is an order that the men must cut their hair short. (24) The women must let their hair hang down, and it is *fady* to have fat in it\[^{22}\]. Fat is used when plaiting the hair for a feast. (25) In the same way it is prohibited to make many little plaits. This custom has been slightly modified in that the women nowadays collect all their hair in a big plait. Among the Betsileo people short hair is not used as a sign of sorrow any more, (26) but it is *fady* both to men and women to comb their hair, because it must be as untidy as possible\[^{23}\]. In the time of Royalty it was decreed that every one without exception, men as well as women, should cut their hair short when a king (queen) died. Among the Betsileo people, this was also the rule when a chief died.

The custom of cutting the hair short is practiced even nowadays in several places; the reason is most probably that some tribes, like the Bara and the Antanosy, still retain very strongly the ideal of Royalty. The Antanosy, Bara, and Sakalava tribes hold to the principle of having chiefs more than the other tribes. This system is not acknowledged by the Colonial Administration as a political factor, but it still
counts with the Natives, and plays a distinct part when decisions of a private character are taken, especially within the family of a chief.

When the dead one has been tended to according to the custom, the wake (fiandrasam-paty) can begin. It lasts day and night until the burial, the length of the whole period depending on where the relatives live. They must all be summoned. It also depends on the diviner, the only one who knows which days are suitable according to the vintana interpretation. There are certain breaks in this wake. (27) Among the tribes on the East Coast, and the Tanala, it is prohibited to utter any audible sign of sorrow when the men have gone to the forest to cut down the giant tree, when they are hollowing it out, and when they are bringing the coffin home. This break must last until all the preparations of the corpse are finished and it has been placed in the coffin. During the wake they pass the time by singing the old traditional dirges. These songs are elegies on the one who has passed away, and an appeal to all in the village to share the inevitable grief. As they sing, the big drum is beaten, which is called “The big heaven drum” (ny ampongabelanitra), and there is dancing. One group succeeds the other, the big drum booms, and the dancers stamp upon the ground in regular, but hectic rhythm, whilst women and children clap their hands. The ground actually quivers, and this goes on without any break until midnight. Then it all suddenly stops, and everything is dead quiet. (28) Among the Antanosy and Merina people it is prohibited to make any noise at midnight during the wake. Among the several possible reasons for this sudden pause, we may mention that in olden days midnight was called “When the witches go out” (Mivoaka ny mpamosavy), and this is still the time when they go out to spread fear in the village. The witches are often old women. They undress and make a bundle of their clothes, which they put on their heads. They smear their bodies over with pig’s fat, which is taboo to other people. Unseen they steal out of the hut and start their dancing outside, mostly on the graves. If someone is mortally ill in the village, or if a wake is being held, these witches are very active and in high spirits. I myself have heard their steps and their scratching on the window-shutters, when someone in the house was very ill, and I have heard their strange laughter. I cannot imagine that such laughter can be heard in any other instances, or from any other people.
It is belly-laughter, both merry to excess and frivolous, yet one is forced to perceive a supercilious note, and shameless mockery. It jeers at the grieving and anxious people, and acclaims the victory of death, because it is death itself with all its abominable horror that is the delight of the witches. The more the people of the village are filled with horror and fright, the more courageous and happy are the witches. They return home before daybreak. Thus even during the midnight pause in the wake nobody falls asleep, but they are all on the alert, afraid that the witches may cast an evil spell on the corpse and thus bewitch the soul of the dead one, or of one who keeps vigil.

Others who are very active on this occasion are the spirits, both those from the family tomb and those of strangers, as well as the different demigods and gods. The dead ones in the family tomb are desirous to receive the one who has just passed away, and so are the other spirits. During the death agony one can see how fixed this conviction is among the Natives. Sometimes the dying one fights furiously against the spirits, consciously or unconsciously, and he complains of having to leave his children, his rice fields, and his cattle. The dead ones of the family, however, and the tomb itself, will take him by force, and the spirits will grab him away from life. This on some occasions gives the death-struggle a very dramatic character.

As already mentioned above, one of the purposes of the wake is to keep witches and spirits away until the burial has taken place. Another reason is the danger of grave-robbers, who want to take possession of the corpse. The vigil is therefore not only a sign of sorrow and sympathy, but a protection of the dead one.

During the wake it often happens that gravity gives way to licence. When young people of both sexes are gathered in the house of the dead, the sorrow turns into wildness and excesses. They sing the old traditional songs, which are of too obscene a character to appear in print. The whole wake degenerates into sexual orgies and licentiousness; the incest taboos are abolished, liquor flows, and the throbbing of the drum works the dancing into a crescendo of heat and passion. This is the desire of life in all its unfolding — in the house of death. The Natives cannot see anything paradoxical in this. In order to have a clearer understanding of it, we must try to make ourselves familiar with people's conception of the soul of the newly dead. The soul is
still restless and roaming, because its old home has no place for it any more. On the other hand it has not yet arrived in the land beyond, because the body has not been buried in the family tomb. It is homeless and rootless. The purpose of the wake and the entertainment is, in addition to what has already been said, that the singing, the dancing, the music, the drinking, the desire of life, and especially the excesses, should be for the pleasure and entertainment of the soul of the dead one. (29) We should observe, therefore, that except for the breaks mentioned, quietness is prohibited at a Native burial, because this would make the atmosphere unbearable.26

The food used at a burial is different from ordinary food, and it must be abundant. The most important part of it is the ox meat. This is called by a special name, “hena lofo”. It has also another name, “meat which is sent with” (hena fampomba), i.e. with the one who is buried. This meat, which must be from cattle, must be referred to in certain terms. (30) One must not say that it tastes good. It must be called unpleasant, bad meat (hena ratsy) or “straw-meat” (hena bozaka), something which does not taste better than straw and grass. (31) It is prohibited to flavour burial meat with salt, because it must not be too delicious.28

Why then is this meat of a poorer quality than other meat? This question may well be asked, because on such occasions they do not slaughter scrawny animals. On the contrary, it must be a fine beast, and there must be meat in abundance. In 1949 I passed through a Sakalava village in Antsalova district, during the funeral rites of a great and mighty man. Hundreds of people were present, as the family was very big. For this burial 200 oxen were killed. Some of the meat was consumed, and the remnants were left in the grass around the grave to rot there.

Thus we see that both quality and quantity are sufficient. However, there are two sides to the question. To the one who is dead and to the dead ones in the tomb, the meat is good in itself, and the more there is of it, the more it satisfies the dead ones. It also causes the dead one to arrive in the ancestors’ land as a wealthy man with many oxen and other possessions. As already mentioned, it is “meat which is sent with.” The taboo, however, concerns the living. In order to under-
stand why the meat is called bad, we must perceive the Natives’ conception of death as such. “There is nothing as bad as death” (*Tsy misy ratsy mihoatra ny fahafatesana*), is a standard expression. It is evil and disgusting in itself, defiling all who have anything to do with a burial. In Vakinankaratra they say that the meat used at a burial is made unclean (*voaloto*) by the one who is dead. The uncleanness from one who has just passed away is called *lamako*, and as far as I know, this word is not used about dirtiness in general. About corpses another word, *makota*, is also used which means unclean. In South Betsileo it is called *koteta*. These two words, however, are also used with the meanings: careless, slovenly, dirty (about clothes), and about excrement. (32) In North Betsileo they say that a corpse is *tiva*, something disgusting, which one must keep clear of (*Tiva ny iaty*)\(^{29}\). The same word is used in Sakalava about one who has been fn contact with excrement, and is therefore physically and spiritually unclean.

*Sotisoty* is used about material uncleanness: dirt, dirtiness on the body, something disgusting, and about dirty hands and feet after work in the fields.

All the expressions: *voaloto, lamako, makota, koteta, tiva* and *sotisoty* are each of them used in their own way about the impurity of the corpse when talking about this in general. (33) It is, of course, out of the question to use any of these words at a burial about the one who is dead. That would amount to expressing contempt for him. They are only used in an objective explanation.

In order to throw more light on this special uncleanness, we can mention that in Vakinankaratra and Imerina\(^{30}\) it was a custom in olden days, that at a rich man’s burial the hump of the first one of the slaughtered oxen, was put under the head of the dead, like a cushion. As a result of this, all the other oxen slaughtered for the occasion became unclean (*Ary izany no nahaloto ny omby rehetra*), irrespective of how many oxen were killed. All the meat became unclean. The view is certainly that the uncleanness from the corpse was transferred to the hump and thus to all the other animals. Another cause of the uncleanness of these oxen, is, according to the Natives’ way of thinking, that one is compelled to slaughter cattle; it is not done voluntarily. It is an extraordinary and unpleasant occasion, and
that is why the meat is called "bad meat". It has been supplied because of an evil and disastrous occasion (Zava-dratsy, na zava-doza no nahazoana azy).

A third reason is that it is not polite to call it "good meat". If someone should happen to do so, it is a sign that he finds the meal delicious, that he enjoys it, and that he is happy to be there, which again could be interpreted as an indication of his pleasure in the death of the person concerned. At this time people are very watchful and suspicious of witches and enemies, who may have caused the death by means of witchcraft, or perhaps even by direct poisoning. The appellation "bad meat" is, therefore, a self-protection against suspicion of murder. A large number of words and expressions for the special occasion, as well as correct behaviour, are, therefore, not only signs of sympathy, but to a great extent ways of protecting oneself against suspicion.

(34) In Vakinankaratra\(^{31}\) and among the Antanosy people, the nearest relatives are not allowed to eat the burial meat, though more distant connections are allowed to do so. The nearer one is related to the dead one, the stronger the taboo.

The unclean effect of death on the relatives depends on how closely related they are to the deceased. The nearest relatives feel the uncleanness more than others. The relationship brings the living into a far too intimate contact with death itself and with its impurity. The food at the burial then becomes dangerous, and thus taboo.

Another thing which plays an important part is the feeling of loss. The grief of a bereaved mother, father, child or spouse, by no means stimulates the appetite on such an occasion. I have many times witnessed that this natural feeling of loss can be both strong and bitter among the Natives\(^{32}\).

When the corpse is moved out of the house, it must be carried out feet first. In the house it was placed with the head towards the East, and therefrom it must be carried straight out through the door on the western wall. (35) It is prohibited to carry it head first\(^{33}\). The Tanala, the Betsimisaraka and the Antaisaka have an extra door on the eastern wall, which is used only when carrying corpses out of the house, (36) and this door must not be used for any other purpose\(^{34}\). If there is no special door, they take away part of the eastern wall, a very easy
matter, as the walls are made from bamboo-strips, or from the stem of the palm called "the travellers' tree".

Outside the house the dead one is lashed to the stretcher. (37) It is prohibited to call this a bier (filanjam-paty), because this gives offence to everybody\(^{35}\). It is called "bird's house" (trano vorona). (38) As a result of this again, one cannot call an ordinary bird's nest (akany) a bird's house\(^{36}\).

When the people proceed to the grave, the stretcher is borne by four adult men, two in front and two behind, with the carrying-poles on their shoulders.

(39) All who join the company must walk barefoot\(^{37}\), (40) with nothing on their heads\(^{38}\). (41) It is prohibited to spit\(^{39}\), as that indicates contempt. Suitability of apparel on such an occasion is determined by the principle that one must appear as shabby and miserable as possible.

Women and children follow immediately after the coffin, and the men come last. The meaning of this is that the company will be "covered" by the men. All the others are then protected against evil spirits and malefactors, and especially against death itself, so that it will not persecute them. It is said that "men do not fear one who is dead" (Ny lehilahy tsy mataho-maty).

There are some who are not allowed to go with the others to the grave:

Pregnant women. (See ch. XIV, nos. 32, 33, 34.)

(42) Mothers with newborn babies\(^{40}\). It is said that little children are unable to stand such a custom, because the spirits of the dead ones are angry (Ty sany sata sany ny zaza kely fa masiaka ny lolo).

Children who have not been circumcised. (See ch. XV no. 21.)

When people are carrying a corpse to the grave, they never walk straight forwards, but they zigzag to the place\(^{41}\). (43) To walk straight forward (mivantana) would mean that death would do the same, and thus find the short cut to the living.

There are certain rules about how fast or how slowly the company should walk. (44) In Vakinankaratra it is prohibited to go without a rest\(^{42}\). If, for instance, an old man is to be buried, and they reach the top of a hill, the coffin must be put down in order that the old one
may see the village for the last time, as it has been his home for so many years. This will be to the satisfaction of his soul and enable it to rest more easily in the tomb. It is also a custom to put the coffin down three times on the way to the tomb. The purpose of this is that death shall not return (mba tsy hiverenan'ny fahafatesana). If they pass through a gap where the birds are wont to fly (fihoaram-borona), they stop for a short while, and every one takes a small stone and throws it on to a little mound. These cairns are found in different places all over the Island. They are found at the crossing from one valley to another, and they are built up by burial parties. The meaning is that the pile of stone shall mark a partition between the village and the grave, between the world of the living and the world of the dead, and thus act as a hindrance to death.

(45) It is prohibited to run along with the coffin to the grave. This would encourage death to run down the living. By moving slowly, one prevents death from reaching those who follow. This, as when the Tanala and the Betsimisaraka zigzag to the grave and avoid all roads, must also be understood as a hindrance to death and ghosts, and a means of avoiding defilement of the ordinary roads.

(46) When the burial company has reached the tomb, the coffin must not be put down by the Asorotany corner, because this vintana is too powerful and dangerous.

There are certain ceremonies connected with the opening of the tomb, depending on what type of tomb it is, i.e. if it is the large wooden coffin, the grave-house, or the stone-grave. It is, however, a general rule that the leader of the burial company addresses those who have already been buried there and explains to them the reason for the arrival of the cortège. He also mentions the name of the one who is going to be buried and asks for permission to bury him there. In his address he uses very humble and well-chosen words. Ox-blood from a horn is poured down at the entrance. (47) It is prohibited to open the grave without sacrificing. We can see a special reason for this. If the grave is opened without any sacrifice, and without addressing those who are buried there, and telling them who is going to be buried, one may risk that the person will be buried while the dead are out haunting and thus not at home to receive the new one. It often
happens that the grave chief must pour liquor into the crania in order to tell them on what errand they are there. It is a South Betsileo custom for the chief to go into the family tomb a week after the burial to smear ox-fat on the face of the newly buried one. He makes a consolatory speech and then asks the dead one to remain quiet and not return to the village and worry the people there.

When the obligatory ceremony is over, the diggers can start. Among the Antanosy people the diggers are not allowed to wear any clothes. They must be naked. There are probably several reasons for this. One reason is that the diggers are more exposed to the danger of death than others, and the dangerous impurity of death will easily stick to the clothes. After the burial the diggers must have a bath in the river. There must only be 2 or 4 who do the digging, uneven numbers like 3 and 5 are forbidden. The purpose of this symbolism is probably to keep death away from the living. An uneven number is something which is not full, and it must be completed by one. There is a fear that death will want to make it complete, and will therefore take one from the family.

The handles of the spades must not be well fixed to the blade (Angady raiki-jarana tsy ihadiana ny fasana). The purpose here is to prevent death from adhering too closely to the living.

It is fady to take the handle of the spade home, and the blade of the spade must be washed in ox-blood at the graveside before it is taken home.

After the digging it is not allowed to place the spade upright; it must lie flat on the ground. An upright spade will remind one of a living man, but if it lies flat, it will be like a dead one. Parallel to this custom is the rule that one must not leave a spade flat on the ground after work, because it reminds one of a dead man. If the spade is left out in the field, which seldom happens, it must stand upright.

We have here an example of how two taboos relating to quite different matters mutually explain each other. In some instances this method is not only useful but quite necessary in order to understand different phenomena.

In Vakinankaratra it is a custom that those who bring a corpse to the grave say to those who have already been buried there: "How are
you? How is your health, and how are you getting on otherwise?"
At the same time they pat the old corpses and continue: "We are
bringing our child to you. We were unable to keep it with us. Receive
it well, take care of it, because from now on it belongs to you, not
to us."

When the corpse is brought into the tomb, there are many who
walk in to see how their deceased are keeping, the changes of the
bodies and the condition of the winding-sheet. The near relatives of
the one who is buried must carefully observe where the corpse is
placed. (54) Any change of place is strictly prohibited, and every one
is bound to know where his deceased relatives are placed in relation
to the others52. Those who walk into the tomb wish to be confronted
with their deceased. The behaviour in such a situation is more or less
individual. The feelings vary according to the loss. Some weep and
sob, touch the corpses, talk intimately with them and console them.
Others pour out the sorrow and grief of the painful separation from
their dear ones, whilst others again talk quite pleasantly about this one
and that one who are laid in different places in the tomb, and they
have good advice to give as to how to put the new corpse down.
It is all done with respect and awe for the deceased. Both those who
enter the tomb and those who remain outside carry on conversation
aloud. Hushed silence is quite out of place at a burial, the buzz of
voices must be heard.

For the Antanosy people it is compulsory to bring burned pieces of
firewood (foroha-tapitra) to the grave. By this custom they show
that they are afraid that the family may "burn out", and at the same
time it means that at the present burial, death shall be stopped.
A piece of firewood which has been burned by fire, means that the
fire has been stopped on its way, and it will be the same with death.
Through the death of the deceased, a piece of the family has been
burned off, but it has stopped on its way. The burned pieces of wood
which have been brought to the burial become an exorcism of death.

A corresponding rite is the custom that the widower or the widow
at the burial of a spouse must eat some charcoal from the burned
piece of wood. The purpose of this is that death must be stopped, and
that they must not be hit by the same misfortune when they have
married again53.
It is a custom among the Vezo for the widower (widow) to throw a little stone into the grave, saying: “I am no longer the husband (wife) of the deceased one, but of a living one.” This stone is called “the dead stone” (ny vato maty). He (she) takes another stone home, and this one is called “the living stone” (ny vato velona).

(55) Young girls and unmarried women are not allowed to look into the grave, because this may prevent their ability to give birth to children. At a burial their fertility may be destroyed. At the same time they have an aversion to looking into the grave, as child-birth is one of their strongest desires, and here they are confronted with the enemy of life, death itself.

The selection of a place for the deceased in relation to the other corpses in the tomb, is made according to age, standing and sex. A woman is placed on top of the heap of female corpses, south of the entrance, whilst a man is placed north of the entrance. That is how they are placed in a Kibory-grave at the East Coast. In the large grave-chambers in the Inland, the corpses are placed on big flagstones, where each family has its own place. The corpses are always placed with the heads eastwards, except in the case of witches (see p. 144).

When the door of a stone-grave in the Inland is being closed after a burial, all the openings at the edges of the door must be plastered with wet soil or clay, and this must be done in a special way. (56) One is not allowed to repeat the smearing of the mud-plaster because then something else will repeat itself, i.e. the misfortune which has just taken place (Tsy azo iverenana ny loko fasana, fa miverina indray, hono, ny loza). (57) One must not move the hand upwards when doing this plastering. It must always be moved downwards on the stone door. The meaning behind this taboo is that the misfortune shall “go down”.

When they walk out of the tomb, the oldest and most venerable of the men must go first. (58) If there are several brothers and sisters of the deceased, the oldest one is not allowed to be the last one to walk out of the tomb. The youngest one must come last. If he is an adult, he is the one to close the door, but very often the door is so heavy that he needs the help of others. He is the last one (ny faralakhy), and thus he marks the end of the children. When he closes the door, it means that the onslaught of death has come to an end, i.e. it has been stopped
for a long time. He is also far behind his eldest brother with regard to honour and dignity, which makes it natural that he is the last one to walk out of the tomb.

Everything which is not buried with the deceased must be thrown away. (59) It is strictly prohibited to take anything home\(^59\). The stretcher and the mats are thrown into thickets and grass outside the tomb.

(60) It is forbidden to take home any of the meat of cattle which has been slaughtered by the tomb\(^60\).

When the burial chief makes his speech, all are gathered outside the closed grave. He expresses his thanks to those present for the dignified way in which they have done their best to give the deceased a worthy burial. Everything has been done according to their custom and practices. Then follows a eulogy on the one who has passed away, on his work and deeds, with a word of consolation to the mourners. In the end he asks everybody to return to their homes in peace and in an orderly manner.

(61) When returning home, they must be very careful not to look back, because that will encourage the spirit of the deceased to accompany them on their way to the village\(^61\). This must by all means be avoided. (62) It is also prohibited to collect firewood on their way home\(^62\). Each one must, as soon as possible, go to a place where he can be cleaned from the impurity of death (*ny lamakon’ny faty*). This purification ceremony is performed at a river or a brook, where there is “living water”, i.e. running water. Here they wash their hands and feet and also the tools which have been used. One must, however, remember to face the water which is running downwards, when doing this washing. The uncleanness will then disappear with the running water. (63) Nobody can enter his house or start any work before having been cleansed\(^63\).

This purification does not only signify the cancelling of the taboo concerned and a return to ordinary life. It has a directly positive purpose: to halt the misfortune of death on the road, so that it will not accompany them on their way home. To the Native, therefore, such a ceremony means something much more than a mere formality. It is the expression of a very strong instinct, a determined will to force the destructive powers away from the living.
CHAPTER IX

The feast of the turning of the corpse

This custom is very common in the Inland, i.e. among the Merina and the Betsileo people, and in Vakinankaratra. The feast is held in the cold season, June—August, at intervals of from three to five years, and it lasts for three days. The length of the interval depends on the desire to have such a feast, on the financial position of the family concerned, and on how recently a new corpse has been buried in the tomb.

The Malagasy word for the turning of the corpse is famadihana, which means to turn something over. The word is used as a general description, without direct reference to name, time or place. (1) When, however, a man says that he is going to have the feast at such and such a time, the word famadihana becomes taboo. The direct use of the word would be considered boorish. When a certain turning of corpses is going to take place, the man responsible for the feast says that he is going to swaddle the ancestors in material (mamono lamba ny razana), or just uses the neutral expression that something is going to take place (misy raharaha hatao). Then people will know what is to happen.

The reason for the necessity of this feast is expressed thus: (2) it is fady to let the people lie in the tomb without being turned. Only the ancestors of dogs are left alone like that (Fady ny mamela ny razana tsy havadika, fa ny razan’alika tsy mivadika). To be compared with a dog is the rudest abuse the people can think of. They say that the one who does not turn the corpses of his ancestors, is stupid, foolish, and unfit to bear the name of his father. (Raha tsy mamadika, dia lazaina fa tsy mahazaka anaran-dray, fa adala). This means that he is not worthy of being his father’s son, and that he lacks the ability to
further his inheritance and the family tradition. To be marked as such is an unbearable shame and dishonour. The whole family would feel it a burdensome disgrace should the dead in the tomb be forgotten and left uncared for in their mouldering lamba. On the other hand, it brings great honour to hold such a feast. Over a wide area one will be praised as custom-wise, well-informed, dutiful to the dead, one who is cultured and well-to-do. This does not mean, however, that only the wealthy hold such a feast. According to what I have seen, the feast is held both by rich and poor. It is a fact that it does not matter how much such a feast costs; the families concerned must often struggle hard afterwards in order to pay off their debt. If they are not able to pay in time, they must borrow again from others in order to pay. It is strictly laid down that those who have the economical responsibility for the feast must pay their share. (3) Otherwise they will be cursed and ceremoniously expelled from the family, excommunicated from their home place and from the family tomb. In addition to these misfortunes, the Supernatural Powers will overcome them with leprosy or lightning. In many families most of the income is used on these feasts.

It is the extended family, including the different branches who come together, and this may be a gathering of several hundred. Many oxen must be slaughtered, large quantities of rice and gallons of liquor must be provided; many new mats for the guests, other mats on which to put the corpses outside the tomb, and new, red silk winding sheets, a costly item, must be supplied.

(4) With regard to the new winding-sheet it is said that it is prohibited to use anything but a red silk lamba (lamba mena). This is home-woven silk, about 2½ yards square. The silk they get from silk-worms which they breed themselves. It is dyed dark-red with the bark of the Nato tree, or with colour imported from Europe. Little glass beads are woven into the material, and there are narrow black, pink, yellow, green and white stripes in the lamba. (5) It is prohibited and even unheard of for any living person to use this kind of lamba. During the winter season one can buy it in the market, and the special families who make these lamba carry on a lively home industry.

The musicians, who sing and dance for three days, ask for a very high fee. In 1954 they could demand up to £ 100. In addition to this,
people have to acquire new clothes for the occasion, especially the women. They have often a new silk dress for each of the three days of the feast. Usually families with adult children bear the financial responsibility for the feast, i.e. the nearest relatives of those who have been buried in the family tomb.

To be able to take part in such a feast at different times is the ambition of many. A man will look forward to it and make it an aim in his life, in order to attain honour. The tremendous and attractive items of the feast of turning the corpse, are, therefore, a great inspiration, an encouragement to hard work, thrift and contentment. These sentiments are very common among the Inland tribes. If a man should neglect this feast, he is looked down upon by others, as having lost his honour and prestige, as one who has been robbed of all purpose and aim in life. There will be nothing left of the qualities making him a social individual, a worthy member of the family, a respectable dweller in the village. If he is without any interest in this matter, he shows that he despises his own ancestors, who are buried in the family tomb. What will he then do with his future? According to the inherited and fixed conception of the Natives, it is only the dead ones who can succour a person in need and threatened with disaster. Everything depends on those of the family who have passed away, the women’s fertility, the growth of children, health and prosperity. All will go wrong without the blessings of the departed. This dependence on the ancestors constitutes a religious argument, which is quite as important as all the outward requirements mentioned above.

This religious argument is contingent upon the belief in the soul as a surviving element. In order to see the objective side of this belief and find out what nourishes it, we shall have to study the way in which the dead ones of a family appear to the living. They appear first and foremost in dreams, which vary in innumerable ways. A mother may dream about a child which she has lost. This arouses her parental instinct and causes her to attend to the corpse. The same is the case with a father who has lost his son, or children who have lost their parents. If one dreams about dead ones, one is sure that they have been there in the house on a visit. They return to the house not only in order to see their former home, but in order to ask for necessary things like clothes, because they have worn them out and because
they feel cold. They want food, because they are hungry, they want liquor because they are thirsty, they want dancing and singing because they are bored and have a miserable existence. They complain that they have been forgotten by their descendants. A dream about the deceased is alarming, causing distress to the dreamer and all the family. The interpretation of the dream is left to the ombiasa. This usually results in one thing: the turning of the corpse.

If anybody dreams about one who is buried far away on the Island, it means that he wants to come home. He is lonely there and is longing for his forefathers’ soil, and for a sight of his own people as well. The soul of the deceased can be content only when he is buried in the ancestors’ soil (ny tanindrasana), because then he has come home, in the fullest meaning of the word. The family tomb becomes then the everlasting home. Here we touch on some of the main principles of the Malagasy social concepts: the family and national sentiments, the rights of inheritance and land, in short all the rights a member of the family has in the village. If he belongs to the same family tomb, all the rights are his. He can lay claim to help, and his burial rights are guaranteed. A burial in a single grave is always looked upon as an unsatisfying and provisional arrangement. If at all possible, all who have been provisionally buried are brought home, with the exception of those who have lost their right to the family tomb. In the months June—August one can often see people on the roads and paths, walking for days and weeks, carrying small cases which are bound to a pole. At the exhumation the bones are placed in the case without special ceremonies. Strangely enough, they are very casual about arranging the bones. If a thigh-bone is too long, they just cut it, so that they can get it into the case. The Colonial Administration has not imposed very strict conditions with regard to exhumation, provided that the skeleton consists of dry bones only, “a dry corpse” (faty maina) as it is called. The conditions are quite different with regard to corpses which are only a few months old, the so-called “wet corpses” (faty lena). These cannot be moved except for very special reasons.

Exhumation on account of exile is, therefore, an important reason for the turning of corpses. In addition to the revelations through dreams, there are other very weighty reasons for having the feast. If there is a heavy child-mortality in the family, or if there are many
miscarriages or total sterility, the feast will be absolutely necessary in order to obtain fertility from the ancestors. Retrogression in wealth, the threat of poverty or other misfortunes, are important reasons as well.

In short, there is a bilateral need. The living are dependent on the dead, and the dead are dependent on the living. This reciprocal need links the two worlds together, and the turning of the corpse is evidence of this mutual dependence.

The serving at the feast is very much the same as at a burial, but there are certain laws about the colour of the cattle to be slaughtered. (6) One is not allowed to use multi-coloured cattle. They must be monochrome. The reasons for this rule are both symbolical and linguistic. Monochrome in Malagasy is tokana-bolo. The first word in this expression is tokana, which means the only one, something which happens just once, contrary to several times and several things. In the same breath as the Natives express this taboo, they also express the purpose: that death must occur only once in the family (mba ho tokana ny faty). Thus it has the meaning of making deaths as few as possible. Here the same word (tokana) is used about death occurring once. Monochrome cattle will reduce the deaths in the family to as few as possible. There is, however, another taboo, which enters into the rule about monochrome cattle at the turning of corpses. (7) If, for instance, a red ox was slaughtered when the tomb was initiated, one cannot kill red cattle at later turnings of the corpses. “The tomb is initiated” is in Malagasy called natokana ny fasanana. Here the same word (grammatical root) is used as the one used for monochrome cattle. The cause of this taboo is that a repetition of the same colour at a later feast will create aversion, because the building of a tomb is a thing that happens only once, and the recurrence of this should be kept away by this taboo. One will then have to use, for example, pure black or pure white cattle as sacrificial animals.

When the company has spent a pleasant time together, eating and drinking, discussing domestic matters, proposals and betrothals, the taboos which might be a hindrance, policy and agriculture, purchase and sale, and have thus enjoyed themselves, the last day comes, when the most important part of the proceedings is to take place. Then all the corpses are carried out of the tomb, wrapped in silk lamba, and
then taken into the tomb again. The time for this ceremony is sunset, at some places in the dark after sunset, but never late at night. (8) From the morning until late in the afternoon it is forbidden to take the corpses out.

All are assembled around the tomb, which is opened according to the common vintana rules about a fortunate day. When the corpses are carried out, the oldest ones must be brought first. (9) It is prohibited to place them down on the naked ground. New mats are put down around the tomb, except at the eastern and southern walls, because these two walls are in contact with the Asorotany corner. This corner is so dangerous that if the dead ones are placed near it, the earth will open and consume everybody.

(10) It is prohibited to neglect the smearing of the ancestors with fat (of oxen) (Tsy azo atao ny tsy manoso-menaka ny razana).

(11) If the deceased when living had been used to tobacco, one must not forget to give him tobacco at the feast of turning the corpse. The same is the case with liquor, which must be poured into his mouth (Raha mpinana paraky izy, fony velona, dia tsy azo avela ny tsy homena azy. Torak'izany raha toaka, rarahana am-bava).

(12) Some are inclined to shed tears of sorrow when the ancestors are being carried out of the tomb and back again, but this is not allowed. One must dance at such a feast (Ny sasany mitomany noho ny alahelony raha havoaka sy hampidirina indray amin'ny fasana ny razana. Tsy azo atao ny mitomany. Tsy maintsy mandihy ihany).

(13) One is not allowed to keep quiet during the ceremony (Fady ny tsy miteny amin'izany raharaha izany). Quietness only shows that one is sulky and dissatisfied. It is, therefore, a rule that those who assist must carry on a light and lively conversation.

“If the (four) last-mentioned taboos are broken, one will not obtain any blessings from the ancestors” (Raha voadika ireto fady ireto, dia tsy hahita fitahian-drazana), says my informant.

(14) The prohibition against quietness must be respected for the sake of the dead ones as well. Those present must talk to them in order to establish contact. The dead ones will want to know what is going on, and conversation is carried on just as if one were talking with a living person.
The relatives sit on their mats with their legs stretched out and receive their deceased. A mother takes the little bundle which once was her child. A father takes his son, an adult daughter takes her mother, and so on. They hold the bundles on their laps, caress and pat them, and hug them in their arms. This is accompanied by harrowing scenes and heartbreaking cries. Some weep loudly, others sob convulsively when the lamba is taken off the face of the deceased, and they see how it has changed. They try to console the dead with kind words, telling them that now they are going to get new silk lamba. A stock expression is used: "Look, Sir (my child), here is your lamba (Indro åry Tompoko, (zanako) ny lambanao). They tell them that the whole family is gathered there in order to greet them and show their care and solicitude.

Sometimes, when for instance a daughter embraces the corpse of her mother, she falls into a swoon, or she begs her to take her along to the beyond, because the loss is so great. Sterile women bite off a piece of the winding-sheet of the parents and grand-parents, and eat it. This they do in order to be fertile. The old winding-sheet with the beads is powerful, and it brings fertility. It is the ancestors' power which makes the women fertile and pregnant. Sexual intercourse is in this connection of minor importance.

During the ceremony the band plays, dances and sings. The entertainment must be as elaborate as possible in order to make a success of the festivity. But why this festivity on such an occasion, one may ask. From the point of view of an ancestor-worshipper, the answer is simple. It is all done in order to entertain the deceased, and not only the living. There is another very important reason as well. The shrieking sound of the bamboo-flute and the mighty thundering of the drum will call on the spirits (ny ambiroa), in case some of them should be away on their ethereal and capricious expeditions. A corpse without the soul in it is something empty, and it will not be in a position to hear and understand what is said. If the soul is absent, it will not know what the relatives are doing for its benefit. The deceased without a soul is, therefore, something meaningless.

These scenes last for only a few hours. The grave chief, from the top of the tomb, gives the order that all the corpses must be brought in.
(15) The word “corpse”\textsuperscript{15} (\textit{ny faty}) is used only neutrally, in a general sense, and is never uttered on this occasion. Instead the word “burden” (\textit{ny entana}) is used. The relatives smear ox-fat on the old winding-sheet, which is not taken off, and then they tie the new red silk \textit{lamba} on to the old one. (16) The number of cords must not be two, four or six, an even number\textsuperscript{16}, but three, five or seven. An uneven number is called \textit{singana}, and it means something separated, singly, a number which is not a pair. Here it means a stop, a break, a remainder, contrary to an even number, that is, an unbroken chain, which, may however, be reduced to smaller units. When the Natives explain the reason for using uneven numbers only, they use the method of similarity of words. The number of cords must be \textit{singana}, in order that the property of the family shall not disappear, but rather that there shall be something left over, something that will grow and make a living. (\textit{Ny fehexana tsy maintsy hatao singana, mba tsy ho lany ringana ny haren’isy mianakavy, fa mba hisy kely tafasingana, hanaovana aoriana indray}). The same word is used for “uneven number” and for something which “is left over”, something due, which will help in increasing one’s fortune. If there was an even number of ribbons, this would mean that food and money would be finished, and there would be nothing for tomorrow.

(17) The cords must not be one whole piece of material\textsuperscript{17}, but several pieces joined together. Here we find the same idea as the one of uneven numbers. The continuous means a chain of misfortunes in the future. The taboo, however, cuts this dangerous continuity.

(18) Furthermore, it is prohibited to start at the head, when binding the winding-sheet on the corpse, and then continue towards the feet\textsuperscript{18}. That would mean that everything would go downwards for the family. The feast, however, aims at prosperity in every respect. One must, therefore, start with the legs and continue upwards (\textit{miakatra}), because a rise in a direct meaning of the word at the same time means a rise in the figurative and indirect meaning, when a ceremonial function takes place.

Before “the burdens” are carried back to the tomb, it is the custom to carry them along the rice-fields of the brothers and sisters who conduct the feast. This is done in order that the ancestors may see that their children have done good work in the fields they have in-
herited. Then all the cattle are gathered. A herdboy drives the cattle slowly in a circle, and the "burdens" are held close to, so that the ancestors can see that their descendants have looked after the cattle in a proper way. During this display, some mutter softly: "Look at our rice-fields. Look, here are our cattle". Very often nothing is said. It is the display itself that counts. After this the bundles are carried three or seven times around the tomb. This is done with singing and dancing, music and gaiety. The dancing is done not only for pleasure, but it has a ritual meaning.

The ancestors simply demand to be danced with. Dancing and music are ritual means by which the ancestors are made content, and to those who assist it is a sacred service of the cult. Late at night as it might be, in the dark, or in moonlight, this dancing around the grave can be very dramatic. The celebrants are intoxicated, not only by liquor but by mass-hysteria, and by the strength and desire of life. Some leap around throwing skulls or other parts of the skeletons high up into the air. Afterwards they collect the bones, which are never mistaken. Youth of both sexes flirt and speak boldly, enemies start to fight, and there is much uproar.

Why cannot the bundles be brought directly into the tomb without this obligatory walking around with them? The answer is again of a linguistic as well as of symbolic character. "Directly in to" the grave is in Malagasy "mivatana". (19) If the corpses were brought directly into the tomb\textsuperscript{19}, which is strictly prohibited, death and other misfortunes would follow directly. By walking around the tomb, one will deceive misfortune and lead it astray. This clear idea does not exclude the thought of entertaining the dead. When the procession around the grave has come to an end, the corpses are brought in, the oldest one first, and they are put in their respective places on the flagstones along the walls. The oldest ones have their places of honour at the north-eastern corner. When there are mortal remains of great-grand parents, and even further back, there is so little left, that there is nothing like a body any more. The remains from several people are then made into one bundle and bound well together in a silk \textit{lamba}, so that the dust may be kept as long as possible. In the tomb everyone takes leave of the dear ones, saying good-bye to them, and reassuring them that their relatives are still in the village, and that they will
always commemorate them. When taking leave of them, however, they ask them to keep quiet and not to come and haunt the village. This they say in a very polite way, but at the same time very firmly. After this the tomb is closed, and everybody returns home in a cheerful and happy mood.

We shall not deal with the great public speeches (kabary) here. These are usually very well formed, real examples of oratorical achievement. The different family chiefs compete with each other in their ability to present the power and dignity of their families. It is in a way a kind of diplomatic settlement within the extended family. The saga and great deeds of the ancestors are not forgotten in these speeches, which are very popular, because their arrangement, their proverbs, humour and wit are attractive to the audience. If one wishes to study the Malagasy language with all its subtlety and elasticity of expression, with its fine nuances, which do not hurt anybody, but at the same time can express a thing to perfection, one need only listen to these speeches.

It has been mentioned above that there is loud expression of sorrow when the different people receive their deceased, in order to give them new winding-sheets. These expressions of sorrow are spontaneous and impulsive, because the feelings are so strong that they cannot help it. These spontaneous outbursts are deviations from the general rule that nobody must show any sign of sorrow at the feast of turning the corpse. It is not the custom to be downcast or mournful (Tsy fanao ny manjonjonitra). The idea of the feast and the dominating spirit of it is optimism, with joy, and the feeling of collective strength and fellowship. The turning of the corpse is tantamount to religious renewal of the ancestral worship. It strengthens the hope that in the future the ancestors will richly repay them with blessings for all that they have received of food, clothes and entertainment.
CHAPTER X

Posthumous names

These names are not a unique phenomenon. They belong to a larger field of expressions, covering a vast number of word- and name-taboos, which on different occasions are mentioned in this book.

(1) It is taboo to mention the names of the deceased. They must, therefore, be given another name when they have died (Fady ny manono na ny anaran'ny maty, fa tsy maintsy omena anarana hafa rehefa maty). When the Antanosy people say this, they express at the same time something which not only concerns themselves, but in principle is a common Malagasy apprehension. This is very evident in the burial speeches and in occasional conversations otherwise. Those who have passed away are not casually referred to by their earthly names. In the Inland the common name Ratompokolahy or Itompokolahy is used about men of the nobles, and Ratompokovavy or Itompokovavy is used about women of the nobles. These names mean "Sir" and "Madam" respectively. The words Tompokolahy and Tompokovavy can without reservation be used about living people when addressing them, and form a very polite way of addressing people of whom one thinks very highly. These words are not often used, because they presuppose special occasions. (2) The prefixes Ra- and I- to the words tomponkolaha and tomponkovavy are never used about living people, as they are reserved for the dead only.

Sometimes the expression "Sir, I eat (your) illness" (Tompoko, haniko rofy) is used when addressing the dead, and this is one of the most polite turns of phrase. It is as if one simulates that the deceased is still alive, and the relatives ask that they may take upon themselves his illness in order that he may not die. It is, however, only a conventional way of naming the deceased with veneration and awe, having no ritual meaning.
When a *Hova* (commoner) is dead, they say: "The dear beloved": *Ndriamalala* about men, and *Ramalala* about women. However, the demarcation between nobles and *Hova* is not so sharp that *Ratompolahy* cannot be used for a *Hova* as well. The point is that none of these appellations can be used about a living person.

After these obligatory common appellations, the earthly name may be mentioned, if this cannot be avoided, for instance when the family’s lineage is discussed or in similar cases.

(3) One cannot say about a king’s death, that he is dead, but that he is lying with his back to the people (*miamboho*), that is, he has turned his back on his people, he has left this life. Otherwise one says about ordinary people not that they are dead, but “wounded” (*naratra*) or “broken” (*folaka*), or “lost” (*very*), or “he (she), who never will be seen again” (*Tsy hita intsoy*).²

In the Bara tribe, one who is dead is called “*Rafanjava*” (Master shining). The same name is used for the moon. (4) The common Malagasy word for moon, *volana*, becomes a taboo-word in the Bara dialect, because the moon, as a heavenly body, is looked upon as a *zanahary*, and thus the profane word *volana* cannot be used.³ They call it “Master shining”.

Since on decease the dead automatically acquire the name of the moon, this signifies that they have been exalted to sacred beings.

Among the Sakalava strict and minute rules govern the posthumous naming. Immediately after the burial of an adult, the family council is gathered under the sacred Tamarind, where they decide on the name of the deceased. This concerns only adults and old people, not adolescents and children. When childless spouses are dead, one is not specially interested in giving them names.

(5) The new names must not be similar to the names they had when living⁴. Here another taboo comes into the picture. (6) If anybody in the village has the same name as the deceased had in life, he must immediately change it, because none of the relatives is allowed to carry that name⁵. (7) Even if there is only some similarity between the two names, that of the living person must be changed⁶. It is so strictly forbidden to use the former name of the deceased, that the one who does such a thing will have to atone for his transgression by sacrificing an ox. Here I should like to mention that it is very hard,
when trying to collect ethnographic information, to induce the Saka-
lava to talk on this topic. Many of them refused point-blank to say
anything about it to me, as they were afraid of the taboo and afraid
of the dead. It was only privately between ourselves that the village-
chief or an old man would give me exact information about the post-
humous names. Even then I had to be very careful and to beat about
the bush for a long time before I dared to touch upon the matter.
(8) In everyday life, even the posthumous names should not be men-
tioned⁷. They must be used on special occasions only. It is possible
that I acquired the information because I was a white man and only
on a short visit in that area. It helped me that I could explain that the
sole reason for collecting material was to get neutral information about
the origin and history of the family and the clan, and about their old
customs. The Malagasy people are very fond of discussing the history
of the family in a neutral way.

It is, however, very difficult to know the meaning and the purpose
of the posthumous names, if one does not know how they are made
up and how they are used. Some examples will explain this.

_Sakalava names:

“The one who is greater than a thousand” (*Ndramandilatsarivo*)
was a mighty chief in Befandriana of the Morombe district. In this
conection “a thousand” does not first and foremost mean the figure
1,000, but just many. A rich man is called “one who has got a thou-
sand” (*amparanarivo*). Riches among the Sakalava are reckoned in cattle,
and a man who is really rich has hundreds of them, even up to a thou-
sand head; in this case the expression is used in connection with the
number of cattle. If it was a chief, however, who had great power, the
thousand refers to his subjects. It is a distinctive feature of most of
the posthumous names on the West Coast that they have the suffix
-arivo (thousand), and this makes them names of honour.

_Names of certain Mikea ancestors:

“The one who had to take charge of the obligations to the children”
(*Ndramamonjeanake*). The family tradition of the place says that,
when his father died, this son had to take charge of all obligations as the head of the family.

"The one who complied with the obligations" (Ndramahefalahatse) was known for his dutiful character.

"He who took over after his father" (Ndramamonjerae). He lost his father when he was still young, but through his efficiency he managed to make himself respected by everybody, and he helped his brothers and sisters.

"He who took over after his elder brother" (Ndramamonjezoke). He took care of his elder brother's burial in a dignified way, and proved to be a good and clever successor to his brother as the head of the family.

"He who did well for the village" (Ndramahasoatanà). He was good-hearted and proved to be a real "father and mother" to all in the family. "The village" is here an extravagant expression for the camping place of nomads.

"He who takes care of the thousands" (Ndramamonjearivo) had great power as head of the family.

"He who summons the thousands" (Ndramikaikearivo) indicating the power he used to have.

"He who was loved by the thousands" (Ndrateanarivo) was appreciated very much as "father and mother".

"He who did good to thousands" (Ndramanasioarivo) was a good-hearted man.

"He who cared for, or made a living for the thousands" (Ndramamelonarivo) took care of everybody.

"Protection" (Fiarova) is one of the Mikea female progenitors.

"She who united, tied together" (Nampiray) means that she was the strong and great connecting link in the family.

"He who holds the thousands (in his power)" (Ndramaheasoarivo) was a Mikea king who was well known many generations ago. There is still a king who is head over all who live in the forests, and he has unlimited power. The present one is called Mahamora, and he is, according to what I have heard from people, an able and clever man. When I visited him in 1953 I found him very polite and hospitable, giving an impression of being sharp-witted and intelligent. He was an especially active negotiator in controversies between families, or within
one family. He always first tried his best to make the two parties agree, but if he did not succeed in this, he would simply say to one of the parties: "You go northwards and never again make your appearance in this domain". To the other party he would say: "You go southwards, and if you ever return to this place, Ndramahahare will know how to catch up with you". (9) It is unheard of among the Mieka people that a king's order is not obeyed. The very same day they will have to parcel up their belongings, the spear, the little wooden shovel, the net in which they carry the wild roots, the little spade and the honey-container, and take their departure. For the sake of security, however, spies are sent after them to see that they take the right direction.

"He who endures staying in the forests" (Ndramahatântâny). Some of his relatives left the forests and settled in Basibasy canton of the Morombe district. It is, however, looked upon as an honour to remain a proper Mieka and not leave the ancestors' way of living. To leave the forests is a sign of weakness and it is unworthy.

"He who made work to become easy" (Ndramanamorasa). Whatever he took in hand was easily accomplished, and he also helped others in their difficulties.

"He who preserved the incense" (Ndramahatanemboka) was a sacrificing priest, a "sacred" (masina) man, i.e. he not only kept the incense, but used it in his religious practice.

"He who brought the wife back" (Ndramanatibaly). The story about this man says that shortly before he died, he felt that he soon would be leaving this world, and then he brought his wife back to her parents. In this way he showed great respect both to his wife and to his parents-in-law. It is a custom that the widow returns home to her parents or eldest brother, who will have to support her for some time.

"He who came to his children" (instead of them coming to him) (Ndramandimbeanake). His children had married and were staying far away. When he became ill, he said: "I want to see my children before I die", and he managed to come to them with great difficulty and thus had his wish fulfilled. In the pedigree these short and simple expressions go in as fixed links, and they are very carefully preserved because they are looked upon as "the last will", and even as "sacred words".
“She who went away to her mother” (Ndramamonjereny). She became ill when she was old, and prepared for death. Then she felt a very strong longing for her maiden home, her “ancestral soil”, and to die where her mother had lived and been buried. This wish was fulfilled.

“She who collects food” (Ampitindroke) was very clever at digging roots and catching game.

I shall refer to some of my notes taken on a visit to Andalambezo village, canton Andavadoake of the Morombe district. The people who have settled there are a mixture of Mikea immigrants and Vezo. They live on their agriculture and fishing. The village is situated in the forest, but not far from a long, narrow lagoon.

“She who gathers the grandchildren around herself” (Ndramamorisafy) was an old grandmother with many grandchildren. She was so kind, and her people were so fond of her, that neither her children nor her grandchildren wished to move to other places, but settled down in the grandmother’s village.

“He who sways the thousands” (Ndramamalikarivo) had great authority and was very rich in cattle.

“He who kicks the thousands” (Ndramanimpakarivo) was an able warrior.

“He who sends a message when important things are approaching” (Ndramanjohy). When he called on his trusty followers, everybody knew that something of importance was brewing.

“She who loves the thousands” (Ndramitearivo) was well known for her beauty.

“She who regards the children” (Ndramandinekanake). She had many children and grandchildren and was the progenitor of many descendants.

“The famous woman” (Ampelamalaza) is a famous ancestress in Andalambezo. She was well known for her independence and ability, and thus she put her husband in the shade with regard to reputation.

“He who lives on top of the hill” (Ndrambonivohitse) was a very rich and mighty chief. His area of authority reached from Morombe to Manombo. The name does not mean that the hill, from a geographic point of view, was very high, as West Madagascar is very flat. It is just a name of honour.
"He who did well for himself" (Ndramanasoavata) decided just before his death how much provender should be used for his burial. At his burial several hundred oxen were killed, and an excess of rice and liquor was given to the multitude present. Everything that was consumed of food and drinks was to the good of the deceased, as he took it along to the beyond, and in this way he did well for his own soul after death.

"He who is worthy of a royal castle" (Ndramanevalonake). He was given this illustrious name because of his services to the king.

"He who gathered his children" (Ndramamorianake). The story about him says that all his relatives from far and near came to his burial and were all present at this very great and expensive function. "The children" is a popular word for descendants and relatives.

"He who could not bear leaving his children" (Tsimahefoeanaake). When he was old and helpless, his younger brother wanted him to move to his home, but he just could not take leave of his adult children, and they for their part did not want him to leave. He died in his family home.

"He who saves the soil" (Ndramamonjetane). At his burial a large, solid trunk was hollowed out to make a coffin, and another one to make a lid, but a crack appeared in the coffin. The same thing happened to the second and the third coffin that was made. The fourth coffin, however, satisfied the people. "It was as if he should not have died, because he was loved so much by the people, and because the coffin would not have him", said the man who told me this story. An incredibly large number of cattle were killed for the burial, and he came as a rich and highly esteemed person to his ancestors, where from he then could bless his soil, i.e. his children and descendants in the future.

"He who went to the ancestors" (Ndramamonjerasa). His ancestors lived originally in Andalambezo, but after a terrible drought there was famine there, and they went northwards and founded a village in Ambohibe by the Mangoke river, where they stayed for many years, and where they also were buried. Ndramamonjerasa, however, lived in Andalambezo. When he became old, he made the long journey to Ambohibe, because he wanted to be buried with his ancestors.

"He who was feared by many" (Ndramaromatahotse). He was well known for his strictness and anger, and all people were afraid of him.
This posthumous name is, however, no criticism of the deceased. On the contrary, the fact that he was able to make people fear him showed that he had the honourable qualities of a chief.

"He who opposed anything" (*Ndramitoharaha*). It was especially strangers he could not stand, whether they were Europeans or people from other places. Through his outstanding independence and inaccessibility with regard to foreigners, he showed his power and authority.

"He who went to his elder brother" (*Ndramamonjezoke*). When he was dead, his corpse was placed on top of his elder brother's corpse. In the large tumulus graves are placed the short, hollowed-out trunks which are used for coffins. One corpse is usually placed on top of the others. Here it is marked that the older brother died first, and then the younger one, and thus they died in the normal sequence.

Here are three posthumous names (*anarana fitahiny*) of famous ancestors of the fishing people, the Vezo, names which are usually called on at the sacrificial pole in the village:

"He who chases the thousands aside" (*Mpanonjenarivo*). The name tells us about his great power.

"He who owns the thousands" (*Rampanarivo*) was very rich in cattle.

"The rescuer of the thousands" (*Ampandombarivo*) refers to one who conquered the enemy and saved his subjects from being killed or taken as slaves.

The following two are Vazimba names:

"He with a lot of money" (*Rabevola*) was very rich in silver coins.

"He who had many grand-children" (*Ndriamarozafe*). The name speaks for itself.

Then follow two names from the Antanosy tribe:

"He who is facing the thousands" (*Ramiatrikarivo*). This means the chief who is facing his subjects or soldiers and exhibits his power.

"The king (or the nobleman) who is over the thousands" (*Ranäri-amboniarivo*). This name is both a glorification and an expression of power and ability.
The principle followed in the giving of names post mortem is that they must say something definite about the deceased. It must be a concentrated, necrological expression, which can be kept and repeated through generations. It may also say something about an important part of his last will (*famelan-hafatra*), which decides about how and where he is going to be buried, and in this case it is usually something out of the ordinary. What gives splendour to the last will and the name is that it is always followed out to the letter by the relatives. The name emphasizes the praiseworthy qualities of the ancestors, like courage and strength, good-heartedness, love of children and the native soil, care of the future of the family. It is a kind of condensed saga, aiming to give the recipient a heroic glory.

Another thing which the family council must take into consideration when giving posthumous names is that the names must be pleasing to the soul of the deceased. Here the thoughts of the living concerning themselves come into the picture. There are names which are used especially when the deceased are called upon at sacrifices. They are formed in such a way that they are not only names of a historic person, but the characteristic construction and form of the name give a constant picture of the person. When “The rescuer of the thousands” or “He who is greater than thousands”, “He who did good to the village”, are mentioned and called on at a ritual ceremony, then it is absolutely certain to the people that they were just like that when they lived, and that they are still the same. Even now they can rescue the thousands or prove that they are mightier than the thousands, and they will still do good to those who are present and call on them. In this way the names are a continuous reminder of the beneficial abilities of the ancestors. These names are, therefore, directly connected with the ancestral cult.

If we ask the Natives why they are so much against mentioning the former name of a deceased, and why it is of such vital importance to give them other names, we receive answers that may be summed up as follows:

In most cases they do not like to mention the earthly names, because they arouse unhappy memories. By giving a new name, one annuls the old one, and in this way one gets rid of “the earthly remains”. It is for exactly the same reason that, according to Sakalava custom, the
hut of a deceased is burned down, (10) and nobody is allowed to build a house on the same site\textsuperscript{10}. By these actions the connection with the dead ones is cut off in order that the living may be protected against death and the destructive power of the dead. The new name is, therefore, a way of keeping death away. When the former, or earthly name is mentioned, the attention of the deceased's soul is aroused in a special way, and the danger of revenants is very present.

This matter, however, has another aspect: the opinion of the dead, according to the belief that the soul survives the death of the body. There is not enough glory and dignity in the earthly name, and if it is used, the deceased will become angry and avenge themselves. If, however, they get a name of honour, they will rest content, as this new name is a certain acknowledgement and glorification of them. Many of these ancestors were despotic and imperious, and they would not tolerate the use of their earthly names. In order to avenge themselves on those who dare to use them, they appear in dreams and hallucinations and omens, especially to those possessed of demons, and also to witch-doctors. The causes of the sacrifices are very often jealousy and lack of attention on the descendants' part.

A comprehensive cause of the posthumous names is a canonization of the deceased and a sanctification for the entrance into the static and sacred world. We can see here that there are two sides to the matter: the point of view and the interests of the living, which are both protection against death and attainment of the dead's blessings, and the opinions and wishes of the dead. This forms a correlation between the living and the dead. Here also we get a view of what the meaning of a name may be. It is much more than a mere label. It has a fixed personal content and identity of the one to whom it belongs, and the mentioning of a name has far reaching consequences, which are clearly marked by the imperative taboo.
CHAPTER XI

The sacredness and the impurity of the dead

The interpretation of this relationship has not always been clear. In connection with this, the same confusion will easily assert itself in the definition of the death-taboos. Sir James Frazer combines the above-mentioned conceptions when he says:

Thus in primitive society the rules of ceremonial purity observed by divine kings, chiefs, and priests agree in many respects with the rules observed by homicides, mourners, women in childbed, girls at puberty, hunters and fishermen, and so on. To us these various classes of persons appear to differ totally in character and conditions, some of them we should call holy, others we might pronounce unclean and polluted. But the savage makes no such moral distinction between them; the conceptions of holiness and pollution are not yet differentiated in his mind. To him the common feature of all these persons is that they are dangerous and in danger, and the danger in which they stand and to which they expose others is what we should call spiritual and ghostly, and therefore imaginary.

We find, however, that the Natives do distinguish between the unclean and the sacred. To support this argument we may refer to the taboos of burial and the turning of the corpse. In order to get to the heart of the matter, we may ask the following question: is the deceased taboo because he is unclean or because he is sacred? The question in itself is of great interest, but in order to find the answer, we must try to perceive and follow the Natives' chain of reasoning. Then we shall find that they adhere to certain principles and ideas.

One line of thought is that natural reaction to death which is felt by every human being. The Natives have a positive view of life, and a
strong feeling of repulsion against the major enemy, death. The taboos
dealt with in the chapters VI, VII, and VIII richly prove this. The
feeling of uncleanness after having touched a corpse, the uncleanness
of the food, the uncleanness of the house and so on become a physical
uncleanness which soils all concerned. The taboos concerning this
uncleanness are energetic demonstrations against death and a safe-
guard for the living.

The other chain of thought is religious and concerns the sacredness
of the dead. But why are the dead looked upon as being sacred, one
may ask. I shall mention below a few points which will throw light
on this very broad question. We must view as a whole the programme
of a burial as conducted according to the old custom. This programme
includes the careful laying-out of the corpse, the expensive winding-
sheet, the lamentation and the obligatory and long-lasting weeping,
the relatives’ visit, the eulogy of the deceased in the burial speech,
the wake, and of course the vast supplies of food and liquor as well
as the gifts of silver coins and other things. All this elaborate proce-
dure must have a meaning, a very special purpose, otherwise people
would never spend so much money. The meaning and purpose is to
make the deceased worthy of living with the ancestors in the beyond.
The ancestors are already sacred. But the one who has just died comes
from the profane world, and he must be sanctified.

Where does his sacredness begin? And how does he become sacred?
These two questions are linked together. It is impossible to say exactly
when the sacredness begins, but we may say in short that it is the
burial ceremonies which make him sacred through the services of his
relatives, in that they give him all these victuals which they themselves
consume. In order to throw light on this sanctification, we shall com-
pare it with sanctification in other respects. The Natives who make
sacrifices to the gods say directly that it is the oxen that are killed at a
sacrifice, the burnt offering of the ox fat, and the fragrant rice, which
sanctify the gods (manamasina azy). The sacrifices increase the sacred-
ness of the gods. We find a parallel to this in the interrelation between
the Malagasy kings on accession and their subjects in olden days.
The people’s homage and acknowledgement, obedience and faithful-
ness, as well as their gifts to the king (ny hasina), were the agencies
that raised him to the position of a king (manandriana azy). In other
words, it was the unanimous will of the people that constituted him a
king, an action by the mass.

The sacrificial stone altar is made sacred by the gifts which are
sacrificed there, for instance the liquor which is poured over the altar,
the ox fat which is smeared on it, the boiled rice on the sacrificial table
at the foot. Through these things the altar is sanctified by the sacri-
ficing people.

A fetch is sacred, but it is made sacred by incense, exorcism and
daily care, just like a creature in need of attention. Without this con-
stant sanctification by the witch-doctor there would be no sacred
power in it.

One who has just passed away finds himself in a temporary and
uncertain situation. Here we have come to a very important point in
our study of the beginning of the deceased’s sacredness, the point of
intersection between life and death, between the profane and the
sacred, between the condition of the soul in the present and in the
beyond. Just here the two worlds meet, the immanent and the trans-
cendent.

All the victuals, the entertainment, as well as the other items of the
burial programme, are a dedication of the deceased to the beyond.
If he has nothing to bring with him in the way of oxen, clothes, food,
honour, and so on, he will not be accepted by the earlier deceased
ones of the family, according to the Natives’ belief. The family tomb
will not receive him. It is, therefore, the relatives, the living ones, who
make him sacred, though we cannot say that this occupies the minds
of the mourners directly. Neither is it mentioned by anybody, as the
main thing under the circumstances is to conduct an honourable
burial as soon as possible.

In dealing with the question of the sacredness of the dead, however,
it is necessary to view the sanctification process in the following way, thus
inductively finding a solution by examination of the material at hand.
An indirect proof of the relatives’ sanctification of the dead is the
totally opposite situation, i.e. a burial without ceremonies, without
food and without gifts. That is the worst calamity that can befall a
Malagasy, as it would mean a disgraceful death and a painful and
restless existence in the beyond. The soul brings absolutely nothing
to the next world and is in a miserable condition in every respect,
mocked at by all the other deceased. "To die once is bearable, but to
die twice is more than anybody can stand" (Maty indray mandeha
zaka ihany, maty indroa tsy laitra) is a common Malagasy proverb.

To die for the second time means that the soul of the deceased dies.
And it dies because none of the living made sacrifices to the dead, in
the form of the different sacrificial gifts which can satisfy his needs.
Or in other words: the soul dies because it is left out of the thoughts
and memories of the relatives, it is no longer an object of their atten-
tion. This is a kind of perdition, seen from the Natives' point of view.

Thus we have brought to light how long the life beyond lasts.
It lasts as long as the relatives and their descendants commemorate
the dead.

When one of the family has been dead for such and such a long
time and nobody remembers his name any more, he is no longer in
the genealogy, and he is not mentioned in the sacrificial prayers at
the big sacrifices. It is useless to ask an ancestral worshipper about
those who lived before those who are commemorated and called on.
He does not like such a question. Such souls are out of the picture,
because they are outside the sphere of religious interest. Thus the
mourners and those who make sacrifices to the ancestors at a burial
are the ones who decide if a soul shall continue to exist or not. If it
suffers its second death, the reason is that there is nobody among the
living who cares about it, as the deceased is forgotten by everybody.

This is a decided factor at the sanctification of the dead. We may
call it the subjective factor, because the matter is seen from the point
of view of the living. There is, however, a complementary objective
factor. This objective side of the matter is the change which takes
place in a human being through death. Death is so powerful that it
changes a person totally from a living individual to a shell. It acts as
something strange and unknown and turns the known into something
quite different. It separates him from the others, not only literally but
also with the strange stamp of the dead. It is, therefore, death with
its strange but overwhelming and irresistible power which is the
objective factor at the sanctification of the dead. If there were no
objective basis of this sanctification, the Natives would never sacrifice
so much and engage themselves so much with the deceased as they do.
The objective element is outside of man; it comes in from outside with
the overwhelming power of death. We can note again the parallel to this in the king's accession to the throne, and in the existence of the throne. The basis of the people's homage, loyalty and submission is either the king's right to the throne according to inheritance or his personal ability as a conqueror, legislator and ruler. I mention this as a comparison to the elevation of the dead to sacred beings by the living. Thus we see that active participation in the sanctification of the dead is a necessary correlate to the metaphysical and transforming power of death, a power which is in itself essential to sanctification.

This sacredness is the cause of definite taboos about the dead, and of their cult. (Cf. ch. II, 23; ch. VI, 11; ch. VII, 12, 13, 14, 24, 25; ch. VIII, 47; ch. IX, 1, 2, 9, 10, 11; ch. X, 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8). In dealing with this special topic, we shall, therefore, consider two kinds of taboos: impurity taboos, which come from physical uncleanness from a corpse, and sacredness taboos which belong to the sphere of the ancestral cult and are founded on metaphysics and religion.

In Panthéon et Religion chez les Tanala, I have tried to place the sacredness of the dead in relation to the dry and clean skeletons in the family grave. A decaying corpse is unclean, and it brings uncleanness on those who assist at a burial. No ancestral worshipper will say that decaying flesh is sacred. On the contrary the old customs concerning the care of corpses aim to release the skeleton from this uncleanness.

The Vazimba give the corpse two burials. There is first a burial in a single grave without great ceremony. A year or two later the corpse is dug up, the bones are washed in the river and smeared with ox fat and then brought to the big family tomb. The second burial is, therefore, the really great burial. Through proper care of the corpse, the dead has arrived at a worthy and ideal stage, because he is released from the uncleanness of decaying stage.

A similar practice was common in a great many parts of Madagascar until the burial law was passed. The law introduced by the Colonial Administration lays down that death must be confirmed by the district surgeon and that the burial must take place within 24 hours. But according to old custom, a commoner's corpse was tended in the house for a period of 14 days or a month. In the house there would be a fire in the fireplace burning day and night. The corpse was placed erect in order that the vital organs could fall off easily. Then the skeleton-like
remains were buried with all the celebration, entertainment, and slaughtering of cattle that the people could afford.

It is still a common view that it is the dry bones, which are wrapped in expensive material and protected in a solid tomb, that endure and are sacred. The longer they last, the longer the sacred ancestors will live. If there is nothing left of the bones, the existence of the sacred ones has automatically come to an end.

A point which it is very important to observe at the turning of the corpse is the way people behave on their way home, and also when they have returned to their houses. It is often then that an ethnographer finds an explanation of what he wants to know. They do not look and behave like mourners as they did at the burial, but they are gay and happy, satisfied and full of optimism. After a feast of the turning of the corpse they have no purification ceremonies, either with water or with any other cathartic means. Through contact with the dead, power and fertility is transferred to them, and these precious blessings they try to keep as long as possible. They even take with them home small pieces of the old mats or of the old winding-sheets in which the corpses were wrapped, and keep them as relics. These things are pure and sacred and not infected by the impurity of death. This is an additional proof of what has been stated above, that the sacredness is linked with the age of the corpse and with the dry bones. At the same time it shows that the taboos about the dead have two quite different causes. One of the causes is the impurity from one who has just died, and from the decaying body. The other cause is something quite different: the sacredness of the ancestors when they have reached the static level of sacredness. It is time and age which bring sanctity.
The most common fetiches (ody) may be grouped into three different groups. One type is made of ox-horns which are filled with a dough of resin, ox fat, sawdust, sand, or soil and many other things. Into this dough is put a variety of objects, such as wooden sticks, a needle, a fishing hook, a little pair of scissors, a tiny silver ox, pieces of silver, a poisonous scorpion-sting, crocodile teeth, a joint of the little finger of a deceased celebrity, as well as many other things. Each horn is made for its special purpose, but they are all called mohara. Decorated with beads and fastened to a long strip of material, they are carried on the bare skin, either on the breast or at the side. But they may also have their special place in the hut.

Another kind of fetich consists of wooden pegs on a string, worn like a chain around the neck. Between each peg are two or three beads. It may also be a chain of beads with bright or coloured pearls, teeth from wild boars, little, round shells (felana), and snail-shells. Together with these things there might be a tiny cloth-bag containing powder or a lock of hair.

A third group is represented by quaint figures of living creatures, such as oxen, crocodiles and snakes, or of the male sexual organs, or of men and women. The latter are very simple, with only small lines showing eyes, mouth and nose, but with clearly marked sexual organs in the men and the breasts of the women protruding.

A unique fetich is the little pumpkin which is narrow at the middle with a little round head on top. It is called “The pumpkin, the thousand men” (Voatavoarivolahy). This means that it will bring honour and power, riches and victory in war. It is hollow, and on the outside,
pricked in the peel, are certain magic signs which are taken from the sikidy divination. Around the neck it has a string of beads.

Some fetishes are common property of a family and are then often called sampy in addition to the more comprehensive name ody. It may be very difficult to distinguish between these two words, as they are often used with one and the same meaning. In West and South Madagascar they are also called jiny and are directly connected with the ancestral cult. They are kept in a little white-painted house called "Zanahary’s house" (Tranon-Janahary). This house stands on tall poles, either in the middle of the village or in the forest, and only the villagers know the way to Zanahary’s house. Among the people of the Vezo clan one can see it in practically every larger village. The house is enclosed by a fence and carefully guarded by one who is both sacrificer and witch-doctor. On the long wall there is a little door, and inside one can find, among other things, a mirror, one or more bottles of home-made liquor, glasses, a censer, a bowl with fresh, clean water, the sacrificial knife which is used when killing the ox, a staff which has belonged to one of the ancestors, as well as strings of beads, necklaces and other charms that once belonged to famous people.

Several of the great and noble Sakalava families keep mementoes of their old kings and chiefs as specially precious and sacred things. There might be a lock of hair, nails, a canine tooth, the first joint of the little finger of the left hand, the spear with two blades, the royal rod. All the small items are wrapped in a red silk cloth and carefully kept in the smallest of a nest of baskets which fit into each other; the receptacle is locked into a red-painted case and placed in the north-eastern corner of the house. These sacrosanct relics are exhibited only at the big annual feasts. Then they are carried in a procession of several thousand people, who celebrate for many days. One thing to mark in this connection is the fact that one will never find the mohara horns in these Zanahary-houses.

Whether there are nobles or ordinary men only living in them, there are in most larger villages one or more witch-doctors who know the secret of charms, and who can make, use, and sell them. There is practically no situation or occasion for which there is not a useful charm.
Each fetich has its own taboo, but as these taboos may seem very enigmatical, even unintelligible, we shall go into detail in some selected cases, explaining how the fetiches are made, and how they are used and handled.

"The famous wild boar, the king" (Andriandambomalaza)

This is a fetich used in war, riot and the plundering of a village. The purpose of this fetich is to make one invulnerable to enemy bullets. It is composed of many different things, which can be divided into two kinds. The more important part is "Master Grandfather, the famous wild boar, the father of the 21", and the other part is "The 21 children".

The first mentioned part is made of a very hard wood, which is called "The famous wild boar". This tree has dark red flowers and it grows in mountain crevices, just as if it were shooting out of the mountain-side. Because it "grows on stone" as it is said, it is a powerful medium, and the red colour of the flowers is the colour of might and power. These three characteristics, hardness, dark red colour, and type of habitat, refer to the wild boar's strength and to its dark-brown colour. The similarity between the tree and the animal is the reason for calling this fetich "wild boar".

Those who go to fetch the tree must take the following things with them:

1. A red cock (akoholahy mena) which is good at fighting.
2. Seven spears with red handles (lefona fito, mena zara).
3. A home-woven piece of seamless silk material (lamba landy tsy mivitrana). The wholeness of the material is a symbol of unity and perfection.
4. Seven pieces of silver (vavavola fito) from old, pure silver.
5. A bowl made of burnt clay and painted with blue-black graphite (ny vilia manga).
6. Clean water.

(1) Those who partake in the fetching of the tree must not be fatherless or motherless (tsy maty ray aman-dreny), because living parents mean continuous strength and vital power.
When they have come to the place where the tree is growing, the men take up position at a certain distance and try to hit the trunk with their spears. If they do not hit the stem, the tree may be cut, as it has proved to be invulnerable. If, however, they hit it, this shows that it is useless. But it is said that nobody has ever heard of anybody hitting the mark on this occasion.

Then the oldest one of the men shouts: “Come here, you Andriamanaitra man, you Andriamanitra woman! Come here, and do not be angry with us, because we have come to fetch “Master famous wild boar”. It is not just by chance that we fetch it. We shall make it into ‘He who encloses our lives, our hearts and our families with a protecting fence’ (Ratomarafsefy). We shall make it into ‘He who gives power and riches’ (Ratomaramanana). Do not be angry, do not destroy us, because we have brought along all the things which are usually used when such a thing is done.” — He mentions all the six things. It is a prayer for permission to cut the tree. Before the tree has been cut off at the root, the cock is killed and held over the root in order that the blood may run over it. When it has been hewed down, it is sprinkled with “silver-water”, wrapped in the silk material and carried home.

A length from the trunk of “The wild boar” is then whittled down until its length is from the tip of the forefinger to the wrist.

Its “children” are 21 pieces of wood, 14 male and 7 female, which are threaded on silk with a small greyish-white bead between each “child”.

Here are the 14 men:

1. “The sacred mark” (Fisoritra) which means the thing which is marked either with colour or engraved. The one who has Fisoritra is marked in such a way that he cannot be hit by the enemy’s bullets. It is made from the thick and tall Fantaka-grass (Arundo Madagascarensis), which is famous in other guises as a protection-charm. It has the ability of placing itself between the owner and the enemy (disaster).

2. A peg from a mulberry bush with white berries (Hazondandy miteraka voa fotsy). The leaves are used as food for the silk-worm. This insect is bred in order to get the silk which is used when weaving ritual winding-sheets, as well as other articles. But it is the white berries that are the most important in this connection. They will make
the enemy’s bullets like “white cloudlets”, i.e. powerless, so that they will just trickle out of the gun-barrel because there is no weight in them.

3. “The one who makes the enemy shrivel up in fear and feebleness.” This is made of a kind of wood called *Voamiforitra*: the fruit, the berry, which shrinks together. This fruit has the quality of shrinking like a hedge-hog when touched by something. The first part of the word, *voa*, also has the meaning “to be hit”, and thus the name of the tree is used directly about the enemy: he has been hit and shrinks. This piece of wood is placed between the two pegs from the above-mentioned mulberry bush. Then the effect will be as follows: in the fight the bullets of the enemy will become white cloudlets, and he himself will shrink in feebleness and flee or die.

4. A peg from a mulberry tree.

5. A sliver from the bush *Foritravilambo* — “The adversary crumples before the approaching wild boar”.

6. “Deliverance” (*Fiavotra*) is another kind of wood. This is supposed to protect against the fatal bullets.

7. “The father of fire” (*Raiafo*). The leaves of this bush sting like nettles. It makes the warrior (the robber) full of fire and brave, so that he burns. On the other hand it is so strong that it will burn the enemy.

8. A peg from a tree called *Horeotra*, “The one who breaks into pieces”. But it can also mean “He will be crushed”, and it is this interpretation of the name of the tree which shows the function and the effect of the fetish: the enemy will be crushed.

9. “The divided tree” (*Bàkaka*), the thing which is V-formed. It is taken from a bush, the stem of which has split into two parts. This will cause the plans of the enemy to split, so that the enemy becomes confused and shoots at random.

10. “The thing which differs from all other things in the camp” (*Miavakandasy*) is a bush. He who has this fetish differs from all the other warriors in that he is invulnerable.

11. “The thing which protects against the greatest need and danger” (*Manavodrevo*) is a compound word from *manavotra* (rescue) and *revo*: to be sunk in a quagmire, to be put to shame, to be exposed to something evil.
12. Two mulberry pegs, like no. 2, with no bead between them. They are together and strengthen each other in the common task.
13. Again two mulberry pegs close together, separated by a bead from no. 12. They are rubbing each other (*Hazondandy mifanotra*).

“The women” are pegs of seven different kinds:

1. is of the same kind as no. 3 of the male, but the reason for having one male and one female of the same kind, is that if the one of them does not contrive to get the enemy to shrink, the other one will manage it.
2. “Not arrogant” (*Tsianjonanjona*) is the name of this tree. The adversary will not exult when faced with it.
3. “The irresistible” (*Tsilaitra*). Apart from its use in the fetish, sawdust from this tree is rubbed on the most vulnerable parts of the body. It makes the skin hard and invulnerable.
4. “That which gives courage” (*Fanerana*) in the battle. This is also the name of the tree. Its purpose is to remove fear and cowardice when the battle is on.
5. The same as no. 5 of the male series. If the male “child” fails, the female one will make the enemy shrink in fear.
6. “The one who casts the slough” (*Voampiofy*) means that the warrior will be stripped of his earlier weakness and vulnerability and get a new skin, just as a snake casts its slough.
7. Two mulberry pegs. They have the same meaning as no. 2 of the male, but if one fails, one will still have the other.

These seven female items together with the 14 above-mentioned male ones form the 21 children of the wild boar father. In addition to these, however, there is a very important thing called “fetich for taboo” (*Ny ody fady*). This is a bush which is often used as an antidote when one has eaten some poisonous (bewitched) food, or has broken a taboo. And here it is used in the same way. It removes the uncleanness which all the above-mentioned things may get, so that they can regain their sacred power and be used again.

The male and the female “children”, threaded onto silk, form a necklace, the joining of them being symbolical of unity and thereby
strength. The silk, however, must be drawn out of the silk worm’s pupa while it is still alive.

When the initiation ceremony takes place, all the people of the village gather at a feast, in high spirits because the “Grandfather Wild-boar” has come to them. A big ox, red and unblemished, is sacrificed. The “Wild-boar” is washed in silver-water and rubbed with oil from the Tanantânana fruit (*Ricinus communis*). After this the warriors drink some of the water used for the washing, and the rest is sprinkled around in their houses. After the washing the one acting as priest shouts: “Listen, listen! King Wild boar, the famous one. Thou art father and mother, protect our lives, protect our hearts, our property, wife, children and all our relatives. Strike with blindness those who want to destroy us, strike their feet with lameness. When the enemy moves upwards along the river, let them find nothing. When they move down the river, let them see nothing. Thou hast not ears, but thou canst hear. Thou hast not eyes, but thou canst see. Thou art a tree which has intellect, and ability to think (*Hazo manan-\textit{tsaina} hianao, manam-\textit{betsivetsy}). They are going out on a dangerous expedition, be, therefore, with them.”

After this the warriors go down to the river together with the priest. He wades into the stream, and there he holds the fetish down in the water. The others walk into the stream a little further down. In that way the power of the “Wild boar” will be transferred to them through the water.

The chain is wrapped in the silk cloth and placed into a seven-fold basket, seven baskets of different sizes that fit into each other. The basket is then very carefully taken care of by the oldest of the warriors whose parents are alive (*velon-dray aman-dreny*). His house must always be clean. The number 7 here, as well as the numbers 14 ($7 \times 2$) “men” and 7 “women”, indicate clearly that the purpose is combined to bring disaster and death on the enemy.

The fetish is carried in war, in riots and on raids. If the men return alive and even victorious, the power of the wild boar will increase, as well as its fame and strength. It is carried by the leader who walks in front. If he is killed or dies on the way, the fetish is brought to the house were it was usually kept.
In a battle there are fetiches on both sides, and the invisible fight between these two powers is much more intense and bitter than the visible fight between the warriors, according to their belief. If they lose, they may blame the fetich, and it may be thrown away, but this happens very seldom. The witch-doctor will have to find the cause of the defeat; and here we come to the point he will certainly ask about, the keeping of the fetich taboos, for many things are forbidden to those who use the wild boar fetich.

(2) When they are on long journeys and by chance walk into a house where somebody has recently died, the "Wild boar" will not bear this, as it can have no connection with anything which has had to do with death. Then it returns to the house where it was kept, even if the pieces of wood are with the warriors. Even if the warriors are at home, but still in the service, they must not go to a burial. (3) Furthermore it is taboo to them to eat burial meat.

It is also forbidden: (4) To eat meat from animals, wild or domestic, which have been shot, because then they will be shot themselves. Here we find the cause of many of the eating-taboos, which otherwise would be quite unintelligible.

(5) To eat pig's meat, to let the pig come into the house, to burn hog's bristle near the house when slaughtering. Then the fetich will smell the pig, which it cannot bear.

(6) To walk straight into the house where the fetich is kept. One must stop, walk back a few steps and wait for the one who takes care of the fetich to come out. Only then may the one who is paying a visit do his errand. If he walks in without further ceremony, it is believed that he will be killed by the "wild-boar", and "no (sacrifice of) life can redeem him" (Tsy aso solon'aina).

(7) To permit dirtiness and uncleanness in the house of the fetich. The seven baskets must be free of dust and rubbish. (8) To have dirty hands or nails, when giving the fetich a wash. This applies to the guardian.

(9) To lie down on the stomach and drink from a well. To lie on the stomach is called mihohoka. The same expression is used about a man who is dying, and especially about children born on an evil day, since they are drowned by being placed face down in water. Warriors must
not, therefore, take this position when drinking, but they may without
danger drink from their hands or a cup.

(10) To drink running water (rano mivalana). This means some-
thing which disappears and never returns, and the same might happen
to warriors.

It is a firm belief that the fetich loses its sacredness (very hasina)
and power if any of these taboos are broken. The above-mentioned
rules are so strict and exact that it is usually an easy task for the witch-
doctor to find the cause of a defeat, or of the death of a warrior. One
of the rules has been broken.

Here we face the question about how to make the sacredness return.
For this they use two things, which have already been mentioned:
the bush which is called “The fetich for taboo” (Ny ody fady), or
“Not taboo” (Tsy fady), and silver-water. The piece of wood is
ground on a whetstone, and the powder is mixed with the silver water.
In this the fetich is washed and in this way its power will be restored.

“The Wild-boar” is used not only as a gun-fetich (ody basy) but
also for the healing of sick people. If, however, the sick person has
been in the habit of eating pig, the fetich is of no avail. If the sick person
does not eat pig’s meat and the fetich heals him, the wild boar will
all the same turn against him and kill him if he should later happen to
taste pig’s meat or eat food containing pig’s fat.

The “Wild-boar” taboos must not only be kept by the one who
preserves them, but by his servants and labourers as well, and his
children and descendants. If they break them, they will suffer from
leprosy, it is said.

“Lost village” (Verivohitra)
This is used when a person, usually impelled by jealousy, wishes to chase
another out of the village. In a “triangle” situation, when one party
wants to hinder marriage and obtain the girl by underhand means,
he uses the fetich “Lost village” to chase her fiancé away from the
place and render him absolutely homeless.

It is made of 12 different kinds of wood from which pegs are
whittled and threaded on to a string in such a way that they form a
chain. These twelve consist of:
1. "The one who has the courage to put obstacles in the way at night" (*Sahialimibahana*). This will be in the way of the man, so that he will have no way to go to his daily work.

2. "A tree taken by the stream" (*Hazolasandrano*). Just like a log drifting down the river, is he compelled to go away, however far it might be.

3. "In a row" (*Fisesy*) the enemies will have to retreat one after another.

4. "A tree alone" (*Hazotokana*) is the name of a little bush with very hard wood (*Vernonia*). From the poisonous leaves they make a sort of tea, which is used as a vermifuge. Here it means that the man must live alone and not in the big "forest" of relatives and friends.

5. "He who rapaciously removes" (*Kiripika*, or *Kiripidahy*) is a little bush. In order to explain the use of this kind of wood, the active form of the verb is used, *maniripika*: to force one away from the place.

6. "A tree in a deserted village" (*Hazoantananahaolo*). Old house-sites are detested, and people do not go there, because they are taboo places. Charms are made from things growing there, and their special ability is to drive people from house and ground.

7. "The thing which makes it dim" (*Ramanjavona*). Even if a man gets hold of a special *ody* to help him to remain at his home place, it will all be useless, as this thing will weaken and make dim the hope of any help.

8. "Wrangling" (*Fandirana*) is the name of a bush (*Weinmannia*), but it means also quarrelling and disagreement. This kind of wood is supposed to create disagreement between the couple, whether they are engaged only, or even married, so that the unhappy and aggressive third one may get her.

9. "Broom" (*Kifafambohitra*) is a little bush from which they make brooms. To sweep is in Malagasy *mamafa*, from the root *fafa*, the same as the root of *kifafa*: broom. He shall be swept away and out of the house and the village, as the proverb says: "It is swept from the sacred north-eastern corner and right down to the fowl-corner (the north-western corner) (*Fafana hatrao an-jorona firarazana, ka tonga any an-joron'akoho*), and this means that his house will be quite empty and deserted.
10. “Compelled” (Tomenjy). He is compelled to flee from his home.
11. “The tree which throws away” (Hazomanary). This will cause
the man to throw away his belongings and give up relatives and friends.
12. “The tree which is struck” (Hazodlavoa). He must live like the
lepers, alone in the hills.

The initiation ceremony is conducted thus: the chain is rubbed
with suet from wild dogs. When the witch-doctor swings the fetich
over the censer, he says: “Master lost village! Hear us! A man is now
your adversary. Get rid of him! (The name is mentioned). Force him
to leave this place and to go to the place you have determined. His
place is not here any more; it is far away, because you do not love
your enemy. Chase him so that he leaves soon!” (Mandrenesa! Ry
Verivohitra! Olona mandrafy anao isao, ka esory izy hiala ho any
amin’ny tany izay voatononao halehany. Fa tsy taniny eto, fa any no
azy, fa tsy tiana ny fahavalonao. Roahy izy hiala faingana!).

There are several taboos for this fetich and for those using it:
(11) To sit on a stone or a ledge of naked rock, as this means immo-
bility, solid ground. To stay there would be contrary to the purpose
of the fetich, which is to make the ground of the village and of the
house uncertain and unsafe to the person who is not wanted.
(12) To drink stagnant water. The aim is to get people away from
the place, just like the water which runs away and disappears. The
owner of the fetich must drink only running water.
(13) To eat burnt rice sticking to the bottom of a cooking pot.
The rice sticks to the pot, but the aim of the fetich is to break
the youth away from his fiancée, or the man from his wife, in order that
the fanatical rival can get her.

This fetich is also used by robbers before carrying out their raid,
when they want to make the inhabitants of the village uncertain and
afraid. The taboos mentioned above must be observed by the robbers
as well. In addition to these there are two more for robbers:
(14) To dream about blood. This would mean that they themselves
would be wounded or even killed by the inhabitants.
(15) In the same category is the dreaming about something green,
green plants or green plantation. Green stands for life, and this he
will interpret as his own, which then constantly will be in danger of
being taken. Even if a band of robbers has travelled for several days in
order to plunder a place, and one of them dreams about blood or something green, they will have to give up all their plans and return to their homes.

Fetich for thieves and robbers
This is called Mandrobaka, which means to plunder, seize by force, and like other fetiches of this kind it is made up of a number of wooden pegs and other objects. Those who have this fetich must observe the following restrictions:

(16) They must not eat anything which has been conquered, for example, a cock which has been defeated in a cock-fight, or an ox which has fallen in a bull-fight. These people want victory and gain.

(17) They must not eat hedge-hog. This cowardly animal only rolls itself in a ball and puts up no fight.

(18) When they go out to steal or plunder, they must not remove anything which is in their way. If it is an animal, small or large, it cannot be killed. If a herd of cattle blocks the road, they must go round the cattle and not frighten them so that they move off the road. The meaning is that whatever is found on the road, whether it be branches or fencing, or animals, they are all there in order to block the road, so that the pursuers shall not catch up with them when they flee with their booty.

The poison-fetich
This is called Raiboboka, "He who is the origin of swelling". It is a mixture of different strong kinds of poison. It is also called "Aching" or "Pain in the body" (Fangotsohana). Those who make use of this are the following:

Robbers and assassins.
Those who usually fight with their fists (mpanao totohondry).
Those who fight by kicking (mpanao dia manga).

It is also used:
in bull-fights where the big bulls with sharp horns fight each other, in bull-fights where one man fights with a bull, in cock-fights.
The fetich is made of the following:

1. A scorpion (**maingoka**).

2—3. Two kinds of poisonous spiders. One is grey and is called **Matahora**, which is also the imperative form of **matahotra**: to fear, i.e. "Fear!" The other one has red spots on its hindpart, which is even indicated in its name (**Halamenavody**) (**Latrodectus mena vody**).

4. A poison-beetle called **Voamitohy**, which means "He is continuously hit".

5. A water-insect called **Tsingala**. It is said that if the cattle get these into the stomach when drinking water, they will die. The witch-doctors have no remedies against this disease.

6. A hornet, **Fangaraka**.

In addition to these 6 insects there are 7 kinds of trees and plants:

1. The **Agy**-bush. This plant has poisonous nettle-hairs on the leaves. It burns and inflames the skin.

2. **Avaotra**. This is climbing-plant with sharp thorns which are poisonous (**Smilax Kraussian**a). Among the Betsimisaraka people it is called "The evil spirit’s trap" (**Fandrihibodisy**).

3. The Mysore thorn called "The cattle do not get over" (**Tsya afakomby**) (**Caesalpinia sepiaria**). It is common to use this bush with its long thorns as a fence around the plantation, thus keeping the cattle away. It may also be planted as a hedgerow.

4. **Raiketa** (**Opuntia ferox**) is a kind of cactus with long thorns.

5. **Menjy** is a bush with poisonous roots.

6. **Kalakele** is a bush with poisonous berries and roots.

7. **Vahotra** is a poisonous liane. Besides being the name of the kind of liane, it also means lashing, referring to the binding of cattle which are going to be slaughtered. In bull-fights, for instance, this fetich will "bind" the enemy.

Twigs from each of these things are rubbed on a whetstone, and all the wood powder is mixed together. The other ingredients are Cayenne pepper (**Capsicum annuum**) and home-made liquor. Of all these things a thin porridge is made, and the poisonous insects are then mixed into it. Then the whole concoction is put into an ox-horn. **(19)** The horn, however, must not be taken from an ox which has been slaughtered at a burial.
During the initiation ceremony the witch-doctor crouches on all fours in front of the horn and speaks with words which are filled with hatred and revenge. The main content of the initiation prayer (vavaka fanemboka) is: “Raiboboka! Hear me! I pray to thee. Thou art the one who can make things to swell when thou woundest and smitest. May the wounds become inflamed and suppurate. Destroy! Destroy! Kill! Because thou art mighty, and those whom thou smitest will die, and those thou dost not smite, will have to tremble before thee. The one who is touched by thee will be poisoned. Let the poison penetrate right through his body. Thou canst see our enemy, that he mocketh at thee and despiseth thee and saith that thou hast no power, that thou art a wind only. Exhibit thy power, and let him feel it through swelling and pains in his whole body.”

Then the horn is smoked with incense, which is called ramy, from a gamboge tree of the same name. The smoke has a pungent smell. It is this incense which is generally used for the smoking of war- and witch-fetiches. The more “peaceful” fetiches are smoked with another kind called “resin from the fragrant tree” (ditinkazo mantra), which has a more pleasant aroma.

The uses of this ointment or porridge differ a little. In most cases it is smeared on the spears and bullets of the robbers, on the horns of the game-bulls, and on the spurs of the game-cocks. But at the same time the poison-horn plays its part in the fight, as an active and aggressive being.

Those who make use of this fetich have definite taboos:

(20) They must not eat meat which has been roasted on the spit. If they do, they themselves will run the risk of being spitted.

(21) They must not eat the kidney of any slaughtered animal. Kidney is called voa, which also means to be hit.

(22) They must not kill any animal which is represented in the fetich.

Thus there are 6 different animal-taboos which are closely connected to this fetich. They are, therefore, taboo not first and foremost because they are poisonous in themselves, but because they have the ability to destroy and kill. The Natives certainly do not overlook the natural poison in animals and plants. Many of them even have a good knowledge of the different kinds of poison and their effects. They are also very careful not to come into contact with them. However they do
not first and foremost look upon them as isolated means of destroying. A poisonous spider can kill with its bite, but it is not exclusively the poisonous bite that kills. It is the whole animal that acts, and it kills according to its desire and nature. This murderous nature reveals itself in a determined will, and it is as such it is used in this fetich. It is believed to co-operate with the man who fights, and with its fatal nature it will kill his adversary. To the fetich worshipper, therefore, there is nothing like a pure, medical poison. That is just an expression, and without ceremonial exorcism and initiation performed by an able witch-doctor, the animal- or plant-poison will have no effect whatsoever as a charm. All the things in the sacred ox-horn are conscious beings, with wills of their own, which appear on the fighting ground and stand by the owner in good times and bad. It would therefore be unthinkable to him to kill any of the animals represented in his fetich, as they are his fellow-conspirators.

"The decomposed Toloho-bird" (Tolohoraraka)

This is a witch fetich.

The witch makes use of the following:

1. The Toloho-bird (see ch. V, no. 87). When this bird is roasted its flesh decomposes quickly and falls away from the bones. During the illness of the victim the purpose is that the same will happen to him: he will rot alive.

2. The slough of a snake (ofom-bibilava). The skin of the sick one will fall off, like the snake casting its slough.

3. Tails from 7 snakes of a kind called "the water’s master" (rambony fito ny Tompondrano). This snake lives in brooks and rivers. It is a common belief that it eats people. (23) As a taboo animal it is very much feared, and nobody kills it. The intention with the 7 tails is that the one who is going to be bewitched shall often meet this animal and thus be so frightened that his soul will leave him for good (lasa ambiroa). This will first cause illness and then death. A body cannot live for a long time without a soul, the Natives say with conviction.

4. Tails from 7 Marolongy snakes. The direct meaning of the name is "the one who has many sharp teeth, spikes." It is a small snake
which lives on the ground, especially near ant-hills. (24) It is a taboo-animal. The 7 tails are cut into small pieces and mixed with the kidney of a slaughtered animal. As mentioned above, kidney is called *voa*, which again means “to be hit by something evil”. The intention here is the same as mentioned in no. 23.

5. Seven withered leaves from the *Voara*-tree. This is a kind of wild fig-tree with reddish fruit. Only fallen leaves are used. The active form of the verb which is used to explain the meaning is *mivoara*, and the root of this verb is the same as the name of the tree. *Mivoara* means to peel off, to strip off. The meaning is clear: the skin of the sick one shall fall off like the 7 withered leaves.

6. Ants which are killed at the entrance to the ant-hill (*vitsika vonoina eo am-bava-lavany*). The ant-hill symbolises the house, the home, the domestic circle. It is in the middle of this safety and enjoyment that the victim shall be killed, so as to make the loss as painful as possible.

7. Soil from the foot-prints (*rao-dia*) of the one who is going to be bewitched, and from the spot where he has spat and where he has made water. This soil is made into a dough. The witch crushes the bones of the *Toloho*-bird, and the crushed bones together with the decomposed flesh are kneaded into the soil-dough. The same is done with the snake-tails, the leaves and the ants. At night she takes this cake along to the grave of a witch. Witches have single graves as they have no right to any family tomb. In the grave she buries the cake with crying and lamentation. She seeks contact with her dead “colleague”, and fanatically and wildly she prays: “Take him! Fetch him! Hear me, thou who art buried here. It is I, can you hear. It is I! (She mentions her own name.) Throttle him! Throttle him quickly! Because he hath already come to thee here in the grave. He hath already become a spirit (*angatra*). At sunset thou catchest up even with those thou canst not see. Fetch him, who hath already come to thee”.

When she has learned that he really is ill, she returns to the grave in the middle of the night and prays: “Hear me, thou decomposed *Toloho*-bird, let his flesh rot and fall off, crush his bones, cut his tongue off, tear out his stomach and all that is in him, strip off his skin from the head to his feet. Hear me, because thou art the great, burning fire, which cannot be quenched. Those who try to quench thee will
burn themselves. Kill! kill! kill! because now many wild animals have come here to consume him. Kill his relatives as well when he hath passed away.” The wild animals she thinks of are the wild cat and the night-birds.

Immediately after this she goes to his house, taking along poles for the making of a stretcher. The points of the poles, which are called “the head”, (*ny lohany*), she smears with the contents of the stomach of a slaughtered animal (*taimboraka*). The poles indicate his certain death, followed by the slaughtering of burial cattle. After this she beats the wall with her fist or kicks it seven times.

When the sick one moans and wails, she does the same outside his house, so that both he and the others can hear it. Just before going home, she cuts the tongue off a living frog and buries the animal next to the wall, and as close as possible to the sick man’s head. When the frog is dead, the man will also be dead.

The following actions are taboo to the witch:

(25) To throw lumps of red soil. When the red colour is used by the witches, it does not stand for honour, like the king’s colour, but it means death. If a witch throws red soil, she will bring death on herself.

(26) To pull out ferns. These plants are called *Ampanga*, but the name of it has the meaning “to accuse” as well, and thus the witch, by pulling out this plant, will run the risk of being accused and sentenced by the village council.

(27) To eat meat from the neck of a slaughtered animal, which is called “meat which turns round” (*fitodihan-kena*).

(28) To turn her head to look towards certain things or persons. This is called *mitodika*, from which we get the verbal noun *fitodihana*. By observing this taboo the witch will prevent the disaster meant for others from turning against herself.

(29) To step on, or come near to a grave from which corpses have been removed (*fasan-nangalam-paty*). It is her aim to get people into the grave, and not out of it. The more she can get, the more satisfied she is.

(30) According to the traditional laws of unanimity in a Malagasy village, bewitching is prohibited (*Fady ny mamosavy*), as it works against the elementary social principles. In spite of this, bewitching occurs again and again. If a European wishes to understand the place
of these antisocial and strange individuals in the society, he will have to study the spiritual and moral conditions of the village. As in most communities the peaceful outward appearance of a Malagasy village often conceals the enmities, jealousies, intrigues, and slanders that exist below the surface. The existence of these evil elements must be explained, and what could be more simple than to point to the activities of the witches as a primary cause of the presence of something wrong in the life of the village? The men and women are going about their work and keeping the taboos. They deserve prosperity and internal peace — but there is always some trouble. The simplest way of solving the puzzle is to "rub off the dirt", as it were, on the witches. Sometimes the suspicion may be unfounded, but it may also be justified, as the witches not only make use of terrifying methods and symbolism, but even kill directly, using poisons from plants, fruits and roots. But whichever is the case, the witch plays the role of scapegoat, the one on which the blame for unaccountable misfortunes is thrown. In this way she becomes "the dregs of the village" (faikan-tanàna). Taking this broad view of the society the witches become a necessary evil, who against their own will, and in spite of their antisocial attitude, in a way play a necessary part in the life of the community. Without them the evil and the destructive powers in the social life would not have any outlet. Thus they are, strange as it may sound, involuntarily serving their community.

The lightning fetish

The witch-doctor makes this fetish in order to acquire the ability to make use of the lightning, especially as a weapon against those who do not believe in him or who despise him. With this fetish he will also be able to call down rain in the spring and the summer. An example of the lightning fetish is one called Valohelatra, which is interpreted in two ways. Valo means 8, and helatra means lightning. Thus Valohelatra means "The 8 flashes of lightning". This composition is quite understandable, because the fetish consists of 8 parts, each of which serves a means of causing the lightning to strike down. According to the number-symbolism, 8 is the symbol of an enemy (fahavalo), and
this is exactly what it means according to the eighth row of the sikidy-
divination.

We find the other interpretation in the expression mivalom-baratra, which means “to ask the lightning for forgiveness.” Varatra also means lightning which strikes down. The root of the verb mivalo is similar to the word for 8, but otherwise it is an independent word. “To ask the lightning’s forgiveness” points to their custom of lifting up their hands when there is thunder and lightning, and promising to lead better lives¹. Thus mivalom-baratra means to change one’s exterior without meaning it seriously. When the storm is over, people are as they used to be. It is an outer show of piety, which does not correspond with the daily nature of man.

The fetich consists of the following:

1. Wood-powder from a bush called “Annihilated by the powerful one” (Lanimahe’ry). This is mixed with soil from a place which has been struck by lightning. The intention is that the lightning shall be so strong that it will strike with certainty those who “are not loved”.

2. A tree which has been split by lightning (Hazovakimbaratra), and two stones which have been broken by lightning. The witch-
doctor knocks the two stones on each other, and makes use of the one which breaks. Powder from this stone is then mixed with the powder from the cloven tree. The idea is that all the evil-minded people shall be split by lightning.

3. Powder from a decayed, rotten tree (Hazovovohina).

4. Powder from a tree with a broken crown (Hazofongodoha). Here the intention is that the lightning shall strike undesirable people on their heads and reduce them to powder.

5. “Tears which cause storm-clouds to gather” (Ranomasompanakodrahona). These are drops under the lid of a steaming pot (ranomasom-
pandrakotra). The soot-black lid and the steam-drops are the dark and stormy sky and the heavy rain which follows the flash of lightning. At the same time the drops symbolize the crying and the tears of those who mourn over the lightning’s prey.

6. The slushy soil from the outlet of a quagmire, where the ground quakes and sways (Vavahona mangovitra indrindra). People shall
tremble in fear, like the swaying mire, when the witch-doctor makes use of this means.

7. The tail of the water-snake, "The Master of the water" (Tompo-
ndraho).

8. The tail of the snake "The Master of the earth" (Tompontany). Ordinary people never dare to cut off the tail of this snake, because then they will die, it is said. The witch-doctor, however, who makes this fetich, has courage to do it, as he has power which others have not got.

The powder from each of these 8 things is mixed with sand from the siki\texttext{dy} divination, and 8 tiny bags are filled with the mixture. These again are put into a soot-black pot, which is held over water with the bottom upwards, or "on the stomach" (ahohoka) as it is expressed by the Natives. The om\texttext{biasa} uses one of his hands to keep the things in the right place. The black pot is now the black, stormy sky. By this act he will connect the things with the sky and thus get power over the lightning and the pouring rain. The two snake-tails give him additional power, by making him the master of the water and the earth.

After this he ties the 8 small bags around an ox-horn which is about 6 inches long and is taken from an ox killed for the occasion. The top part of this horn is hollowed out, but unlike most of the horn-fetiches nothing is put into it.

The decoration of the horn is very important. It consists of strings of beads of different colours, which are tied round the horn. Their main purpose is to heal those whom the witch-doctor has struck half-dead with lightning.

1. The red agate-like beads which are called "The disaster has no power" (Tsileondoza).

2. "The beads which raise" (Vakamiarina) are shining, transparent glass beads. They will raise the one who has been struck by Valo-
helatra's lightning. This, however, they do only if the relatives of the struck one prostrate themselves before the witch-doctor and beg him for grace and forgiveness, praying that the one who has been struck may be raised to new life. If he does not bring these beads in time, the victim will die.
3. “Unwilling to be separated” (Malaimisaraka) is another bead decoration. The life of the one who has been struck by lightning will be unwilling to be separated from him, and he will become sound again.

4. “A thousand-fold happiness”, or directly translated “Thousands are coming” (Tongarivo), is a glass bead with different coloured stripes. In addition to good health, he will have luck in all his undertakings.

5. “The string of beads has three joints” (Vakanatetolotohizana) is Valohelatra’s best finery, “loin-cloth” (salakany), its honour and dignity, supplying it with strength, whether it be for the purpose of taking life or restoring life to the one who has been struck. The name means something coherent, a continuation of something which is either good or bad.

6. A ring (honkona). At the upper part of the horn, there is a metal ring, which is fastened to the horn with small nails. Instead of a ring one may also use thin, twined lace, which is lashed tightly, forming a band of about one inch in breadth. The ring is a symbol of something without end, something unbroken. In this connection it means that the life of the one who is rescued will be continually bound to him by these beads. Thus it is a means of gaining strength. At the same time the ring helps in keeping the power of the horn. This horn has its own special name, the horn that has no hole at the point (Tandroka tsy miloaka). If there were a hole there, the strength and power would inevitably run out from the sharp end of the horn and cause the death of people. The horn with its ingredients and finery is wrapped in a piece of blue silk material. When the right moment comes for the witch-doctor to use it, he unfolds the opening, and then the lightning will strike down.

The initiation prayer is thus: “Listen! Hear me! Thou, who hast power over disaster (1). Thou, who raisest up (2). Thou, who dost not separate a man from his life (3). Thou, a thousand-fold happiness (4). Thou, string of beads with three joints (5). Thou, ring of happiness (6). Do not linger, but come to-day. Thou art able to accomplish thy task to perfection. Thy prize is the big, angry oxen which butt into the soil, the undivided silk material, the undivided silver, the spears with red handles, the clean blue plate, and the red cock.”
The taboos of this fetich are:

(31) Food made of lungs, which are called havokavo-kena. The first part of the word is havokavoka, which means human lungs. With the added kena it means lungs from a slaughtered beast. From another quite different word the transitive verb mangavokavoka is formed. This means to beat, to flog. This similarity of words makes it taboo to the owner of this fetich to eat lungs, because then he would be flogged.

(32) Voa (kidney), which at the same time has the fateful meaning “to be struck by something painful or hard”.

(33) Roasted food which has “difficulty in breathing” (tono sempotra), like corncobs, roots, potatoes, meat roasted at the fireplace in such a way that the pieces are placed between all the three fire-stones at the same time, choking the draught. Then the fire will not be able to “breathe”, as all the entrances are blocked, and the food will become “out of breath” and indigestible, even dangerous to the health.

(34) To step over a soot-black pot. The lightning-fetich is meant to produce a black sky, and the pot is the stormy sky. Thus it becomes taboo. It is sacrilege to step over it, bringing the impurity and destruction of the transgression on the sacred fetich.

(35) The words varatra and helatra must not be used, as they are taboo-words. When there is lightning, therefore, one must only say that it is “mud” (fotaka), i.e. something harmless.

(36) It is prohibited to run when there is a thunderstorm, because one may run the risk that the lightning will pursue one.² (37) Furthermore it is prohibited to split bamboo for building purposes in a storm, as that has some similarity to lightning, which splits and splinters.

“The one who causes the rain to vanish”

This is one of the many different fetiches used in the service of native “meteorology”. It is called Ramanjavona, a word that may be divided into three parts. Ra is a prefix for persons and signifies dignity and reputation. Zavona is the light morning mist which disappears when the sun shines. At the same time it means light clouds. Manjavona means “there is mist”, but at the same time it means that the mist
lifts, disappears, so that there will be dry weather. *Ramanjwona*'s purpose is to remove rain and give dry weather. The fetich is used mostly in the autumn when the rice is being cut and spread out for drying.

This fetich is made up of the following:

1. The *Arify*-bush. Its purpose is to lead the rainy clouds astray and make the air cool and clear, when the witch-doctor gives the order. As the explanation of this the word *manirifiry* is used, which means that the air is clear and cool. The root of this word is *firy*. Though this is quite a different word from *arify*, it is used in metathesis, a method which is occasionally made use of when a word is used as an allusion to an expression or is applied in a figurative or symbolic way.

2. Wet sand (*fasika anaty rano*). This sand is taken from under water or from a river-bed, and is dried in a pot until all moisture has left it. The intention is that the fog and the rain shall evaporate, and that the heat from the sun shall make the earth dry. The literal meaning is that the witch-doctor “roasts the sky” and strikes it with drought, so that it will not be able to produce rain.

3. A kind of grass called *Horona* (*Aristida adscensionis*). This is often used for thatching, and for firewood in places where that commodity is scarce. Just as the roof protects people from rain, so will this fetich form a roof over everything and everybody, so that the weather becomes good. *Horona* is the root in many verbal connections, having the meaning “to roll up” something. Here the fetich shall “roll up the clouds, as it has power over the sky.”

4. “The mouth of a chameleon” (*Vavantana*) is the name of a bush. The chameleon (*Tana*) is a taboo animal. There is an allusive verb, *mahatana*, the root of which exactly corresponds with the name of the chameleon (*Tana*). The meaning of the verb is “to be able to keep hold of something.” It is a characteristic of the chameleon that it holds on to what it has caught. This tree will keep the heavy rain-clouds from releasing the rain.

5. A bush called “Part of the plantation will remain dry” (*Tambohomainila*). This is a kind of mimosa (*Cassia mimosaïdes*), which drips thin resin from the branches during the dry season, like drops of rain. Outside the tree everything is dry. If the rain comes at harvest-
time, and the rice is spread out on the fields for drying, the rain will not reach the one who makes use of this fetich, but the fields of others only.

Before these things can be effective, they must be initiated with prayer and ritual. In this ceremony the 7 spears, red coral beads, and incense are used. The formula of the prayer is something like this: "Hear us! Hear us! Thou who canst lead the rainy clouds astray, thou who canst keep parts of the earth dry. Make the heavy, black clouds disappear, lead them astray, because they are thine enemy. It shall happen that the threat ahead will stop on its way, the clouds in the sky will not press down, and the horizon on both sides of the clouds will not be narrow. Let it be a big opening, so that the clouds can disappear. Hear me! Listen to my cries! See, here are the 7 spears and the precious coral beads. They are valuable things which are used in order to make the fetich powerful (saram-panafody sarobidy). Chase the rain away, stop it, because thou hast the ability to think and understand. Thou canst bind the sky, thou canst take the rain away." After the prayer the witch-doctor whistles some flute-like tunes, which are intended to have the effect of making strong winds, driving the rainy clouds away. All the 5 objects are then smoked in resin and put into a nest of baskets, which is kept under the roof in the north-eastern corner of the witch-doctor's hut.

(38) He must by all means ensure that no water is spilled in the fireplace. (39) He must not drink water, but be satisfied with the water which is in the food. (40) Furthermore he must not walk in water, wade across rivers or brooks or walk in a quagmire. (41) It is also taboo to wash his head. Those taboos do not concern the witch-doctor only, but all in the village who ask for his assistance. If he or any of the others break any of these taboos, there will be rain. It is only at the critical time when the rice is gathered in, however, that these taboos are in force.

The crocodile-lock (Fanidimamba)

It is a little piece of wood which has been carved into the shape of a crocodile, and put into the river. This is meant to protect people against crocodiles.
9. Woman of Bara making mats

10. Burial houses of the Antaimoro
11 a. Fetiches and charms from Sakalava

11 b. Fetiches and charms from Sakalava

11 c. Various fetiches. Below, an omhiasa's rod
(42) When they cross dangerous fords in a river boat, they must not keep their mouths open (*tsy misoka-bava*), but clench the teeth firmly together. An open mouth suggests the gaping jaws of a crocodile.

(43) They must not eat food which has been prepared by the light of the torch (*hanina tsilovina*). Because of this light, the food will be seen by the animals from the dirty, grey water, so that they can find those who cross the ford.

(44) It is forbidden to eat meat from cattle which have been mauled by crocodiles and thus have had to be slaughtered (*hen-omby noraisin’ny mamba*).

When they cross the ford, (45) they must not touch the water with any iron, as this will challenge the crocodiles. Once when I crossed a ferry over the Manambondro river⁵, I saw a woman take a cork out of a bottle at the crossing. (46) A corked bottle means that one will not be able to escape the crocodiles.

(47) In the same way nobody crossing the river must have clothes of red material, as this would challenge the crocodiles.

(48) To speak during the crossing in a river boat is not customary. This is easily understood, as it is far from a pleasure to cross these broad rivers in the ramshackle boats, knowing that these cunning reptiles, 18 to 24 feet long, are lurking in the water.

If those who have this lock-fetich hold firmly to these rules, they will not be touched by the crocodiles. They will be taboo-men to the reptiles. There is a kind of mutual understanding between the inhabitants of the riverside village and the river crocodiles. The village pledges itself to observe the taboos, and the crocodiles undertake not to hurt the people. If, however, the people break the taboos, the animals have the right to take the people who cross the river or fetch water at the river bank. Then an atonement must be made, and the witch-doctor must ask the animals for forgiveness, and also sacrifice a domestic animal to the crocodiles. This will then be led to the water and taken by the reptiles. If, on the other hand, a crocodile has taken a goose in spite of people keeping the taboos, a regular ceremony will take place at the river bank. The village chief lures a crocodile to the surface of the water, which is quite possible, as the animals are intelligent and know the people of the place very well. Then he scolds it terribly and accuses it of having broken the
contract and gives it a good warning. He beats the water with a rod, whilst the animal quietly disappears into the depths. In other places they kill one of the crocodiles because they have “broken the river-taboo”. This fetich is, however, of a local nature. It does not concern all rivers and streams in the Island. With the exception of the above-mentioned case, it is prohibited to kill crocodiles.

The locust fetich

One of the most terrible disasters that can befall a farmer is the descent of the greyish-brown cloud of locusts on the plantation at sunset. The next morning the field looks as if it has been burnt off. When the ombiasa observes these clouds, he tries to exorcise them with a fetich which is made of seven kinds of wood:

1. “Hindering thousands” (Miaroarivo), i.e. thousands of locusts from descending on the rice-field.
2. “Preventing disaster” (Miaroloza).
3. “Dead” (Pina). When the ombiasa points to the cloud of locusts with this kind of wood they will be powerless.
4. “Not able to come in a mass” (Tsirongatra).
5. “The one that warps”, i.e. the course of the cloud will be turned (Ramivaona).
6. “Causing confusion” (Fanolehana).
7. “Causing to disappear” (Ramanjavona). This is not to be mistaken for the fetich of the same name (p. 208).

When making the fetich the ombiasa bites a stone seven times, addressing himself to the locusts with the words: “You locusts will have to bite seven stones!” After this he consecrates it with the following prayer: “Lord, hear me! I am going to make a locust fetich. When they come from South, send a strong wind from North, if they come from East, send a strong wind from West to drive them away. Let them fly to the places where there are no rice-fields. Let them not discover our cultivated land, make the rice-plants as bitter as the Vahona aloe.” The container of this fetich is often an ox-horn filled with a paste, and the seven pegs are put into it.

(49) During the exorcism he holds the fetich up against the locusts, and his wife and all the other women must keep away from the place,
because they represent weakness. In this exciting and critical situation manly courage and manly power only can be of any use. Another reason for not letting his wife be in the neighbourhood is the fact that it is the women’s job to collect the locusts into big heaps for food. But the main intention is quite the opposite, to drive the disastrous cloud away.

(50) During the exorcism the witch-doctor must not stand still for a single moment, as that would cause the swarm of locusts to stop their flight and descend just there. He must keep on running to and fro. (51) Whilst he is busy fighting against these millions of capricious little insects, he must be unclad. By performing absolutely naked, he shows that “the earth is naked”. Nothing grows on it, and thus there is no reason for the locusts to descend. (52) He must not keep his mouth open, as that would cause the animals to open their jaws in order to eat all the crops. (53) Neither he nor any other of the inhabitants of the village may take any locusts into the village at this time. That would be equal to the custom of taking baskets full of locusts for food. In the morning the locusts do not ascend before the grass is dry. Whilst there is still dew, they set the grass on fire, and the wings are burnt off. Then the locusts are collected into big baskets.

(54) During the locust-time in summer, the witch-doctor must not associate with women. (55) Certain witch-doctors are even forbidden to associate with their own wives at this critical time. Strict abstention makes them stronger in the fight against evil powers. It is a distinctive trait of witch-doctors that they abstain strictly when they are facing exceptionally difficult tasks.

(56) He must not break or pull out any stalk of grass. The breaking and pulling out of what is growing is equivalent to the depredations of the locusts, and thus it will weaken the charm’s ability to keep them away.

“The fetich which makes the burden light” (*Odymahamaivana-entana*)

This fetich is composed of the following:

1. A bush of light wood called *Fanivana*.
2. Dry leaves which peel off old banana stems (*Raty*). They are very light.
3. Dust and particles which have been sucked high up in the air by a whirlwind (*zavatra entin’ny tadio*).

4. A water-plant with large, flat leaves which float on the water. It is called *Tsinkafonkafona (Pistia)*, and it resembles the water-lily. These four things aim at making the burdens light. Knowing that the people have to carry everything that is to be transported, on the head or on carrying poles, and often to far places, we can easily understand their desire to find means which can lighten their burdens.

This fetish is initiated by the sacrificing of a red cock and by the sprinkling of silver-water. The four objects are made into a little parcel, which the carriers take with them on their journeys. The initiator says: “Hear, thou who canst make the burden light. This is about heavy burdens. Make them light, do not let them press down, because thou wilt assist me. Thou seest that I am alone. Make them light. Thou art powerful (*mahery*) and sacred (*masina*). Thou canst make the heavy light, but I am little and miserable (*kely sady osa*). Help then, because thou art the one I am hoping for.”

To this fetish apply three important taboos:

(57) It must not be touched by women.

(58) Women must not touch the burdens carried by the man, because that will immediately make them heavy.

(59) They must not step over a burden which he has put down in a village where he is going to stay over-night. That would increase the weight and take away the power of the fetish. These taboos must be seen in connection with the Malagasy opinion about woman as something weak.

The love-fetish (*Odifitia*)

This is used by both men and women. Its purpose is to attract the one with whom one is in love, whether married or not. It is also called “Unwilling to be divorced” (*Malaimisaraka*) and it must not be confused with the glass bead of the same name. This fetish is composed of resin, sticky leaves from a bush, and certain tough, strong lianes which grow into each other, like the strands of a thick rope. The lianes are rubbed on a whetstone to a powder, which together with the other things is made into a black pomade which is smeared on to the
forehead, on the palms of the hands and under the feet. It is said that
it “makes people mad with desire” (mahadala filana). A boy makes
use of it when the girl’s parents refuse her permission to marry him.
It might also be a woman who wants to take another woman’s husband.
When the man observes the mark on her forehead, he becomes quite
crazy about her, and when she touches him with her pomaded hands,
he can never get away from her. Her feet will always lead her to him.
People are very much afraid of this fetish, as it will lead to enmity,
breaking up of homes and marriages, and even aims at getting rid of
the person who is in the way. (60) To those who have found each other
by means of this fetish, and live together, it is taboo to eat meat which
is roasted all through (tono tanteraka). Then it has been roasted on
the spit for so long that there is nothing left of the gravy, and this
symbolizes that there is no love left. (61) The other taboo is to lie
back to back. That is a sign of enmity and mutual displeasure. Like
other fetiches it is initiated by the ombiasa.

“The fetish that takes away wrong-doing to the taboo” (Ody ota fady).

If one has broken the fetish taboo, the fetish must be purified and
made sacred again. The following are then used:
1. A bush which is called “fetich for taboo” (Ody fady).
2. Silver.
3. A kind of ground fungus (Holatafa).
4. A kind of grass called Tsitohintohina (Equisetum ramosissimum).
The separate joints of the stalk of grass are comparatively large, and
the stalk with its joints resembles a leg or an arm out of joint. In the
treatment of broken arms or legs this is often used. A soup is made of
the grass and drunk by the one who has broken his leg or arm.

The name of this grass has some similarity to tsitohitohy, which
means several joints linked together. The intention is to remove the
“sin” against the taboo. This meaning appears clearly from the
composition of the medicine as well. However, it does not exclude
another interpretation, which is also used, and which lies in the word
tsitohina. In Merina tohina means illness on account of food poisoning
(bewitched food). In the southern and western dialects it means “sin”
on account of taboo-transgressions. With the negative tsi it means
“Not illness, even from poisonous food”, or “Not wrong-doing”. In short, the grass is not only a means of healing broken bones, but also diseases, and it cleanses taboo-transgressions.

5. A diminutive silver ox (*ombilahy volafotsy*) which is home-made.

6. Two red coral beads, of which one is husband and the other wife (*voahangy mivady*).

The one who has suffered misfortune or has become ill, confesses his “sin” against the fetish which he has offended, saying: “It was not clear to me that it was a crime against the taboo. I humbly ask for forgiveness, and now I shall bathe thee in silver-water. Here is a red cock which crew just now. Thou art *Andriamanitra*; therefore do not punish me for this fault which I have committed. Thine honour, dignity and power will now return. Do not kill me.” After breaking the fetish taboo, the body is usually afflicted with boils, and this illness may debilitate the sufferer completely. He can only be healed when the fetish is bathed in the sacred water. The pieces of silver, the silver ox, wood-powder from the different pieces of wood, the mushroom and the coral beads are put into a bluish-black basin with clean water. The fetish is then strung up in the north-eastern corner and is sprinkled with water whilst the witch-docter says: “We pray to thee, because thou art *Andriamanitra*. He did not commit the offence on purpose but inadvertently (*Nanota fady tsy nahy*). We have come here to give thee a bath. Do not be angry, and do not take vengeance, because thou art *Andriamanitra*, who art lenient when sacrifices are being made. Here are the red cock, the silver, the coral beads with which we bathe thee. Receive these things.” This is a purification of the fetish from the impurity of the taboo-transgression, and a restoration of its power and sacredness. “When this is done, the ill one will recover,” it is said. This purification with the “Fetish which takes away wrong-doing to the taboo” is used for the many different fetiches.

The use of these powerful media in fetiches tells us a great deal about the relationship between a fetish and its owner. He acquires the power in 5 different ways:

1. By rubbing parts of his body with the pomade of water and wood-powder. It is said that when he does this, “the fetish sinks down into him” (*Miletika anatin’ny tena ny ody*).
2. By keeping it in his house.
3. By carrying it, either on a string round the neck or as an armlet or on a chain round the ankle.
4. By drinking water containing wood-powder or a silver coin.
5. By washing or bathing himself in the bath-water of the fetich.

Whether it be in the one way or the other, they are convinced that the power of the fetich flows through the man, and that its peculiar nature will be his. It not only strengthens his body, but its demoniac and possessive power will fully master his mind and thoughts. Thus the relationship becomes a firm belief and trust in the fetich and an alliance which embraces the whole personality of the owner. This alliance may take the form of an agreement or a contract, which is officially made with the witch-doctor. The plants and animals, however, which are used in the manufacturing of it, cooperate with the owner as long as he performs his duties and keeps the taboos. If he breaks the taboos, however, the poisonous animals and plants may turn against him and persecute him for the rest of his life. This is all clear to him when he acquires them. He actually pledges his own life in this contract. It is characteristic of the plants and animals which are used in the manufacture of fetiches that they represent the whole genus, not only the individual. All scorpions, for instance, take part in the undermining and the persecution of the owner of a poison fetich if he transgresses, and all crocodiles do the same if the owner of a crocodile-lock is unfaithful. All poisonous plants which are of the same nature as those used in the making of the substance in the ox-horn join in the revenge.

The daily care and tending of the objects consists of sacrificial gifts like honey and liquor, bathing them, rubbing them with ox-fat, burning incense to them, cleaning the house, seeing to it that nobody who might affect their power or bring uncleanness on them enters the house. Now and again the owner must take them out into the sunshine and have a walk with them, talk with them, and wake them up when they are going to be used for something special. The conversations take the form of ceremonial prayers.

The fetich-taboos do not stand opposed to the taboos which concern other sacred powers, like, for instance, the one about disgracing and mocking Andriamanitra, the Creator, and the taboos concerning
the ancestors. One might think that would be an implacable rivalry between these "almighty" fetiches and the world of gods. The fetich-worshipper, however, is not worried about any intolerance or exclusiveness. His opinion in this matter is that Andriamanitra (Andriananahary) is the Great Creator, with his own place and work. His own fetich has also its own place and its own fixed task. Each one is used where it is needed. Even though he worships this palpable thing, he remains a worshipper of Andriamanitra and his ancestors. It is all within his religious sphere of interest. A conflict of religious duty is, therefore, out of the question. In the idol-worship this tolerance is extended to the religious practices of others and of foreign peoples as well. An idol-worshipper would say: "It may be that other gods exist and that there are other things which can help, but for me there is this fetich only."

One of the things which make fetich-worship so popular and widespread is that it is a visible and palpable means of power, whilst the Creator is invisible and high up in the heaven. In an immediate need he is hard to contact, but the fetich is always at hand.

If we compare the taboos which have been presented in this chapter, we find that to a great extent they are personal, and expressions of the will. This is clearly stressed in the initiation ceremony of the fetich. It is a being with a mind and a will: "Thou hast no ears, but thou hearest, thou hast no eyes, but thou seest, thou hast ability and intelligence." It is addressed with a "thou" like a revered person. It is even raised to the status of a god (andriamanitra, sanahary) and given divine attributes. But each one of them has its defined and limited function. Their purpose and aim are always parallel to the personal interests and needs of the owner. They do not perform and act independently, but only as a willing tool in the hand of the owner, provided that the laws of their own life and sacred power are kept. The laws are expressed in the taboos. These again express exactly the nature of the fetich, its expressions of will and manifestation of its innate power.
CHAPTER XIII

Marriage taboos
and sexual restrictions

There are certain laws governing marriage and sexual intercourse that are observed throughout the Island. These laws are more or less the same in all tribes. The restrictions on sexual relations are of three kinds: the moral, the tribal and the social.

I. Moral restrictions:

According to tradition, sexual intercourse is prohibited between close relatives as follows:

(1) Mother and son (*ny reny sy ny zanany lahy*).
(2) Father and daughter (*ny ray sy ny zanany vavy*).
(3) The mother’s brother and his sister’s daughter, his niece (*anadahin-dreny sy ny zanak’anabaviny*).
(4) The father’s brother and his brother’s daughter, his niece (*rahalahin-dray sy ny zana-drahahinhy*).
(5) The mother’s sister and her sister’s son, her nephew (*rahabavin-dreny sy zana-drahavaviny*).
(6) The father’s sister and her brother’s son, her nephew (*anabavin-dray sy zanak-anadahy*).
(7) Brother and sister (of the same parents) (*mianadahy miray ray sy reny*).
(8) Brother and sister of the same father, but different mothers (*mianadahy miray ray, samy hafa reny*).
(9) Brother and sister of the same mother, but different fathers (*mianadahy miray reny, samy hafa ray*).
(10) Father’s father and son’s daughter (*raibe sy ny zafiny vavy*).
(11) Father’s mother and son’s son (*renibe sy ny zafiny lahy*).
(12) Mother’s father and daughter’s daughter (*raibe sy ny zafiny vacy*).

(13) Mother’s mother and daughter’s son (*renibe sy zafiny lahy*).

(14) Mother-in-law and son-in-law (*rafozambavy sy vinantolahy*).

(15) Father-in-law and daughter-in-law (*rafozandahy sy vinantomavavy*).

Male and female cousin cannot be translated into Malagasy, as they distinguish three kinds of cousins:

(16) A son and a daughter of two married brothers (*zanak'isy mirahalaha*).

(17) A son and a daughter of a brother and a sister (*zanak'isy mianadaha*).

(18) A son and a daughter of two sisters (*zanak'isy mirahavavy*).

The different categories of family relations listed above are as near as possible direct translations from Malagasy. Father, mother, son, daughter, etc. are used in the genetic sense, but the restrictions are extended to adoption and blood-brotherhood as well.

Adoption takes place in the village council or at an official ceremony by the village sacrificial pole. This is called “to raise up children” (*ny fananganan'anaka*).

(19) If a man who lives in monogamy wants to be a polygamist, he cannot do this without giving a sum of money or an ox to his principal wife. This is in order to restore her authority and dignity as “great-wife” (*vadibe*). On receiving this gift, however, she is bound to accept her husband’s additional wives.

(20) In the polygamous marriage the incestuous relationship between mother and son is extended to all the wives the father has had. When the father is dead, the son cannot marry his father’s second wife, even if she has not given birth to him, because she is his “little mother” (*renikely*). Such a marriage is said to be “turned upside down” (*mifotitra*), which means that the normal mother-son relationship has been turned upside down and becomes wife-husband, which is impossible.

Relationship may be summed up in two classes, the direct line and the collateral line. Intercourse is prohibited in direct line upwards and downwards, and furthermore it is prohibited between relatives belonging to the same line. In the collateral line, intercourse is prohib-
ited between brothers and sisters, uncles and nieces, aunts and nephews, and between cousins. This is extended to second-cousins as well, but not further, with the exception of some coastal tribes and the Bara tribe, where the relationship of the collateral line is followed as far back as can be found in the pedigree.

The severity of the restrictions on the two sexes is clearly reflected in some of the taboos. (21) Among the Antanosy people, a brother and sister, or cousins of different sexes, cannot step over each other’s mats, or (22) step over each other’s legs (Tsy mahazo mifandika tsihy na tongotra ny mpianadahy, na ny zanak’izy mirahavavy, na zanak’izy mirahalahy na zanak’izy mianadahy). This does not of course concern little children, but youth from adolescence and upwards, who have their own mats to lie on. The sister’s mat becomes inviolable to the brother to the same degree as her person, and vice versa. If her brother steps over her mat or sits on it, this shows the intimacy of married people, and it is identical with sexual intercourse.

(23) Furthermore, it is said in the above-mentioned tribe that those who belong to the same family have the same ancestors, and therefore cannot desire each other (Mpihavana iray fianakaviana, na iray razana tsy mahazo mifampilina). This taboo gives a comprehensive expression of the moral restrictions laid upon those who are closely related to each other.

(24) Among the Betsimisaraka a brother and a sister are not permitted to shake hands (Tsy mahazo mifandray tânana izy mianadahy)¹.

(25) Among the Antankarana a girl must not wash her brother’s loin-cloth or shorts (Fadin’ny anabav ny manasa ny salaka na ny kilotin’ny anadahiny)². (26) The sexual restrictions are reflected in many small actions, such as borrowing clothes from each other, borrowing a comb, sandals, a safety pin, and so on³. (27) The same rules are in force when two of different sex wish to go to the forest for firewood, for hunting, for fetching honey⁴, (28) or to market on a market day⁵. This mutual avoiding of the opposite sex regulates the sexual life of the inhabitants; it is one of the main principles of the social organisation of the village; a law which maintains sexual order and discipline in the community.

Although a marriage is not recognized by the French Colonial Administration without a certificate showing that the boy and girl
have reached 18 and 16 years respectively, according to Malagasy tradition, arrival at the age of puberty is considered to be the criterion of the proper age for marriage. Though this differs in each individual, on no occasion is reference made to the calendar. Both boys and girls may marry when they have reached the age of puberty, with the proviso in the case of the boys that they must be capable of earning a living for the couple.

The biological and social instincts naturally lead the young people’s desires towards marriage. The outer stimulus to marriage comes from the parents and relatives. These two factors together decide if the parties are mature and when the marriage should take place.

It is especially in the case of cousins (categories 16, 17, 18) that the question about marriage is complicated. And here the customs vary a little in the different tribes. A few examples will throw light on this matter, which is so vital to home and society. But then we shall first have to view it in a larger context, comprising incest and lifting of taboos with the attendant ceremonies, and the entering into a marriage.

The following example is taken from the Antanosy:

If the boy is in love with the girl, and his parents agree to the engagement, the boy’s mother goes to the girl’s parents in order to ask for her secretly. Often her parents agree to it. The boy’s mother says: "Our boy is in love with your girl, and I have come to inform you about this. I hope you agree." The girl’s parents reply: "We are grown-up people, and we know what to do in a case like this. It is all good, as our daughter and your son are our children. Your son will be received as our own child, and you may call our daughter your child. We are grateful that you have come to us to find a wife for your son. Just ask the girl if she is willing. If she is, everything is in order. If she is not willing, however, we cannot see any way out of it, as children are children, without common sense, and often with opinions different from the parents." Then the boy’s mother asks the girl if she is willing. If she says yes, it is in order. If she is unwilling, however, the parents try to persuade her to agree, when the boy’s mother has departed. They say: "Child, think this matter over carefully, because it is a fine offer. He will take care of you, as he has very good parents. And if it should happen that you start quarrelling, he will not beat you hard, he will never kill you or do you any harm, because he is
going to be your friend, just like your elder brother (zoky anadahinao)."
Sometimes the girl gives in when she has been spoken to by parents
and relatives. If the parents of the boy are rich, strong pressure may
be brought to bear on the girl. As soon as they are certain that she
accepts the offer, they send a reliable man to the boy’s parents, who
explains the matter, and now the proposal may start.

The boy, with his parents, uncles, aunts, a whole group of people,
visits the girl’s home on a day which is suitable for a proposal. If the
parents of the boy cannot be present, they send reliable substitutes to
take care of the matter. When at last they are in good spirits, and the
shyness is gone, a spokesman of the boy’s family says in a dignified
manner: “We have come here to ask for descendants from you”
(Tonga izahay, mangata-doria, mangata-tabiro). That is the theme of
his speech, which must be very well formed and spiced with proverbs,
leading the conversation in a pleasant manner to the main point of the
matter.

If the girl and her parents have not changed their minds during the
previous days, the reply will more or less be like this: “To whom
should we give our child if not to you, and which families should have
intermarriage if not our families, as we are all of the pure Antanosy
tribe. If the girl agrees, you are the first ones to whom she should be
given, and to nobody else.” The most difficult part of the proposal has
now come to an end, and the conversation becomes free and lively.
This conversation generally ends in reminiscences of the relationship
between the two families throughout several generations. In moments
like this the dear ancestors and past generations are felt to be present,
and the dead are united with the living by strong links. They also
find that there has been practically no conflict between the two fami-
lies in olden days, and all signs seem to augur that the new home will
be a happy one. More liquor is served, the friendly conversation
continues, and the two families are linked closer together as the party
goes on.

The next step is the marriage, which is held in the home of the girl.
This must be held on a day which the diviner has accepted as a lucky
day. The ceremony is called taha. It is obligatory, as the two are too
closely related, (cousins, children of two brothers, or of brother and
sister, but never of two sisters). The ceremony consists of two parts,
the ox-sacrifice (saotsy, saotra), and the marking of each other with pieces of living coal (mifanandra arim-belona, or arin-gelona).

The sacrifice is called taha troky, in Sakalava (Vezo), taha tsoke. Otherwise most tribes use the common expression ala fady, which means to take away taboo. Taha troky means to remove the taboo from the stomach, i.e. from the women. The sacrifice takes place at the eastern side of the house of the girl’s parents. The sacrificial animal is the fattest ox the boy can provide. The village chief is the priest. Three things are needed: cold water, the leaves from a plant called Tonga (exactly the same as the verb tonga: to come), and leaves from Seva (Buddleia Madagascariensis), which is used a great deal in herbal medicines. The Seva-plant is Zanahary’s (Andriananahary’s) plant as well.

The cold water is used to make the bridal couple cold. To be cold means to be healthy and without fever. To be hot means to be ill, and they think especially of malaria. The Tonga-plant will bring happiness and wealth to the new home. The tips of the Seva and Tonga leaves are dipped into cold water, and the priest sprinkles the eastern wall of the house on the outside. In the same way the sacrificial ox is sprinkled. This has already been brought to the spot and lies hog-tied at the eastern side of the house. The priest sprinkles water on the bride too, and then on all the others who are present. This is a very solemn ceremony. Quietness and dignity reign. They are all gathered in a large circle round the ox, and the priest turns towards the East and prays: “Andriananahary, far away, invisible, Creator of hands and feet! We call on thee first! Come here and be present! We are not able to manage this on our own, as men are only men. Our child Sana... (the son of such and such one) is going to marry.” Here he explains the relationship between the boy and the girl. “Thou loveth fertility. Grant that these two get boys who will become good planters; give them luck in their planting. If they get girls, give them the pleasure of carrying the little girls on their hips or on their backs. Bless them with good children. Bless their marriage and help them never to desire things which belong to others. Make them so happy that others will envy them, increase their prosperity and happiness. Here is thy child, the girl Sambo (daughter of so and so), who is going to be married to the boy we have mentioned. Give her children, so that it will not be
her fault if our family dies out. Give them children who can inherit the ancestral land, and who will not destroy it."

Then he calls on the dead of the family, from the oldest one right down to the last one who died. The names of the tombs where they have been buried are also mentioned. They are called on in order that they can be present, both to be witnesses and to have their share of the sacrificial meal. Furthermore they are prayed to give happiness, blessings, children and riches. The priest uses grand expressions when mentioning the ancestors’ fame. "Ye have given birth to us, ye have struggled and worked hard for us. Ye are the ones to be thanked for this great gathering assembled here to-day, and for our health and prosperity."

The third group addressed by the priest are the evil powers and the people of evil spirit. He makes an exorcism and shouts: "Make all that is bitter and evil to die, to be powerless. Destroy the witches whether they be in the North or in the South, the East or the West, let Zanahary’s eye see them (destroy them) and kill them wherever they go, and also those who do not love their neighbour."

Then they cut the throat of the ox. The blood is gathered into a pumpkin gourd and poured onto a fire which has been made up in the meantime. The blood sizzles and seethes in the fire, which turns into black pieces of charcoal. They are called "living coals" (arim-belo). If the boy is not wealthy, the fire may be killed by the blood from a red cock. The pieces of charcoal are then rubbed on a flat whetstone. The boy’s parents take the black coal-dust and rub a black speck on his forehead, and one on each of his temples, especially where one can see the beating of the pulse. The parents of the girl do the same thing with their daughter. After this the bridegroom and the bride "decorate" each other in the same way. (29) The bridegroom must not so mark his bride’s sisters, (30) nor her brothers. It is looked upon as the parents’ privilege to put these "living" coal-marks on the bridal couple, a sign of their parental dignity. It is an act of blessing. During this ceremony they express the common wish: "May the marriage be good and happy, may you love each other, get many children, grow white-haired and live long."

The next item on the programme is the quartering and distributing of the meat, which is all done according to firm rules. The meat is put
into three heaps, the one being for the boy’s father-in-law. In addition the hind-part *(ny vody hena)* is also given to him. This hind-part is the bridal gift, i.e. what the boy gives for his bride. When her father has received this, the marriage is valid, and the girl is bound to her husband. In Merina the gift is called “the hind-part of the sheep” *(vody ondry)*, in Sakalava and Betsileo “fandeo”). In olden times they probably used sheep in the Inland, but this must be very long ago. Sheep are not used any more.

The other heap of meat is given to the boy’s mother-in-law, with the addition of the side-flesh. This addition points to the fact that she has given birth to the girl, in other words, it symbolises that she is her right mother, with a mother’s authority over her child.

The third heap of meat is for the bridegroom and his family. His additional part is the neck *(fanàngany)*, the part of strength. This will give the boy power and strength.

There are, however, still two important distributions. The fat hump *(ny trafon-kena)* and the kidneys *(ny voany)* are for the bride. These parts are called “the goods of the meat” *(ny hasoan-kena)* and have the effect of fertility. But she must share it with her sisters and the other young girls of the family, as they all want to be fertile. Even if they get a tiny little piece of this meat, they are satisfied, and they always claim their right to taste it.

The last handing out of meat is to the deputation who made the proposal for the boy. It may be very hard to find able men for that task. They must be good public speakers *(mahay kabary)*, they must know the pedigree of the two families very well, so that they can parry shrewd comments from the girl’s parents during the discussion of relationship and friendship from olden times. As a prize for their ability and eloquence they get the head and the tongue. The symbolism of this gift speaks for itself.

When each one has got his share, they all go home, and the bridegroom has the right to take the bride to his home.

He must, however, often wait for some days until the diviner has found a suitable day for fetching the bride, as there are only certain days on which this may be done. *(31)* The bride must not move to her new home in the morning, as that time of the day has a very powerful *vintana*. This must take place late in the afternoon only.
12. An Antaifary village on the East coast

13. Mikea boys
14. A group of Vazimba who have left their caves and founded a village on the plateau. The author is standing with the Chief in the back row.

15. Sacrificial stones of the Antanosy
A special case is a man marrying a pregnant woman. (32) He is not allowed to take her home before she has given birth to the child⁹, but the child will be his, whether he is the father or not.

The fetching of the bride is a continuation of the wedding. This is looked upon as the real wedding-day. The two foregoing ceremonies, the sacrificing and the marking, were religious and juridical functions binding the two together. On the day of the feast the bridegroom sends some young men of his family, together with an elderly man or woman, to fetch the bride and her belongings. These are mats, baskets, clothes, the fat-cup for plaiting the hair, rice, a little wooden cup containing strings of beads, ear-clips and other useful things. When they approach the house, they must not walk against the vintana-direction of the house, but turn off so that they enter from the correct side. The bridal feast consists of a public meal, drinking and conviviality. An obligatory eating ceremony must be mentioned. The bridal couple must eat saonjo (Colocasia antiquorum), which is a species of edible arum, like kohlrabi. Furthermore they must eat bananas. These two plants are symbols of fertility and multiplication. The father of the boy expresses the wish of blessing: “You shall plant saonjo and bananas, feed boys and girls. May the bride have the pleasure of carrying children on her back, and may the bridegroom lead children by the hand or carry children on his hip.” The age-old wish of blessing is short and simple: “Plant saonjo and bananas.” The meaning is that the two shall be planted into the marriage, and the wish is that they may multiply like saonjo and bananas. This kind of marriage is called fanambaly mitroky, which means “stomach-marriage”, which again signifies that the two relatives have been married according to custom and tradition. In all endogamous marriages similar ceremonies must take place¹⁰.

In Vakinankaratra and Imerina a ceremony must be observed when a girl and a boy are entering into marriage and are son and daughter of two brothers or of a brother and sister. It is called ala ondrana, and purports to take away the taboo of sexual intercourse between close relatives. It is a relatively simple ceremony. An old silver dollar (vola tsy vaky) is put into a clean bowl of clean water. The boy and the girl drink from this. Then the “taboo-remover” takes water in the palm of his hand and empties it on their heads saying: “Andriama-
nitra, Andriananahary-ao! Ye ancestors in the graves! (The names of the graves are mentioned). Here are your children. Relatives will be united, but they are taboo to each other, bless them, accept it, in spite of the taboo, let harmony rule their home, let them live long, give them many children, give them children who will not oppose their parents, bless their home." If this lustration is not performed, the two will not suit each other; they will often quarrel, and their children will die when they become adults, it is said.

There are many places in Vakinankaratra and in Imerina and north Betsileo where cousins may marry, with the exception of children of two sisters. But even in these parts the taboo between the two must be removed. The reason for such alliances is often that they want to prevent riches from going out of the family, and is alluded to in the expression: "riches which do not move" (lova tsy mifindra), i.e. an inner economical consolidation.

Among the Tanala in Ambohimanga du Sud there are detailed rules about marriage between cousins. If the mothers of the boy and the girl are sisters, the marriage will always be refused. Even if their grandmothers or great-grandmothers were sisters, the marriage is barred. The union of the two would still be looked upon as incestuous.

If the girl and the boy are the children of two brothers, or of a brother and a sister who have married in different places, they may enter into marriage, but even here there might be a hindrance. The two brothers, or brother and sister, who are parents of the boy and the girl respectively, must belong to the same generation (mitovy laharana). If the girl, for instance, is the brother’s daughter, and the boy is the grandson of the other brother, they will belong to different generations, and thus they are taboo to each other. This creates an impossible relationship, as the one must be looked upon as the "child" of the other. Here we find one of reasons for the striking genealogical knowledge of the Malagasy people. This is impressed on them from childhood, and everybody with any self-respect must know the pedigree (ny tetiarana) for several generations back. Otherwise it would be impossible to know if two may enter into marriage. In addition to the pedigree they must know where the ancestors have come from, where they settled, their achievements, which tribes and clans were their friends, with whom they had been in conflict, where their graves are,
and the names of the graves. All these things are mentioned and included, and they are discussed carefully in the family councils of the boy and of the girl before a marriage can be accepted. The entering into marriage is, therefore, not a matter between the couple only, but an official matter, which must be sanctioned on a comprehensive family basis.

Those who are going to marry must go through a purification ceremony. This is an atonement ceremony as well, because they usually live together unofficially during the time of engagement.

Engagement is called both fofo and fifampizahan-toetra. The latter expression means that the two shall be known to each other, so that they can find out if they can live together and get children. The boy must, however, give her parents an unofficial gift of money (tampimaso) in order that they shall “close their eyes” to the fact that the two live together. If the couple agree to marry, the boy’s parents send a deputation of responsible relatives to the girl’s home to ask for the girl. It is always the boy, through trusted representatives, who proposes. (33) It is taboo to a girl to propose.

If they are close relatives, however, and already have had intercourse, the taboo has been broken, and the marriage cannot start on that basis. Sacrificial gifts for the ceremony must be supplied by the boy. These vary in relation to the gravity of the offence, depending on how closely related the boy and the girl are. It may be fine of a few francs, a sacrifice of liquor, or up to two oxen. The money is shared among the inhabitants of the village, and the liquor and the meat are consumed by them as well, after a ceremony where the Higher Powers have had their share of it.

If the offence is serious enough to warrant the fine of an ox, a beast is killed and the boy and the girl are sprinkled with the sacrificial blood. The stomach of the animal is opened, and the two are ordered to step into the stomach. Then the contents of the stomach are poured over them. This is the most important part of the ceremony. It is called “to be led into the heart of the ox” or “into the interior of the ox” (nampirdana am-pon’omby). The idea is to take away the couple’s blame as far as people, ancestors and Andriamanitra are concerned (Ny antony dia ny hahafaka ny tsiny amin’ny olombelona, sy ny razana, ary Andriamanitra). At the same time it is a prayer for a blessing on
the new home. From now on they are formally looked upon as man and wife, because the taboo regarding sexuality and procreation has been removed. If, however, the mothers of these cousins are sisters, and if the boy and the girl have had sexual intercourse, they must go through precisely the same sacrificial ceremony and must never again have anything to do with each other. A marriage between them will never be accepted, however large the number of sacrificed oxen might be.

For this sacrifice there must be two oxen (omby roa rambony). The boy and the girl are each put into the stomach of an ox, and the contents are poured over them, whilst the sacrificer confesses the transgression of the taboo to the Higher Powers (fifonana noho ny fandikana ny fady). The ceremony performed for these two has a special character. It is an atonement without aiming at marriage. It is called a separation sacrifice (fady fampisarahana), which means that the boy and the girl both physically and psychically have been united by the sexual intercourse, but this union was impure (maloto) and illegal (tsy ara-dalâna). The sacrifice is a means of separating them for ever, so that they may regain their legal status and be accepted again by the family and the society. If this is not restored through a religious ceremony, they will have no future and no rights in the society, and they will have to be expelled from the community. Through this religious ceremony, however, they are restored, so that later on they may enter into marriage in a legal way with other parties.

The Antaisaka in Vangaindrano have a law that only two who have different family tombs (ny tsy miray kibory) may enter into marriage. Children of both sexes belong to their father’s family tomb. Thus those who belong to the same tomb are closely related. There are four instances where relatives are taboo to each other: brother and sister, and the three kinds of cousins which have been mentioned above (pp. 220 ff.).

Even remote relatives who are going to marry must go through a ceremonial purification in order to remove the taboo. This is removed by the ritual sacrifice of an ox. The girl is sprinkled with the blood from the heart of the ox. The number of oxen to be sacrificed depends on how closely the two are related. It might be necessary to sacrifice two or even more. When the sacrifice is finished, the two may enter
into marriage. To this category belong first cousins, children of brother and sister, and children of two brothers. Intercourse between first cousins, children of two sisters, is incestuous, and the same sacrifice must take place, though there cannot be any marriage. In certain places among the Antaisaka, they are so strict about this that the two are chased away from the district and expelled from the family.

Incestuous connections are strictly prohibited in the Bara tribe. Here the three kinds of cousins are included.

If a boy and a girl who are too closely related have had intercourse with each other, there will be great commotion and irritation in a Bara village. Even if the couple did not know that they were too closely related, it does not reduce the crime. They will be struck by the wrath of the gods, it is said. If the girl gives birth to a child, she will die during the delivery, and the boy will be taken by the crocodiles. Or they might both of them be struck by lightning (vakim-baratra). They have committed a shameful act (fahavetavetana), and this will inevitably challenge Andriamanitra's anger. "They must think themselves fortunate if they are not struck by sudden death."

An ox is caught with the help of a lasso and thrown down at the place of sacrifice, where the families of the boy and of the girl are gathered. This often takes place under the large and sacred Tamarind tree, or under the Sakoa-tree. The boy and the girl are then placed in front of the gathering. The sacrificial priest, who belongs to one of the two families, gets up and shouts (mikaihy): "We cry unto thee, Andriamanitra, unto thee Andriananahary, who hast seen the madness (hadalana) of these young people. They have acted madly with each other (nifanadala), they have committed fornication (nanaofijejojejoana), but they did not know that they were too closely related (tsy nifanhalala). Do not punish their madness. Bless them with thy own blessings, so that they may live long. Look, here is the ox which we bring before thee. We are using it to confess the transgression before thee and to ask for forgiveness. Take this ox instead of them, and remove their guilt."

When the jugular vein of the ox is severed, the blood is gathered into a calabash together with some cold, clean water and a silver coin. The priest pours this over the heads of the two. This is what delivers them from their guilt. The ceremony is called deliverance (fanavotana).
From now on the boy and the girl need not have any fear of Andriamanitra's anger, and they may live in quietness and peace.

Among the Sakalava there are certain variations in the restrictions concerning relationship. Among the Vezo living in Manombo in the Tulear district, those who belong to the same family tomb are far too closely related to marry each other. In the Vezo villages further north, however, for instance in Salary, cousins may marry each other, even though it is not desirable. Cousins who are the children of two sisters are never permitted to marry.

The Mikea who live in the Morombe forests have very strict rules against marriage between parties if at any point in the pedigree it is known that their forbears were children of the same mother. As soon as it is known that a couple have had incestuous connection, the boy's father must go to a Vezo village on the coast at night, where he gets a goat in exchange from a man with whom he has a secret contact. He gives a bundle of edible roots in exchange for the goat, as well as wild honey, hedge-hogs and lemurs. The girl's grandfather cuts the throat of the animal, and the blood is smeared on the breast of the boy and of the girl at the point of the solar plexus with subsequent prayers and confessions (fidrakadrakana). The boy and the girl may live where they used to live, but they must have no intercourse with each other. If a sacrificial animal is not provided, the boy and the girl will be chased away, the one of them northwards and the other one southwards. I have received this information from the one who is called the king of the Mikea clan, whose task it is to enforce these laws. When I asked him about the people's attitude to the above-mentioned case, he replied that not only did the boy and the girl feel that they were unclean (maloto), but all the others in the camp had the same sentiments. They avoided talking about it both privately and officially. Thus it was very difficult to have the matter discussed. The Mikea who live in the Manombo forests, however, allow marriage between second cousins, provided that their respective mothers are not sisters. Which generation in the past they belong to does not matter.

According to my observations it seems clear that the incest taboos generally are more strictly kept in isolated and out-of-the-way places than elsewhere. We may take an example from the Vazimba clan. A Vazimba who was born and brought up in a mountain cave gave me
a detailed account of the sexual restrictions that obtain in the clan. This informant belonged to the Antitofo family on his father’s side and to the Antimambà family on the mother’s side. All the three kinds of cousins are taboo to each other. We may take the case of a brother and a sister who have had intercourse. This transgression must be expiated by means of the ceremony known as “throwing water” (tshipazan-drano). The boy must supply liquor. The family is gathered east of the cave. The grandfather of the boy sprinkles the liquor eastwards and calls on the ancestors: “We call on you, ancestors, we ask for forgiveness. These two who are sitting in front of us (their names and their families are mentioned) have done something which will bring disaster (mandoza), they have committed witchery (namoreke), they have eaten their own eggs (like a fowl eating her eggs). We confess the transgression to you.” He often bursts into tears, and with sobbing and tears he goes on: “What can we, parents, grandparents and relatives do? They belong to our family and we are involved in this. They have been in their mother’s womb. Their parents have cared for them and brought them up from their childhood, but when they grew up, they gave in to their desires (nanao zotompony). They have lived together like husband and wife and followed their lusts (nifampila). I make it known to you in this way. Ye shall know that it was not done with my approval. They just followed their own lusts. Let them live, and let us all live in peace and quietness.” The Vazimba look upon this as a crime especially against the ancestors. However, it is not always that the family interferes in such a case in a ritual way. Sometimes the transgressors are chased out of their caves, and then nothing is done by the family to help them.

Intercourse between cousins who are the children of two sisters has the same character of incest. The rules about other cousins are a little more lenient, as we have also seen in the case of other tribes.

As already seen, the Natives distinguish between two kinds of cousins. The one kind are those who are the children of two brothers or of brother and sister. The second kind are those who are children of two sisters. The reason for this demarcation is the conception that the children have most of their blood from their mothers, and very little from their fathers. The principle of relationship is the blood. We may adhere to the Malagasy terms: “Common blood” (miray ra)
and "brothers, sisters, brother and sister of a common mother's womb" (iraitampo), i.e. from the same womb, the same mother. Thus the mother's blood is the decisive factor. The more closely the mothers are related to each other, the more the cousins are connected to each other like sisters and brothers. Cousins who are the children of two brothers or of brother and sister are relatively less closely related. When the Natives are going to decide about the relationship, they always study the maternal side first, as that is the more important one. This evaluation of the maternal side comes to light on many occasions. An example from a Vezo village will show this. In the hot season a storm and hurricane may come all of a sudden. Everybody will have to escape, as a hurricane on the West Coast is so disastrous that it is a matter of life and death both to people and cattle. A group of people are going to escape into a house, but only part of them can get into the house. Who shall have priority? That is quickly decided. The first ones to enter the house are those who have the same mother and who are the closest relatives on the maternal side, together with the mother herself. The others may try to escape as best they can. This is the same in many fields. The mother is "the well of life" (ny reny no loharanon' aina).

But what about the father? In order to give an answer to this, we shall have to distinguish between the father-children and the mother-children relationships.

The maternal value of the mother is to be understood biologically and procreatively, because the existence and furtherance of the family is primarily connected with her. As already understood from the above, descendants and childbirth play a very dominant role in the ideal world of the Natives.

The "bridal price", a gift of money, which is called "the hind-part of the sheep", is given to the girl's parents by the boy, as already mentioned. But the real and final purpose of this gift is that the boy through his wife shall provide himself with children and heirs. Thus the prize might quite as well be called "the prize for getting descendants". This idea concerns not only the future, but the past as well, and it is connected with ancestral worship, since getting descendants is conditional on the children's good care of the deceased.
The father's position belongs to another sphere. His authority has been dealt with in the chapter on authority and seniority taboos. It belongs to the juridical, economical and authoritarian spheres, he being the master and protector of the home and family. The mother's influence on blood-relationship is stronger, and thus the marriage taboos become stricter the closer the relationship on the maternal side.

II. Tribal hindrances

According to the belief of the Natives an important reason for the prohibition of endogamy is abnormality and physical deformity owing to too close inbreeding. Because of such experiences they prefer exogamy to a degree accepted by each clan. Here we shall have to mention that it is within the clan that a man looks for a wife. One who belongs to the Taiva clan in Ambohimanga du Sud, marries a girl from within that clan. To marry a girl from a neighbouring clan, like Zafindriamanana or Zafimaniry, is undesirable. A Vezo from West-Madagascar would rather not marry a Masikoro, nor would one from Isandra of South-Betsileo marry a girl from Fisakana of North-Betsileo. In Vakinankaratra marriage connection between an Anjanamasy and a Tsarahasina is not desirable, even though it is tolerated. An Antaifasy and a Zafizoro of East-Madagascar do not like each other. If we have a look at the inter-tribal conditions, this is marked even more distinctly. A Tanala would rather not marry a Betsileo or a Merina. Neither would a Sakalava marry a Merina, but he (she) might marry a Betsileo, because those two tribes were not at war with each other in olden days, as were the Sakalava and the Merina. Such marriages, however, are not often of a lasting character. Thus the attitude is generally very exclusive, and it is within the tribe in its widest sense that a man should find his wife.

One of the causes of the mutual oppositions between the different tribes, which exist even to-day, is first and foremost rancour because of old quarrels and controversies. (34) This state of mutual opposition may be so strong that one may not be allowed to marry a member of another clan or tribe.
Enmity between two men who lived long ago may be a hindrance to marriage. Then one of them may have said to his adversary in great anger: “Become little! Become miserable! Become withered! Become a destroyed one!” (Kelèza! Bitèha! Rità! Fongàna!)\textsuperscript{13}. This curse will also rest on the descendants of the cursed one through generations. (35) If the boy is under this curse, the girl’s parents who know the old story, will never give their blessing, and the marriage will be out of the question.

III. The social hindrances

These are of a more serious character than the tribal ones. The family councils of the boy and of the girl discuss at an early stage the difficult problems connected with their rights to a tomb and to which tomb their descendants shall belong, in order that difficulties may not arise in the future. As the entering into marriage is so intimately connected with the juridical rules about the use of the family tomb, I have touched on this topic in more detail in chapter VIII, no. 19.

Another question of interest in this connection is how and to what extent the children take over their parents’ taboos. Theoretically this question is of great interest, but in practice it is not as present as one might think, for the sole reason that the marriages are usually endogamous. Both the spouses belong to the same clan and tribe, and to the same social class. Their taboos are the same as the taboos of others. It is mainly the exceptions to the rule which make this question present, e.g. when a man marries a woman belonging to another, remote tribe. But even in such cases they have many common taboos. The woman will have to accommodate herself to her husband’s special taboos, which is not an easy matter. The changes will mostly be in connection with eating taboos. The children will have to keep certain of the mother’s taboos, but generally they must take over the father’s taboos.
CHAPTER XIV

Pregnancy and birth

If it appears that they cannot get any children a husband and his wife without hesitation go to great lengths to attain fecundity. They pay willingly for expensive charms, and consult the witch-doctor, who enjoins on them certain taboos.

An example from the Antitofo family of the Vazimba tribe typifies such consultation. When they come to the *ombiasa* the wife says in polite and humble phrases: “If you can cause my husband and me to have a child, preferably a boy, I shall give you a big ox”. (1) Failure to fulfil this promise (*manao vava* in Sakalava, *mivoady* in Merina) is *fady*. The witch-doctor accepts the payment and makes tiny wooden statuettes of a man and a woman out of the wood of an *Ampoly* tree. The name *Ampoly* means “to bring back”, in this case fertility. The *ombiasa* then takes them along to a lonely spot in the forest where his sacred tree is, his customary place of worship. He makes a fire on the west side of the tree, sits down cross-legged and consecrates the two tiny figures with incense, burning resin from “the fragrant tree” (*hazomanitra*), (*Cinnamomum aromaticum*). Swinging the figures in the smoke he says: “*Ampoly*-tree *aw*, bless this couple who have come here to get children. They are unhappy, take away their sorrow. Ye trees are ashamed of yourselves if one tree is worse off than the others. I am ashamed of myself if I am not as good as the other *ombiasa*. Therefore, show thy power, *Ampoly*-tree, and give them children. Sacred, sacred, sacred, sacred, sacred (*masy, masina*) are ye o charms (*aoly, ody*)! Bless us (*tahio isahay*)! Here is a man and his wife (names are mentioned) who do not get children. Give them children! If thou canst not, nobody else can. Hear us, *Andriananahary* in the highest, and ye, ancestors!” He binds the figure of the man on the woman’s breast and
the figure of the woman on her back. The cord used is made of cotton, 
hasy, which also means sacredness. Here is another typical example 
of the Malagasy interplay of words. Then the witch-doctor takes them 
to a river with clear, running water, to bathe the charms (milolotse 
aoly). They all wade into the river till the water reaches their armpits. 
The ombiasa has brought a hollow pumpkin with him. Into it he has 
put some sand taken from the sikidy tray, a little bunch of green leaves 
and a bunch of dry ones. The green leaves mean fertility, the dry, 
withered ones stand for sterility. Mixing it all with water, he empties the 
contents over their heads. Then the man and the wife turn and walk 
upstream for some few paces with heads bowed under water; turning 
again they immerse themselves and walk four or five yards downstream, 
after which they all go ashore. On shore the ombiasa takes the clothes 
off the husband and his wife. They are unclean, infected by transgres-
sions; the ombiasa keeps them though, as they are not dangerous to him. 
Some relatives are waiting nearby in the forest in order to hand them 
new clothes which they put on. The promised ox is also not too far 
away.

The different witch-doctors use their own special kinds of cures for 
sterility, and these vary more or less in the different parts of the 
country, the medicines consisting mostly of plants, roots and herbs. 
Some of these witch-doctors undertake long journeys well into the 
Inland in order to sell their charms. They come both from the East 
and the West coast and even from the South of Madagascar, and thus 
their medicines and ody become well known nearly all over the Island. 

On top of the above-mentioned medicines and religious ceremonies, 
however, the consulting husband and wife must accept certain restric-
tions that are enjoined on them by the witch-doctor. They are in the 
form of absolute taboos, and keeping them carefully is the condition 
for a successful result.

The following taboos are common and well known among most of 
the tribes: (2) The wife must not eat sakamalaho (Zingiber officinale), 
the ginger root\(^1\). The reason for the taboo is the shape of the root, 
which is somewhat flat with excrescences like deformed fingers or toes. 
(3) Nor must she keep the root tied into a corner of her lamba\(^2\). The 
Malagasy often keep odds and ends and coins tied up in a corner of 
their lamba. If she fails to observe these taboos, the foetus will become de-
formed, with too many fingers or toes; its legs will not grow straight, the deformation making the delivery difficult as well. Besides the frightening shape of the ginger root which may influence the woman psychologically, the food itself will have a direct effect on the growth and life of the embryo.

Not only is it forbidden for her to eat the ginger root, but any food with protuberances (*Fadin’ny bevohoka ny mihinana zavatra maro rantsana*), (4) for instance a potato with many “heads,” (5) or crayfish, because they have got many legs. (6) Among the Antanosy, Sakalava and in Vakinankaratra a pregnant woman must not eat fish, lest the child should get a scaly skin.

(7) The Veso women do not eat squid (*horita*) when with child. A smaller species of it is often caught and used as dried fish. A woman wanting children would be considered insane if she ate such food, a *horita* having eight arms covered with suckers, and a greyish, furrowed skin. (8) Among the Antanosy a pregnant woman must not eat the brains of beasts (*Tsy mahazo mihinana betron-kena ny hanan’anaka, mba tsy hamparary ny zaza*). If she does, the child will be taken ill. It is important to get the right kind of food, say the wise women, who consider food made of brains to be indigestible. If the mother becomes ill the embryo will get ill as well. Another reason given for this taboo is that the child’s skull will be impaired and weakened, and its fontanel will not close up properly.

(9) A pregnant woman must not eat food prepared from hedge-hogs (cf. ch. V no. 74), the reason being that their prickly, ugly skins will prevent the child’s skin from becoming fine and smooth.

Actually, it is a fact that babies not infrequently do have a scaly skin either on account of psoriasis or syphilis. Besides its ugly skin, however, the hedge-hog rolls itself up when scared. If a mother eats hedge-hog, the embryo will roll itself up and cause great difficulties at the delivery. This animal has got still another bad trait in that it does not attack, but just curls into a ball. The child would consequently become a weakling, easily frightened, and in war he would be good for nothing. Thus, not only the body of the child will be influenced by the food its mother eats, but its character and talents as well.

(10) Among the Antanosy the *Kibo* bird (ch. V no. 77) is also taboo for a pregnant woman. *Kibo* is a contracted form of *Kibobo* (which is
the bird’s correct name) and is also a separate word meaning stomach. Still, the two words sound just alike, which is one of the reasons for the taboo. In many places the Kibo-bird is protected on account of its being a typical bird of ill-omen. This fact together with the similarity of the names makes the bird taboo particularly in connection with pregnancy.

A woman with child must not become the object of people’s attention, but should preferably live in seclusion, the natives say.

(11) To stare at a pregnant woman so hard that her eyes are “overcome” is taboo, as this will kill the child before it is born (Tsy tokony hodinihin’ny olona ny bevohoka, fa ho rey masony, ka mahafaty ny zasa mbola tsy teraka)⁷. By gazing hard and intently a witch may cast an evil spell on her, and her fright may lead to a miscarriage.

(12) She must not drink water out of a pot that is widened at the top. (Fadin’ny bevohoka ny misotro rano amin’ny vilany be molotra)⁸. The earthen pots have a rim around the top which is called “the lips” (ny molotra). If she drinks water out of a pot with wide “lips”, the child’s lips will be too big. (13) She is not allowed to eat meat from a calf that has died during calving or was born prematurely (Tsy mahazo mizinana ranak’omby maty am-piterahana, na tsy tonga volana izy) (cf. ch. V no. 19). This would predispose her to miscarriage⁹.

(14) A woman who wishes to have a successful delivery must not eat the meat of a cow that has died during calving. (Vehivavy te hiteraka soa aman-tsara, dia tsy mahazo mizinana hena avy amin’ny omby maty am-piterahana). This taboo also applies to sheep, goats and pigs¹⁰.

(15) The Betsimisaraka and Tanala women must not eat eels during pregnancy. If they do, delivery will not be normal. (Tsy maintsy ho fadin’ny betroka ny amalona, fa tsy mahaterska anaka)¹¹. The embryo will become smooth as an eel so that the woman cannot retain it for the normal term.

A pregnant woman predisposed to miscarriage should eat the skin of a cooked fowl; she hopes this will close round the embryo and retain it for the full term¹².

(16) A pregnant woman of North Betsileo is forbidden to watch the slaughtering of fowls¹³, (17) nor must anybody give her the blood to drink¹⁴. (Fadin’ny hanan’anaka ny mijery famonoan’akoho, sy ny mampiso- sotro asy ny rany). Two central facts can be mentioned as giving rise
to this taboo: the killing of animals means taking life, just as to give birth means the contrary, i.e. to give life; and the blood of the slaughter suggests heavy loss of blood at the childbirth. But when the delivery is well over, it is the custom for the husband to kill a fowl and prepare a meal for his wife. The point of the taboo is to prevent anticipation, as this will challenge the misfortunes and goad them to come. Because of that belief, the native women do not sew baby-clothes before the child is born.

(18) A young woman with child must not eat imperfect eggs (*Fadin’ ny ampela mbola hanan’anaka ny homana lamokan’atody*), for this will destroy the child in her womb (*handamoka ny zaza an-kibony*). There are at least two factors that cause this taboo. Imperfect eggs will prevent her from bringing forth children. Besides this pertinent reason there is a linguistic one. An imperfect egg is called *lamokan’atody*, *lamoka* meaning something bad, ruined. From the root *lamoka* the active verb *mandamoka* is formed: to make defective, not only eggs, but other things as well in a wide variety. This very word is used about destroying the child in its mother’s womb. The peculiar play of words and their similarity serve both as a confirmation and strengthening of the taboo. The Antanosy are very strict about the above-mentioned taboo, as are the Bara, Betsileo and the inhabitants of Vakinankaratra.

The clothes of a pregnant woman and other things she wears play an important role:

(19) She must not wear a hat (*Tsy azo atao amin’ny bevohoka ny misatroka*)\(^{15}\). If she does, the delivery of her child will be made too difficult. (20) She cannot wear her *lamba* around her shoulders, because this will cause the child to be entangled in the umbilical cord at the delivery. (*Tsy azo asiana lamba manodidina soroka ny bevohoka, fa misadika ny tadi-poetry ny zaza an-kibo*)\(^{16}\).

In her eighth month she has to wear as finery a fin of an eel and a piece of lemur fur on a string around her neck (*Tsy maintsy manao fanotsorohana ohin’amalona sy volon’ny varika ho ravaka am-bozony, raha amin’ny fahavalon’ny volany ny hanan’anaka*)\(^{17}\). Then her child will be delivered smoothly and will become as lively as a lemur.

Plants in the field can have a certain influence.

(21) To walk across a field planted with the edible arum, *saonjo*, is taboo (*Fady ny mandika fambolena saonjo*)\(^{18}\). Sometimes the big,
round arum leaves are torn and ragged along the edges, which may make the child hare-lipped.

(22) She must not cross a field of pumpkins (*Fady ny mandika ny ladim-boatavo*)\(^1\), where the stalks will remind her of the umbilical cord, and the pumpkin of the child. Both of these ancient taboos are very strict, my informant told me. They are handed down from the time of his ancestors, who made everyone in their family promise that these taboos would be kept lest they be without descendants. “In our family the taboos are kept to this very day”, he concluded.

(23) She must not step across an axe, or the child will become bow-legged (*Fadiny ny mandika famaky, fa mahabingo ny tongotry ny xaza*)\(^2\).

(24) Nobody in her house must lay the wooden spoon across the top of the pot, for an act like that will prevent the child from being born (*Tsy aso asakana eo am-bavan’ny vilany ny sotrobe, fa misakana ny xaza an-kibo*)\(^3\). Should it happen, a breech presentation will result. The same expression “to be laid across” (*asakana*) is used about being hindered. Again we meet the similarity of words in connection with the forming of taboos and the giving of their reasons.

(25) She must not step over the rice pestle. By so doing she will make the child deformed (*Fadiny ny mandika ny fanoto, fa ho sampona ny xaza*)\(^4\).

(26) There is a commonly wide-spread taboo against a woman sitting in the doorway during pregnancy (*Fadiny ny mipetraka eo am-baran’varana*)\(^5\). The doorway is compared with the organ of delivery, and nothing must be in the way to hinder free passage. We find this taboo among the Antanosy, Bara, Sakalava, Merina, Betsileo, and Antanka-rana tribes and in Vakinankaratra.

In North Betsileo, when sitting on a mat on the floor, a pregnant woman must sit straight, (27) and not lean against something or lie down partly on her side, or the embryo may come into a wrong position. (*Fadin’ny bevohoka ny tsy hipetraka tsara, fa miankinkanka, na mandry tiliaka, fa manjary ratsy ny toeran’ny xaza*)\(^6\).

(28) The Antanosy have the following taboo: a pregnant woman entering her house must not walk in backwards (*Tsy manao dia voho miserina raha tafiditrita an trano ny mavesatra*). If she does, it is feared that the child may turn round, coming feet first or by breech presenta-
tion at the delivery, causing great difficulties. Even other people are bound by this taboo. For instance after a visit the visitor must not turn round outside the house and peep in through the window-shutter, perhaps to speak about something she had forgotten to say. Be it the doorway or the window-shutter, they are both symbols of the delivery organ. The visitor’s turning back (miverina) may cause the child to return, go back, during the delivery, causing its mother not to deliver.

(29) When fetching a load of wood, the single sticks of fire-wood must not lie with their roots against the tops, but root against root and top against top\textsuperscript{25}. If this is not done, the child will turn in her womb and come feet first. (30) The load of wood must not be thrown heavily on the floor or this will give her pains in her stomach\textsuperscript{26}.

(31) She is forbidden to laugh at any deformed person, lest the child get the same kind of deformity\textsuperscript{27}.

(32) A wide-spread taboo is the prohibition against a pregnant woman’s meeting a funeral procession. (Fadin’ny bevohoka ny mifanena amin’ny faty entina halevina)\textsuperscript{28}.

(33) Neither must she visit a house of mourning, nor look at a corpse. (Fadiny ny mijery faty)\textsuperscript{29}. When somebody brings a message of sorrow to her home, she must spit twice on her stomach. (Raha misy bevohoka an-trano, ka misy olona milaza faty, dia rorany indroa ny kibony). To spit forcefully on something means chasing evil away. Similarly, people passing a dead wild animal in the bush usually spit forcefully at it and hurry away as a sign of deep disgust and distrust.

(34) A pregnant woman must not accompany a funeral procession to the tomb\textsuperscript{30}. If for some reason or other she has to attend, she must on no account look into the grave.

(35) She cannot take part in a feast of circumcision (Fadin’ny mave-satra ny manatrika famorana)\textsuperscript{31}. There may be various reasons for this, but I shall just mention the reasons given by the Natives. The small boy about to be circumcised represents somebody already born. A pregnant woman, however, has not yet been delivered. By being present at the feast she anticipates the happy event, which is very risky, and consequently forbidden. These feasts are first and foremost feasts of joy with drinking and dancing and wanton excesses. For this reason as well she ought to keep away.
Here we may consider her moral obligations during the period of pregnancy.

(36) One of these is that she must not be promiscuous, or the embryo will be killed\(^2\). Very often this taboo is enjoined upon her from the beginning, at her consultation with the witch-doctor. Thus she is taboo for all men except her own husband. The keeping of this taboo is the condition for a successful result. If she does break the taboo the death of the child is considered a just retribution. Usually she will come in conflict with her husband as well, but that is another side of the matter.

With regard to the purpose of these taboos of pregnancy a woman is first and foremost considered a biological and procreative individual. A wide-spread opinion is that promiscuous habits and prostitution ruin the bearing of children.

We should notice that the last-mentioned taboo is in fact the same as abstention. The formula of this taboo ought rather to be “to abstain from” and it is a challenge to the moral stamina of the women.

(37) A pregnant Antanosy woman must not talk with men. A certain suspicion may be present that a woman found talking to a man wishes to enter into a love intrigue with him. Just by shaking hands with him she may cause suspicion.

Another fatal consequence may be that the child will resemble the person its mother talks to, be it man or woman. If the person has got a surly and angry look, the child will look surly. If the person is happy, kind, mean or generous, mendacious or truthful, the child will become the same. The embryo is in this way easily influenced by its surroundings and milieu. By stopping and talking she may also risk the child’s “stopping” at the delivery.

The period of pregnancy lasts 280 days, 10 months according to the vintana months with twenty-eight days each. The husband may generally have intercourse with her up to the time she feels the quickening of the child.

(38) Among the Antanosy the husband must not have sexual relations with other women during the pregnancy of his wife. (Tsyanahazo mila vehiavan hafa ny lehilahy vadin’ny bebohoka). Witch-doctors often enjoin this on husbands wanting sons or daughters. The husband’s taboo ceases ordinarily at the birth of the child. From then on his keeping a concubine is not a transgression of the taboo. On being asked
to give reasons for this taboo the Natives say that a husband’s relations with other women may “make the foetus ill”. First and foremost it is his transgression of the taboo that has the dangerous effects. Also it is in the nature of the taboo to punish the transgressor through the child that he wants above all. Another and more practical reason is the danger of becoming infected with venereal diseases by prostitutes, diseases that he can bring upon his wife, which again may cause her to miscarry. Another serious consequence of his loose relations may be bewitching, which again he brings on his wife. Loose women are usually jealous of the wife, and jealousy in this instance means only one thing: bewitching, and bewitching invariably leads to the destruction of one thing or another. The delivery taboos, which will be described later on, show clearly that both the wife’s and the husband’s taboos are seriously meant. Some may ask this question: Do the husbands then keep the taboo of abstention? The answer is that they do not always do so because nature gets the better of discipline. However, a husband may be able to put the matter right by giving a gift of money or a nice dress material to his wife. These presents are meant to soften her, as a liberal gesture towards her to show that her husband does respect her after all. From a traditional point of view a man has got a wider moral liberty than the married woman. Still, a man cannot take it for granted that he will be held blameless, should serious complications occur at the delivery.

(39) Not only is the wife forbidden to sit in the doorway, but the husband and the other members of the house as well\textsuperscript{33}, because this may hinder the delivery.

(40) It is the custom of the Betsileo, Bara, Antanosy, Betsimisaraka and Tanala tribes and in Vakinankaratra that the husband of a pregnant woman must not wear his lamba with one end thrown across his shoulder. (\textit{Fadin’ny lehilahy, vadin’ny bevohoka ny misampina lamba an-tsoroka})\textsuperscript{34}. The usual way to wear it is to throw one corner across the left shoulder to secure it from falling off. If a man goes on wearing his lamba in this way, the child will get caught and fastened during its delivery, just as the lamba is caught and fastened on the shoulder.

(41) In the Bara, Antanosy, Betsileo, Antaisaka tribes and in Vakinankaratra there is a taboo which says: “Do not walk across the sleeping place of a pregnant woman, because that means transgression of taboo
(Aza mandika ny fandrian'ny bevohoka, fa mandika fady)\textsuperscript{35}. The people usually sleep on a mat or a mattress on the floor; it is only the rich and those influenced by European customs who use beds.

Very often this taboo is on the orders of a witch-doctor, being at the same time a very old rule, which the following information shows: “Our ancestors were very strict towards a pregnant woman, she being like people fording a river. Some drown and some get safely over to the other side”. (Nohasarotin’ny ntaolo ny bevohoka, satria olona mita ranô lehibe hono, ka maty indray andro, velona indray andro)\textsuperscript{36}. As mandika here is used both for “to cross over” and “to transgress a taboo”, it shows the way of constructing the taboo formulae. It is, as mentioned before, a play on words, in which the language is very rich, and it is used to intensify the taboo and to give it a special effect.

To step over something means also to take possession of the thing, considering it as one’s own, be it bodies or beds belonging to others. In this case it is the sleeping place of a pregnant woman, and the taboo points at something not to be touched — “No Admission”. And furthermore the Natives are very serious about this owing to the conviction that the “overstepper” influences the pregnant woman and the foetus alike. These psycho-physical influences will have fatal effects on the delivery.

The taboo is meant as a protection against bewitching as well. A spiteful witch walking across the mat will bewitch it, consequently bewitching the pregnant woman and the child she carries.

(42) In many places the husband is forbidden to divorce his wife whilst she is pregnant, as the child will be injured by it (Fady ny misao-bady bevohoka, fa tsy mahazaza)\textsuperscript{37}. His mother-in-law among others, and the official opinion of the village as well may accuse him saying: “Why could he not have delayed his sending her away till the child had been born. Then the future delivery would not look so bad”. A man like that is considered both inconsiderate and unreasonable, qualities that prevent a wife in her position from bearing her child.

(43) No one must wear the clothes of a pregnant woman (Tsy azon’ olon-kafo atao ny mitafy ny lamban’ny bevohoka)\textsuperscript{38}. Fear of bewitching is again the reason, this time the bewitching of her clothes. If she wears them again after lending them, either she herself or the child will have to suffer. To borrow clothes from someone is comparable with having
loose relations. We must also take another point into consideration. The owner of the garment, by wearing it every day, has more or less identified himself with his garment because he has put some of his own personality into it.

(44) People that have no children are not allowed to stay overnight in her house (*Izy tsy manan’anaka tsy mahazo mandry an-tranony*). This is a definite rule in the Antanosy tribe. Whether they have lost their children or are sterile (*momba, kanda*), their presence will have a destructive and fateful influence on her, because they have been struck by an evil fate, which may strike her as well.

(45) In the same tribe there is another taboo saying that nobody must pull at her *lamba*, least of all her husband (*Tsy azo atao ny mifaninton-damba amin’ny bevohoka, indrindra fa ny vadin-tena*). Sometimes the husband wants to borrow her *lamba*, but the wife does not want to lend it to him. During the ensuing quarrel a tug-of-war results. The same may happen at the delivery where two forces are present and at work, one drawing the child out, the other keeping it back. The expression “to draw in one’s own direction” (*mifanintona*) is also used of an attack of cramp, which makes this taboo still more respected and feared.

Another warning is given through this taboo. Even if the child is safely and easily delivered, the act of pulling the *lamba* off one’s wife will affect the character of the child. As a grown-up this child will become a quarrelsome fellow, a robber keeping to the mountain passes “peeling the clothes off people” (*mpanenda-damba*). And quarrels may often be accompanied by cursing, which has the effect of transferring disaster directly, a curse being understood literally. Thus the strong emotions which may be the outcome of a quarrel make the breaking of this taboo terrible and fatal.

(46) A pregnant woman must not visit one who is about to give birth, as that would cause her to be depressed (*Tsy fanaon’ny bevohoka ny miditra an-tranony efa hiteraka, fa mahakivy azy*)39, when being reminded of her own forthcoming distress.

If two sisters are pregnant at the same time, a sacrifice must take place (*Tsy maintsy soronina ny vehivavy roa iraitampo miara-mavesatra, mba tsy hahatonga loza*)40. It is looked upon as a blessing so great that it might arouse the jealousy of the dead. In order to give expres-
sion to their excessive joy and gratitude the family give them a sacri-
fice, thus preventing the sisters and their children from being struck
by disaster.

A comparable custom from Sakalava\textsuperscript{41} will throw more light on this.
When the men are in the forest hunting wild boars or hedge-hogs and
they have the chance of getting several at a time, they let one or two
go for fear of courting disaster. If they get too many, they may arouse
the jealousy of the gods who are the owners of the wild animals in the
forest. The hunters let some go in order to be on the safe side. As far
as the two sisters are concerned, they can be helped only by the sacri-
ficing of fowls or cattle.

The first quickening is a great event, and it is made known to the
woman's family as well as to her husband's family. From now on she
must have the food she wants, her new diet so to speak, which is com-
monly called "choice of food" (\textit{fidy hanina}). She becomes capricious
and difficult with regard to food, choosing and rejecting just as she
likes and thus giving her husband a hard time in trying to satisfy
her.

The event must be marked by a ceremony which varies a little in the
different places and tribes. The Sakalava women mark it by a sacrifice
at the spot, whether it be at home, in the field or in the forest, where
she had this happy feeling\textsuperscript{42}.

To the Natives it is obvious that the quickening is a sign of the
ancestors' blessing. They say that "the ancestors have made her preg-
nant" (\textit{Ny razana nampitoe-xaza azy}). It is quite common for women,
when they have this feeling, to say: "My father (or grandfather) is inside
myself" (\textit{Ny babako, bababeko anatiko}). In Sakalava pregnancy is called
"the ancestors' continuation" (\textit{ny fitohy raza}), which again means
that the dead of the family continue to live in their descendants. Thus
"supernatural conception" is a necessary condition for childbirth, as
sexual intercourse is looked upon as something obvious and natural.

When it is clear that she is pregnant, she goes to her parents and
informs them about it. Then all three of them go to the river in the
morning. She bathes herself in the river and puts on clean clothes.
The parents bring honey-liquor which they mix with water. Then
they fill their mouths with this drink and spit it out over her, expres-
sing good wishes. This water-spitting (tsiodrano, or tsodrano) is the traditional act of blessing in Malagasy.

After this both the families are gathered at a sacrificial function. This is called "sacrifice for the child" (soron'anake). As a rule this function is conducted only the first time the mother is with child. It takes place by the sacrificial pole (ny hazomanga). An ox is slaughtered and the sacrificer makes a prayer to Andriananahary and the ancestors of the family, who are called on by their posthumous names. He asks for blessing on the woman and her child, praying that the birth will be easy and the child big and well-shaped. He also explains to the Higher Powers who the father is. This is the official registration of the child. This civil-judicial ceremony is very important, as it confirms the fatherhood and renews the marriage contract. In many places among the southern and western tribes it is by this sacrifice that the couple are first legally bound to each other as husband and wife, and the possibility of divorce is now reduced considerably.

Among the Antanosy people the father takes the woman down to the river on a propitious day pointed out by the diviner. There he carries her on his back into the river until the water reaches his neck, and lets her go. Then they both swim towards the bank as fast as they possibly can, as if saving their lives. At the river bank he takes a pumpkin-bowl filled with honey-water and empties it over her stomach, just where he thinks the child is. Part of the honey-water they drink together whilst the father blesses her. He expresses his wishes that the child will be well-shaped, will come to this world without extra difficulties, and will become big and strong.

In the eighth month (8 × 28 days) the husband brings her to her parents where the child is to be delivered. (47) He is not allowed to sleep there. As soon as he has handed her over to her parents, he returns to his home. The quicker he gets off, the sooner and more successful the birth will be.

When the time of the birth is approaching there are certain things one must look out for.

(48) It is prohibited to close up rat-holes (Tsy azo atao ny manampina trano voalavo). That would make a hindrance to the child-birth.
(49) Everything which sticks to the wall in the woman’s house must be taken down, whether it is something hanging on a peg or a basket hanging on a nail. All that is sticking to something must be unfastened in order that the delivery may be easy. (50) The woman must not have her hair plaited, but it must hang freely. (51) Neither she nor her children must have buttoned clothes, as that would disturb the after-birth and cause many other complications.

Below I shall mention some of the most important customs in connection with this event, taking the Antanosy home as an example.

When the pains of child-birth start, the husband must take certain measures. (52) Nothing must stick to anything. He must unfasten everything that might be tight in his own clothing. The collar must be unbuttoned, his loin-cloth must be as loose as possible, his necklace with the charm must be loose. (53) He may work a little in the field but not too hard, as that is not allowed. That would make the delivery hard (Fady amin’ny lehilahy ny miasa mafy, fa ho mafy ny fiterahan’ny vadiny).

He waits for an hour or two without getting any news. A painful situation. Then he is called home to take a seat at the head of his wife’s bed, where he is supposed to support her. When the women give birth, they sit crouched or on their knees whilst someone supports their back. If it seems to be a complicated birth, the whole family is called, and the husband must be present. If there are no complications he is not permitted to be present during the delivery.

It is obvious to all that there is something hindering the delivery, and this hindrance must be removed. All who are present must express their sympathy and good wishes to her, as these are effective in themselves. But it is not enough to remove the hindrances in the critical situation. They must be straightforward and tell her plainly that they are very sorry and unhappy. If any of them know that they have hurt her or been unkind to her, they will beg her for forgiveness. This is much more than a custom. It is a real and strong expression of the collective feeling of solidarity in a Malagasy village. If one is struck by disaster, they are all struck, and they are all unhappy. On such an occasion there are certainly both soft and hard hearts. This, however, does not change the real and actual meaning of the custom.
True reconciliation takes place, often with heartbreaking scenes and mutual forgiveness and apologies. The child’s egress is hampered because of old controversies within the family, which have not been cleared up. The husband especially comes into the firing line. If he has been unfaithful to her during the time of pregnancy, he is forced to confess this to her and even to mention the names of the women he has had connections with. If he has been sulky and bad-tempered to her or careless with regard to the taboos prescribed by the witch-doctor, this might also be the cause of his wife’s distress.

It is not, however, controversies and enmities alone that are looked upon as bringing disaster. Very close to these is the suspicion of bewitching. It is a fact that this ceremony of settling controversies clears the atmosphere in the village, and it makes the doubting minds more free from the constant, mutual suspicion. In order to confirm the sincerity of these confessions (*fanekem-pahadisoana*, or *fanekem-pahotana*), the woman’s father calls on *Zanahary* and the ancestors of the family as witnesses of their words of forgiveness. He begs the Higher Powers for help in the difficult situation. It is this scene of reconciliation which is called “to walk against the current” (*manori-drano*).

If neither confession nor apology helps, they call the diviner (*ny mpiskidy*) in order that he shall make use of the *sikidy*-divination. If this gives a positive result, he says: “It will all go well, just wait,” and usually that comes true. Then he becomes renowned and is praised as a diviner of genius, who can say in advance how things will go. He proves to be an able family doctor, who can bring succour in any situation where nobody else is able to help.

If, however, after several hours of study, he finds out that the *sikidy* tray gives a negative picture of the situation, he proclaims forthwith that there is no hope. He orders her eldest brother to release her with an ox-sacrifice. He is called mother’s brother (*anadahin-dreny*), i.e. from the child’s point of view. And now they act very fast. The ox must be fetched as quickly as possible, whether the cattle are out in the field or in the cattle-pen. Nobody has the right to refuse, be it the young men who have to fetch the ox, those who are going to assist in the slaughtering, or the relatives of the woman, who are going to gather people to form the assembly. It will be taken in bad part if
anyone shows the slightest sign of unwillingness. (54) It is taboo to show carelessness or indifference when a urgent sacrifice is to take place. Anybody who is unwilling will immediately be expelled from the village by the village chief and excommunicated, so that he must take all his belongings and leave the place for good. This even applies to her husband and her elder brother whose duty it is to protect her in this difficult situation.

The sacrificial ceremony is conducted in the ordinary way, and the mother's cause is pleaded before the Higher Powers.

If in spite of this the woman or the child or both of them die, it is up to the witch-doctor to explain the reason. The reasons may be many and different, and it is impossible to lay down any scheme of his explanations. But if he finds out that the woman during the time of pregnancy had broken some of the taboos which he had prescribed, that is looked upon as sufficient reason for the disaster. Another reason might be bewitching.

If, however, all goes well, all the women present shout "E-e-e!" twice if it is a boy, and volleys of musketry are fired. If it is a girl, they shout only once. All the village will now know that something joyous has happened. After the shout of joy the umbilical cord is cut with a knife, or with a pair of scissors. In many places they even use a sharp splinter of bamboo or some other wood. The cord is then bound to the stomach of the child with thread of home-spun cotton. The other end of the thread is fastened round the child's neck.

(55) Among the Antandroy people the neighbours are not allowed to enter the house of a woman who has just given birth to a child. A pole outside the house is the sign of "No admittance". Anyone who is bound to enter for some reason will have to rub the face with old ashes.

(56) No one is allowed to borrow fire from her house. The time of confinement lasts for 3—4 months. When she goes out of the house for the first time, she must take along cow-dung or burnt pieces of wood. If she does not do this, the demons will follow her and her child. In the following two weeks she must smear her face with ox-fat every time she goes out.

Relatives and friends are very dutiful in paying her visits of congratulations, (57) but they must be careful not say that a child is
well-shaped or beautiful⁹⁰; this would make the dead jealous, and is strictly prohibited. They must say that it is feeble (osa), that it is ugly (ratsy tarehy), or a rat (voalavo), or dung (tay), and if it is big and fat, it must be called the little skinny one (ny kely, mahia). This fady is especially strict if the baby has a brother or sister who is dead, as they have power to draw the living with them⁹¹.
CHAPTER XV

Rules concerning circumcision

With the exception of some few families among the Vezo between Morondava and Tulear, and those of the Mikea who still live in the forests as nomads, circumcision is practised in the whole of Madagascar. It is "an order from the ancestors" (didin-drazana). The age of the boys circumcised varies as a rule between 1 and 2 years, sometimes they may even be under and sometimes over this age. Most of the taboos concern the time before the circumcision.

(1) The fringes of a mat cannot be cut if it has been wet by an uncircumcised one. (Tsy azo tapahina ny rambon-drary tsihy namani-an'ny zaza tsy mbola voafora). When a mat has been plaited, straws protruding along the edges are cut off. While the mother is plaiting these mats on the floor, the child is usually playing around her and may easily happen to wet the new mat. To cut off the straw then would mean to cut the prepuce, so this would have consequences dangerous to the ensuing circumcision.

(2) Similarly the mother must take great care not to let the uncircumcised baby wet the web in her loom. (Tandremana ny tsy voafora mba tsy hamany amin'ny tenona). And to cut the threads which bind the finished textile to the loom would mean that the whole of the penis would be cut off, or that the glans penis would be injured by the knife. (3) Still another taboo for the uncircumcised is to wear buttoned-up clothes (akanjo voabokotra). Buttoned-up clothes will as a whole be a hindrance for something that is about to be released. A parallel to this is the delivery of a baby. Then everybody in the house must unbutton their clothes. (Ch. XIV nos. 51, 52). (4) It is also taboo for the uncircumcised to wear a hat (ny mampisatroka zaza mbola tsy voaftaka). This alludes to the still uncircumcised prepuce. The verb
mifitaka is used in Merina about a child sitting on his father's knees to be circumcised. The root fitaka, synonymous with famorana, meaning circumcision, also means deception, fraud. A little child wearing a cap reminds one of a grown-up. As such he will certainly sooner or later experience deceit. Still he is so young that he is not yet circumcised and not yet deceived. This is a typical example of that peculiar play on the double meaning of words which they love, the Malagasy art of contriving two shades of meaning in a subtle and delicate way.

(5) It is taboo to carry an uncircumcised boy on one's shoulders (Ny mitandra antsarongana ny xasa tsy voafora)\(^5\). During the special feast of circumcision the father will place the boy on his neck, running around with him joyously and proudly before walking off with those who fetch water for the ceremony. To carry an uncircumcised boy in this way would be showing disrespect towards the feast before this occasion.

There are several stories in circulation about a father who put his six-months-old boy on his shoulders and ran around the house with him several times, shouting: "A boy, a boy, I have got a boy!" In each case the child died immediately afterwards. The warning purpose of these stories is evident enough, and there is no doubt about their effectiveness in ensuring the inviolability of the taboo. A supplementary explanation is the shame attached to the carrying of an uncircumcised boy in this way. As the child does not wear clothes, the shame will be even more evident to all and sundry if the father takes him around on his shoulders.

(6) It is taboo to place an uncircumcised boy on the rice mortar (Ny mampipetraka ny tsy voafora eo ambonin'ny laona)\(^6\). The father sits on a rice mortar turned upside down when he holds the boy to be circumcised. To put the child on top of the mortar would be the same as to put him in the father's place on this very important occasion, which would be a disgrace to the father and the act. The disasters that will follow are many and varied in the different places. Some say that it will lead to infection of the wound after the operation. Others say that the child will suffer a heavy loss of blood. Others again say that the boy will not live long enough to grow up, but "die in the spring of his life" (ho folaka an-dantony).
(7) Before the circumcision it is taboo to let the boy take hold of a knife, a pair of scissors or other things made of iron (*Ny mampandray antsy*, *hety, na vy ny raza tsy voafora*). Every sharp thing made of iron reminds one of bloodshed. As sharp tools will be used in the very act of operating, the child’s taking hold of the tools in advance will cause heavy loss of blood after the operation. Of course, it is dangerous for children to get hold of sharp things with which they may harm themselves and others, but this is only a secondary argument.

The two latter taboos are similar in several respects. The child’s sitting on a mortar, and its holding a knife or a pair of scissors both mean an anticipation of one of the most important events in the life and home of a Malagasy. The taboos are to defend the integrity and value of the circumcision as a rite.

(8) It is also forbidden to cut the nails of an uncircumcised child with a knife, scissors or the blade of a spear (*Fady ny mangala hohon-jaza tsy voafora amin’ny antsy, hety na lefona*). The child’s mother must bite the nails off in order not to risk any dangerous consequences of the circumcision.

(9) The taboo against cutting grass and reed for plaiting of mats before the circumcision has the same motive.

(10) The uncircumcised child must be watched so that he does not look at himself in a mirror because this will kill him. (*Tandremana ny raza tsy voafora tsy hijery fitaratra, fa mahafaty azy*). The custom of having a mirror for daily use is borrowed from the Europeans, but the old view, that a mirror not only gives a picture of one’s own appearance, but of one’s soul as well, still prevails. If the witch-doctor finds out that his patient is ill on account of his soul having left his body, he starts a great commotion to get the soul to come back. One of the mediums he uses for finding out whether the soul has returned or not is to let the patient have a look at himself in a mirror. If the expression on his countenance is remote and apathetic, the soul is still wandering about. If the face of the patient has a more healthy and animated expression, the witch-doctor will see this in the mirror and declare that the soul has returned to the body and that recovery is not far off. A mirror was originally solely meant for the witch-doctors’ treatments and not for one’s toilet.
The little child is too small to recognize himself in the mirror on looking into it. A common belief is that a child’s soul is more sensitive and transitory than that of a grown-up. Should it happen that a child looks at itself in a mirror, its soul might take fright and run away. Thus the child would be taken ill just before such severe strain as circumcision entails. Consequently great pains must be taken to prevent the child from looking into a mirror.

There is another rather important aspect of the taboo. The witches use a mirror when casting evil spells on people. Through the help of a mirror in the sunshine they transfer their special and different calamities to others. This evil game with a little mirror can make people horror-stricken, and many sinister stories exist about it. Such outrages seldom get to the ears of the authorities, however.

(11) Among the Vazimba who have settled on the plateaus, a father is not permitted to tell his son in advance that he is going to be circumcised.

(12) As a whole it is not permitted to mention circumcision in the presence of an uncircumcised child. The act is too solemn and important to be talked about openly.

One must realize the situation: the parents and relatives are rather scared beforehand, fearing dangerous loss of blood, infection or other possible misfortunes, such as bewitching. A certain amount of anxiety will always be prevalent before the event, and they feel that silence on this topic will be the safest course, if the operation is to go well and complications are to be avoided.

(13) A red cock cannot be used at a circumcision (Akoholahy lity mena tsy azo entina ho amin’ny famorana). A red cock can be used at the dramatic sacrifices of healing for sick people and for people stricken by a disaster. But fowls of this kind cannot be used in connection with these healthy boys because red coocks are suggestive of blood; if it is done, it will result in a dangerously heavy loss of blood. The Antanosy use a white cock. No feather, not even the smallest, must get lost during the plucking, but all the plumage must be gathered carefully in a basket. The cock is sacrificed when the circumcision takes place, but eight days afterwards the child is carried down to a running river, where the father immerses the boy or lets him paddle about and splash
a little. At the time of this cleansing of the child the white feathers are thrown into the river and carried downstream with the child’s impurity.

(14) It is taboo to eat a fowl’s leg (Ny mihinana fen’akoho)\textsuperscript{13}. In the south-eastern part of Madagascar the leg is the most honourable part, and the father’s by right. As an uncircumcised boy is not considered a complete human being, the taboo against eating the leg of a fowl is enforced all the more rigorously. Several Natives, however, have told me another reason: this part of the fowl may be suggestive of the penis, which again is associated with the circumcision. Things and events that remind one of the circumcision before it takes place will at once become taboo because they anticipate that which is about to be done.

(15) A boy cannot be circumcised if his mother is pregnant\textsuperscript{14}. If the new baby is another boy, the elder one must wait for the younger to become old enough for the operation. They will then be circumcised at the same time. If the parents do not wait, but circumcision the boy straight away, the result will be harmful in two directions. The use of a knife on the elder brother will harm the younger one still in his mother’s womb. For the elder it will mean weakness, imbecility, even idiocy. The idea behind this is that the two brothers are bound together both genetically and socially. Such a radical operation as circumcision on one will automatically affect the other, even to a greater degree, both of them being small and having little stamina. If they are both circumcised at the same time, this risk will be avoided.

(16) The mother of an uncircumcised boy must not wear anything on her head (Tsy mahazo misaron-doha ny renin-jaza tsy voafora)\textsuperscript{15}. This alludes to the glans penis about to be freed from the prepuce. The operation will be impeded by the mother’s covering her head.

(17) As long as the boy is not circumcised his mother cannot have any adulterous relations, as this can kill the child. (Tsy mahazo mila vady hafa ny renin’ny zaza mbola tsy voafora, fa mahafaty ny zaza-lahy)\textsuperscript{16}. But the father may have such relations except during the days immediately before the circumcision. (18) Then they are strictly forbidden even for him, with his own wife or with other women\textsuperscript{17}. If he did so, the boy would suffer dangerous consequences. However loose the relations among the natives may be from a matrimonial point of view, this taboo draws the line against any form of licentiousness.
We find the same taboo in many different places, all of them concerned with the one and only thought that possible sexual transgressions by the parents will be punished, the punishment striking the child either through death or protracted illness after the operation, or through mental defectiveness. The child will always suffer as a consequence of the parents’ transgressions. If we consider the point from the opposite side, however, and express the idea positively, the meaning of the taboo will be that abstention and self-denial is for the good of the child and helpful towards a successful circumcision. This positive stand is not found expressed in the taboo, as taboos are never formally expressed in a positive way, but we can still draw such a conclusion with regard to the above-mentioned taboo, this being its evident meaning.

(19) The child cannot be taken into the house where rice is stored (*Tsy mahazo manonga tranambo ny tsy voafora*)\(^{18}\). The child is considered unclean and will therefore taint the rice. This impurity is guarded against on other occasions as well.

(20) Uncircumcised children are not allowed to touch a corpse\(^{19}\).

(21) Such children are not allowed to take part at a burial\(^{20}\).

(22) Parents of an uncircumcised child may follow the others to the tomb, but they must not enter it\(^{21}\).

(23) The father must not give any help in carrying the bier\(^{22}\), this being the same as carrying his own child to the grave.

The instrument used for cutting the prepuce may be a knife, a pair of scissors or the blade of a spear, but among the Tanala, Betimisaraka, Antanosy, Antandroy and Sakalava a sharp sliver of bamboo is used (*sila-boloando*), (24) it being forbidden in these tribes to use an instrument made of iron\(^{23}\). Such instruments are all sharp objects that can easily be used in killing. If thoughts tend to move in this direction, the things concerned should be precluded from the circumcision. A sliver of bamboo has not this dangerous aspect. Most probably it has become a dearly bought experience through centuries that the wound is not so easily infected when bamboo sliver is used. The other factor to be reckoned with is that people are very conservative concerning things that are to be used at a ritual act.

Probably the custom of using a sharp bamboo sliver goes back to the time when the Malagasy did not know how to utilize iron. They say

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18 — Taboo
that the use of iron in Madagascar is not many centuries old. I have
gathered some material from the verbal tradition which speaks of bog-
iron being gathered and melted, the anvil being the hard mountain
side. In many places one may find ferruginous stones lying around in
the open. The Malagasy bellows are two pistons that go up and down,
but not simultaneously, The air from each of them is led through two
narrow tubes joined together in the smith’s forge thus allowing for an
even supply of air. Old people can still be found using wooden spades
(\textit{ny kipao}), wooden spears (\textit{lefon-kazo}), plates and spoons. To make a
fire with two wooden sticks is not an unknown art, even in our days.
I have even watched the Mikea doing so, for they have no other kind
of tinder-box.

We have not any proof of the bamboo sliver being used at the
circumcision before the time when tools of iron became available to
everybody. But most probably the ritual conservatism has maintained
the tradition of using wood instead of iron at the circumcision to this
very day.

An absolutely neccessary thing to do before the circumcision takes
place is to find out whether “any ‘sin’ is burdening the boy” (\textit{fahotana
izay mitambesatra aminy}), or his parents, something that only the
\textit{ombiasa} can discover. If he finds out that this is the case, he gives strict
orders that the boy must be cleansed before he can agree to perform
the circumcision. Only sacrifice of a beast can take away the “sin”.
If the impurity of the child derives from its mother she must give the
\textit{ombiasa} all she possesses in the way of ornaments as a gratuity (\textit{ny
saran’ombiasa}). These may consist of ear-rings, neck-chains and old
silver coins in her hair. If the “sin” derives from the father, he must,
besides the beast of sacrifice, give several big pots, 3—4 plates or
other kinds of household goods. These are not merely gifts to the
\textit{ombiasa}: the gratuities also have a strong religious importance: to
atone for wrongs committed, which again means nothing else than
transgressions of certain taboos.

I shall mention some few of the more importants events at a feast
of circumcision in Imerina. From these examples we can learn the
essentials of what takes place in the other tribes.

The feast lasts from three to six days, being a great family occasion
with much singing, music and dancing. On the day before the opera-
tion, however, the parents, grandparents, sisters and brothers must put on mourning. The women comb only half of their hair, whilst the men let their hair become matted and tangled and they all put on ragged clothes. The mourning is believed to result in a successful circumcision. There is a saying which goes: “Out of the depression of evil good comes” (Ny isanjosanjoan’ny ratsy hihavian’ny soa). The putting on of mourning shows that people take the matter seriously, doing everything possible to make the child survive.

(25) Entrance is forbidden to all who do not belong to the boy’s home. The relatives keep vigil the whole of the night before the event, singing the old songs of circumcision. The leader sings about the boy in the future, how he will accomplish great feats, will go out into the world and amass a fortune, becoming strong as an ox and as slippery as an eel. When fighting he will not be thrown to the ground, when running nobody will be able to overtake him. Another song they sing is about the big ox that is about to be slaughtered, and who is going to have the different parts of the beast, telling in the minutest detail of the ritual of quartering. The house the boy will have in future is also glorified with a witty, but accurate description of its equipment and the use of it. When the leader has sung a couple of stanzas, the others repeat the last line as a refrain. Another refrain is the exclamation “Handria!” which can be very effective and expressive, indicating a confirmation of what the leader is singing. Good wishes are given at the end of the song: “Let him survive, do not let the blood flow too freely, let the wound heal easily! Aw-aw-aw!” A thick banana stem as high as a man is put up in the parents’ house, and on top of it is placed a clean new plate containing dry cow-dung and fat of an ox. Small, white stones, called “living stones” are put in a ring around the plate. The stem with the plate on it is called the candlestick (ny fototra fanaoavan-jiro) which indeed it is, as the cow-dung serves as a wick, and the ox-fat as tallow, when the “candle” is lit for the ceremony. At the foot of this candlestick the relatives place gifts of money to the boy by way of congratulations. The gift of money is called “The child’s sacredness” (ny hasin-jaza). By the north-eastern corner of the house some very long sugar-canes with their top leaves still on are raised. To make it clear I shall explain how sugar-canes are planted. The top part of the cane together with the top sprouts are put into the
well-prepared and manured soil with the sprouts on top. This custom of putting sugar-canes in the north-eastern "wishing corner" (ny zoro fiarazana), as it is called, stands for the wish and the dream of having many boys born into the home and the descendants’ constant multiplying.

Besides the slaughtering of the big ox, the fetching of water is a very important part of the programme. If there is a waterfall in the neighbourhood, particularly above the village, the water is often fetched there. The waterfalls that are preferred to the others are those where a certain tough creeper can be found. Its name is Itsilavondriana, i.e. "The one that the waterfall cannot bring to fall" (Hydrostachys verruculosa). The tops of the plant are upturned. The symbolic meaning of this is that the boy may be able to stand firm in life’s adversities and may not so easily become upset either in the direct or in the figurative meaning, and may walk through life with head uplifted.

At dawn a group of strong men go to fetch water in a calabash called "The Pumpkin, the thousand men" (Voatavoarivolahy). Decorated with consecrated chains of beadwork it is carried by one of them in a piece of cloth on the back just as a little child is carried. On returning, however, they are met by another group waiting to give them a "warm" welcome. With sticks and stones they try to get at the calabash. Wild fighting ensues, in which everybody receives a good buffeting. The fetchers of water must give in, running for their lives pursued by a shouting and hooting crowd, whilst the women clap their hands, jeering at the fugitives and praising the pursuers in song. The father of the man carrying the calabash must be alive (velon-dray). It is also necessary for the carrier to be vigorous, as he must be able to reach the house of the child after much leaping, twisting and dodging. The water, called "powerful water" is intended for the surgeon to wash his hands and his knife in. The operation is mostly done by the ombiasa, who does it very quickly, pushing the skin as far back as possible. The prepuce is then swallowed by the boy’s father together with a banana. The wound is washed in juice from a banana stem crushed in the mortar. During the ceremony the mother is creeping around on the floor splashing "powerful water" on to the walls praying sincerely and softly: "Andrianamitra, Andrianamitra, Awo-awo-awo! Let it succeed, let it succeed!" (26) Another woman, who is not allowed to wear any
clothes but for her loosely hanging lamba, puts the child on her back with the wound tightly pressed against her naked back, and she walks quietly back and forth with a rocking motion in order to soothe the whimpering child. Many boys may be circumcised at a time, the eldest being taken first, and so on downwards according to age. There is no particular nursing of the boys afterwards, except that care is taken not to let them play too much outside, thus getting dust and dirt into the wound. If no complications occur, the wound will heal in a fortnight's time. The operation is usually performed during the cold season, all kinds of wounds healing more easily then than in the hot weather.

The above-mentioned taboos all have their clear practical tasks and purposes. Firstly they are to prevent dangerous after-effects and help the wound to heal nicely. Secondly they further the importance of the occasion and the blessing for the child that the ceremony aims at. On asking people why they are so strict about all boys being circumcised the answer more often than not will be that the old tradition must be followed. (27) It is forbidden not to do so (Fady ny tsy mamora ny zazalahy), is another rather common answer. It is very difficult to gather particulars on the matter. In spite of this some more detailed reasons can be stated, built on information given by more reflective and candid Natives:

a. Circumcision is a protection against inflammation of the penis.

b. To a certain degree it is a protection against venereal diseases. When hygienic reasons are given we must have in mind the hot climate which disposes to such diseases. To wash one's body is not a common practice in the Inland, and even when doing so now and again, soap is seldom used. The fishing population is an exception. They bathe in the ocean very often, but soap is useless there, of course.

c. It is a protection for the wife against possible unwillingness to copulate.

d. An uncircumcised person is unclean (maloto).

e. On account of his impurity an uncircumcised person has no right to be laid in the family tomb.

f. The deceased in the family will not receive him when he is buried.

g. An uncircumcised person is not a man in the physical sense, and as a grown-up no woman will want to marry him. That the meaning
of the circumcision is to make the boy a man we see clearly from the common expression: *Ny mandehilahy ny zaza*, which directly translated means to make the child a man, this expression being synonymous with circumcision.

The act and the feast together are rituals of transition where the child steps into the society as an acknowledged member, besides being physically accepted as a normal and masculine individual. Through circumcision a boy is cleansed from the impurity of his birth and his antisocial character, acquiring the purity and popularity of a normal member of society.

The different things used at the feast, the fresh sugar-canves in the "wishing corner", the big stud bull, the gifts of money and the "living stones" mark the feast distinctly as one of fertility. The ritual songs and felicitations have the same purpose.

Among forest tribes in the east, among the coastal tribes and in the Bara tribe the feast of circumcision is not very much different from the celebration in Imerina. Often the ceremony is performed at the sacrificial post in the village. However, the prayers stress explicitly the wish for the women to give birth to many children, particularly boys. The religious part of the feast is a confirmation of its evident and conspicuous purpose as a feast of fertility and procreation.
CHAPTER XVI

*Transgression, guilt, punishment*

The personal character and the attitude to the conception of the taboo are made evident by the ever-present possibility of transgression, and still more by the necessary consequences of transgression, which are guilt and punishment. These three expressions are in this connection far from being theological terms, nor are they words created in recent times. They belong to the Malagasy language from olden times, and are directly connected with *fady*. During the many conversations I have had with Natives about the taboos, these words came into the discussion spontaneously, and the ethnographical material would not be complete without reference to this matter. In this book I do not deal with these fundamental terms in detail, but only use them as far it is necessary for the understanding of the present topic.

Before dealing with these terms it is necessary to explain what the Natives mean by sin. This is called *ota*, and to sin is *ny manota*. It may simply mean to err, to make a mistake, not to go in the right way, as for instance, when one of the four bearers of the palanquin has not yet learnt to carry in the correct manner, and thus upsets the balance of the team.

*Ota* has a moral meaning as well: doing wrong. Very often it is not used as an independent word, but linked to *fady*. The complete expression is therefore, *ota fady*: doing wrong to taboo. To do wrong to taboo is *ny manota fady*, and this may refer to something extremely scandalous or unspeakably vile, without referring to any special taboo. Another meaning, however, of this compound is more limited, and concerns directly the different taboos. As a digression I shall mention that it was through influence of Christianity on the language (from 1820 onwards) that the word *ota* has come to be used in another way.
The Christians preferably say *ota* only, which means sin in the Christian sense, i.e. a definite sin against God. Usually they do not say "*ota fady*", or "*ny manota fady*" (to sin against taboo), as this alludes too much to the old and traditional way of thinking.

Doing wrong to taboo is the traditional meaning of "sin", and it is tantamount to transgression of taboo, which is called: *ny mandika fady*. The verb *mandika* means, generally speaking, to overstep, to cross a path or a road (*ny mandika ləlanə*, cf. ch. XII, nos. 34, 59, ch. XIII, nos. 21, 22, ch. XIV, nos. 21, 22, 23, 25, 41). It is also used in the term: to transgress the laws of the State (*ny mandika ny ləlanə*), but this should not be mistaken for *fady*. As far as the laws of the French Colonial administration are concerned, the breaking of these is not the same as breaking the taboos. People do not think that transgression of State-made laws will be punished by the Supernatural Powers. One may be put into prison or be sentenced to forced labour for some months or years. It is a different matter to act against a taboo. Then the inherited rules and principles, which are one's personal property, are being flouted, and the transgressor finds himself in serious danger.

If we ask: to whom do they do wrong? the Natives have a clear answer. It is in a casuistic form, and may be divided into different groups. It is a transgression against *fady* of the fetish (*ota fadin'ny ody*). In connection with this, but in practice a separate case, it is the breaking of the *ombiasa*'s *fady* (*ota fadin'ny ombiasa*), if his orders are not respected. In another group we find the transgression of the *fady* of the ancestors (*ota fadin-drazana*), which includes historically determined taboos as well, that are linked to special occasions. Among these are a number of plant and animal taboos. It is transgression against parents' and guardians' taboo (*ota fadin'ny ray aman-dreney*), and the "sinner" is blamed (*omena tsiny*) if some of the authoritative taboos are broken. The village council is included in this group of authority, which is known as "father and mother."

Then we have the great sphere called the transgression of the *fady* of *vintana* (*ota fadin-bintana*), according to its character and system.

There are many breakings of taboos which cannot directly be placed in any of the above-mentioned groups. There might be the breaking of a tradition or rule concerning general behaviour. These are very strict rules. As such customs are very old and thus have become
tradition, departure from them is the same as breaking the ancestors' taboos. The customs of every-day life (*fomba sy fanao*) are actually synonymous with the "ancestors' customs" (*fombam-drazana*). It is also categorically and clearly stated: The ears of the one who changes the customs of the ancestors will rot off (*Ny manova ny fomban-drazana ho lo sofina*).

Transgressions of the demons' *fady* form a very special sphere, and there are several groups of them. In West Madagascar, for instance, they have the *Ndriamandresy* - and the *Doany*-worship. Among the southern tribes, including the Antanosy, they have the *Helo*-worship. Every demon has its own taboo, which is kept by the demon-priest or the demon-priestess. The possessed medium is often a woman. She speaks to the people in a deep trance, and the communications are mostly concerned with eating restrictions and administering special medicines in order to ward off future disaster. If the priestess breaks these taboos, she will have to die, and the threatening disaster cannot be warded off, because it is transgression of the demons' personal taboos. The disaster may be in form of famine, cyclone or epidemics. Whatever the type of transgression the atonement must always include a plea to *Andriamanitra*. The name of this god is most commonly used when warning people against the consequences of transgression, and disaster which has come because of breaking of taboo is usually looked upon as punishment by this god.

The aftermath of wrongdoing and transgression is a personal feeling of responsibility and guilt. Guilt is called *heloka* in Merina and in Betsileo, and *havoor* in Sakalava, and refers to guilt in relation to an individual or to Supernatural Powers. The adjective *meloka* indicates the basic meaning of the word: something crooked, a crooked road or a crooked thing. But it is used figuratively as well, for instance about one who has committed a crime. An *olona meloka* is one of "a crooked mind", whilst the opposite is an upright man, one with a "straight heart" (*mahitsy fo*). *Meloka* (crooked) is an expression of moral valuation and is also used as juridical term. *Voaheloka* is one who is sentenced by an official lawcourt as guilty of a crime.

Guilt means a radical and fundamental change in the relations between the wrong-doer and the wronged. Due to the transgression,
the relationship between, for instance, a son and his father (and of course Andriamanitra) becomes hostile and implacable. Two expressions will throw light on the meaning of guilt. Ny mivadika fanekena means "to break an agreement", or to disavow one's promise of loyalty, to betray. Ny mivadika means literally: "to turn oneself over from one side to the another". The other expression which is directly connected with the breaking of taboo, is to break velirano (mivadi-belirano), which is an agreement, as, for instance, not to steal from each other (cf. ch. V, no. 47). Agreements like this are inherited (lova), handed down from generation to generation. When somebody has broken a taboo, people say that he has been "conquered by velirano" (resim-belirano izy). He "is guilty" towards those who founded the taboo. This is in accordance with the original initiation ceremony and its solemnly pronounced rules and the consequences to be suffered by those who might break the agreement. It is analogous to the breaking of a fetish-taboo, but this is in a different category.¹ There is also a state of contract between the witch-doctor and the client. The witch-doctor guarantees complete healing, complete deliverance from the unhappy condition complained of, in return for a fixed fee. The other party pledges himself to the keeping of all the taboos concerned. When one "turns oneself away from" an agreement or a covenant, one breaks a taboo, whether it concerns collective or individual agreements, or whether one has to do with a certain fetish or demon.

The heloka-relationship is clearly seen in the conception that guilt on account of taboo-breaking is a serious handicap. A man who is mortally ill cannot be healed if he or someone else in his house is guilty. If a woman in labour is not able to deliver the child, the reason is that she or her husband has broken some taboo. When the birth of a baby is going well, this is a sign that the family are all just and good people. Among the Vezo the fishing will be unsuccessful if a transgression has "stuck" to the village. Only when a sufficient sacrifice has been made will the primary cause of the handicap have been taken away.

I have myself witnessed what a heavy burden this heloka-feeling can be. A Tanala woman had broken an old taboo. Hundreds of people were gathered at the sacrificial place. Beasts were killed and sacrificed,
and the priest explained to the Higher Powers the reason why the people had come together. It was the guilt of the woman.

The very serious and solemn way in which the Vazimba act after taboo-breaking shows clearly that the feeling of guilt is caused by personal guilt in relation to divine powers. When, for instance, a boy has had sexual intercourse with a cousin of a forbidden category, great sacrifices will be conducted, and one of the old men will confess on behalf of the “sinner” and humbly beg Andriananahary and the dead for forgiveness, and to take the ox, instead of the life of the one concerned. Because of the strong feeling of solidarity and of relationship the infection is spread to all the others who live in the same cave and in the community. They are all engaged both in what is good and in what is bad. A taboo-breaker is a disgrace (henatra) to his home and to his community, as he brings the whole society out of its normal status and into a dangerous position.

Even if the person concerned has committed the offence unconsciously, the guilt is still transferred to him. There is no exception, whether he does wrong consciously (minia manota) or unconsciously (manota tsy nahy). Even the animals are included, and the breeder must not treat the matter lightly. An angry ox which hurts its owner seriously, must pay with its life. A hen which crows is unnatural and abnormal, and this is all its own fault, for which it must die. There is no atonement or penance for the animals’ breaking of taboos. The state of guilt is even transferred to the children. A circumcision cannot be done if there is any “wrong-doing sticking to the child” (fahotana miraiitra amin’ny zasa). It might be something of which the parents are guilty. If, for instance, a child is born a cripple, an idiot, or blind, it is obvious that this is caused by some hidden transgression, and the parents are the first ones to be suspected. This belief is very strong and vivid, and is certainly not due to any possible influence from Christian mission work. The idea of the child’s suffering for its parents’ transgressions has no connection with the conception of original sin. This idea has no dogmatic form in Malagasy conceptions, but deals only with concrete and single transgressions on the part of the parents. If we ask the well-known question: “Who has sinned, he or his parents?” the answer will in many instances be: his parents.
The punishment is a consequence of the heloka-relationship. In this connection voina is a central word: terrible misfortune, punishment. The adjective mavoina means to be extremely unfortunate, in a painful situation, as a consequence of having come into a wrong position, in opposition to the taboo authorities. Thursday is a day which brings voina (andro mahavoina). To remove voina (ny manala voina) is to cleanse oneself, remove impurity and guilt which otherwise will bring disaster and pain.

One who takes the place of a taboo-breaker takes over voina (ny misolo voina) and carries his punishment, and this one is the sacrificial animal.

"The bird of ill omen" is one who is often struck by disaster (Rabevoina). This is also used about a woman who has become a widow for the second or the third time. One who is dead and buried in exile is called Rabevoina, but it is a dangerous and ugly word.

Another term for punishment is famaliana, which means a response, an answer, or to render like for like, either favourably or in wrath, but here it has the meaning of punishment.

What then does a Native understand by punishment for transgression? Certain of the punishments are seen in direct relation to the taboos, and they are often concerned with the native soil. To sell parts of the native soil will bring poverty and exile. To oppose one's parents and the village chief will bring expulsion from the community and loss of all social and economic rights. To build a family tomb in a wrong way will bring frequent deaths, and so on.

In the previous chapters punishment has been mentioned immediately after the taboo, "one who does this or that, will be struck in such and such a way." This is quite natural, because the mentioning of punishment coherently belongs to the common taboo-formulation. A list of the most common punishments would look thus:

Barrenness.
Banishment with curses from his native soil.
Banishment from his home.
Exile for the rest of his life, and a roving life.
Inability to earn a living.
Forfeiture of the privileges which other people enjoy.
Inability to be like other people.
Suffering, even loss of life.
Premature death.
Death of children.
Leprosy.
Blindness.
Dumbness.
Deformity.
Swollen foot and arm.
Partial paralysis.
Ragged clothes.
Sudden death.
No ritual burial.
Death by lightning and hail.
A terrible death.
A filthy and worthless life.
Becoming the scum of the village.

This list shows that all the punishments are concerned with this life and not with the next. Secondly it shows that only a few of the many punishments are executed by people, such as the expulsion and cursing by the parents and the village council, and the people’s contempt. All the other punishments come from the powers beyond. The judgement of evil deeds takes place in this life, and it is performed by Andriamanitra and his watchmen (mpiambina) or messengers (irakiraka), who watch over the keeping of the taboos. This god’s domain is practically unlimited, from misuse of his name to lack of discipline and respect for the laws of the community, from dishonouring parents to the killing of certain birds and eating forbidden food. Here we face a problem. Why are the punishments of the gods so much more important and efficacious than the punishments administered by people? Why do they leave the punishment to the gods when it is a matter of taboo-breaking? It is not sufficient to say that it is a mystic power which works automatically. But by grouping the taboo-conceptions together and seeing them in their context, one will find that the punishment corresponds with the founding of the taboos. They have been founded by calling on Andriamanitra, that he must bear witness that what they have determined is true and correct. And in the cere-
monial cursing he is called on to execute the punishment on the one who has broken the taboo in question. In this way the taboo-tradition is always a living and present factor, binding everyone to the rules. The present rests in the past, and the past is constantly revived, and thus it determines the actions of the people. This is what the Malagasy express by saying: "The ancestors' power is in the taboos" (Ny herin-drazana ao anatin'ny fady). This is the dynamics of the tradition reflected in the thought and actions of the individual.

What, then, do the Natives do in order to avoid punishment? To discover this we shall have to refer to the whole cultic apparatus with sacrifices and purifications as well as the ceremonial exorcisms. These have already been dealt with above.

These functions have the effect of compensating for the life of the one concerned with a sacrifice, and of restoring what has been broken down. Furthermore, they reinstate the individual and the society into the undangerous relationship with the powers, and restore normal conditions.

The sacrifice has another meaning as well. Through the sacrifice or the ceremonious purification the individual is changed. He has gone through a process. The ceremony is the end of a physical and psychical crisis, and a new and better situation has been created. The ceremonies lead to a kind of sanctification, which works positively in the form of fertility, physical strength, and the hope of obtaining desirable things. There is never anything static in the life of the individual or of the society, but there is constant movement and change in one way or the other. In order to make the things or the movement work in the desirable direction, one has to use means which are preferably connected with personal sacrifice. It is what one has been struggling for and denying oneself to attain that is used in ritual practices. The sacrifices may differ both with regard to form and meaning, but in this connection I shall deal with those which are connected with guilt only.

There is the purification sacrifice, where the blood and the stomach-contents of the animal are the means of purification. Then we have the atonement sacrifice or the compensation-sacrifice for the man's life. This has not the character of an atonement sacrifice in relation to the gods. In this respect there is no mystic relationship formed between
the gods and the people, nor is there any spiritual and continuous union between them. The purpose of the sacrifices is to keep the gods as far away from the every-day life and the people as possible.

Repentance and confession of wrongdoing are not unfamiliar concepts. On the contrary they are very often part of the sacrificial procedure, and are means of easing complicated or dangerous situations, like serious illness and difficult births. A distinct change for the better, and a new attitude of heart and character towards the village authorities and the parents is what everybody would expect from one who has offended them. This is a virtue of necessity. But in relation to the ancestors and Andriamanitra there is no new mental or religious attitude. The relationship with these is restored, not by a change of heart, but by the sacrifice of an animal as compensation for a human life.

The taboo-breaker himself must not conduct his own defence, but the sacrificial priest must act on behalf of him and of those who are present. A taboo-transgression can never be blotted out by the transgressor himself; it must be done according to the traditional ceremony. And the official ceremony includes the unity of the village as well as the dead and the gods. When the ceremony is over, there is no "arrière pensée", but the matter is absolutely finished.

This blotting out of the transgression may have a fixed form, as it has among the Betsimisaraka of Marolambo district. They have an annual sacrificial feast (Ny mahalala isan-taona). This is held in the month of April. The village chief sends a strict order to everybody that they must join in the feast. Young men go into the forest and cut long branches of the Lendemy-tree and place them at the entrances to the village, both at the southern, western, northern and eastern sides, so that they look like village gates. In every house the family takes a fowl and places it by the door, where they kill it. The heart, the lungs and the liver of the fowl are then wrapped into palm-leaves, and this parcel is hung up on the branches over the entrance roads. All the people then gather at the village square. The sacrificial priest conducts a prayer. He calls on Zanahary, Zanahary-man, Zanahary-woman, "He who passeth over the skies" (Ndremitetilanitra), "The god of thunder" (Rabegodona), "The great lightning" (Ravarabe), "The great hail-god (Ramikabe), "He who growleth strongly" (Beeronerona), "The one with the clean nails" (Madiovasanakoh), "He who
splitteth the Zahana-tree with his look” (Masofamakizahana), “He who is very hairy on his chest” (Rabevolotratra), “The messenger” (Rantomoa), “The gold-laced messenger” (Andriambariona), “The god of the forest-silence” (Imbarakoinona), the sun, the moon, the stars, the ancestral soil (the native land), the four corners of the world, the sacred rivers and lakes, the tall mountains. After this the dead ones are called on, and then he says: “During the many days, months and years that we have lived, we have broken many taboos. We confess this fact in front of you and ask for forgiveness and for the blotting out of the transgressions. Here are fowls which we bring to you. We give them as substitutes for all of us who live in the village, and we pray for forgiveness.” Afterwards there is feast with fowl’s meat and home-made liquor. This is a general annual purification of the place and of the village from the taboo impurity, and at the same time it is an attainment of blessings and good things. Both this ceremony and the ceremonies mentioned above are concerned with taboo-transgressions.

There are also ceremonies which blot out future transgressions. A Native will now and again come across dangerous things without being aware of it. In several places it is therefore common to make future arrangements where they ask for forgiveness in advance, in order to obtain permission to break this or that taboo. In the Bara tribe the poorer folk sometimes have to go to the Highland to earn enough money to pay their taxes, and they may be away for several months at a time. When the cattle-drivers are taking the cattle all the way to Antsirabe or to Tananarive, they may run the risk of coming across forbidden things. It takes several weeks to walk from Ihosy to Tananarive. On the way the Bara will have to buy food at the primitive rest-houses and this food may be made from rice, pig’s meat, fowl or cow-meat with a mixture of different vegetables. It might be next to impossible to find out exactly what the food consists of. It is not the custom to ask what the food is made of. And the traveller is certainly far too hungry to worry about this. It may also happen that he finds some edible roots by brooks and in the forests. Many times it is difficult for them not to eat things which are fady. In order to make an arrangement for the journey, a regular ceremony is conducted at the home place before they leave. A large rice-mortar is filled with
water and placed in front of the house, where the sacrificial priest lives. A black fowl is killed, the comb of which is cut into small pieces and put into the mortar. The priest takes scrapings from the threshold of the house and puts these into the mortar as well. All this is carefully mixed with the head of an axe. Then a man takes a strong rope, arranges it as if to make a lasso for catching an ox and puts the loop into the mortar. Every one who is going to drink puts his head down into the mortar. The man pulls the rope so that the one who drinks gets it around his neck. Nobody is allowed to drink without being caught in the rope. This is a sign (famantarana) that the danger of the taboo is caught and that those who drink from the mortar are freed from the restrictions. Whilst they drink they must mention the eating taboos and the action taboos which they will break, and say: “I shall eat this and that. I shall do this and that. I am free, I shall not be stricken, even if I eat and do this and that.” (Haniko ny anona, ataoko ny anona. Afaka aho izay, ka tsy maninona intsony na hihinana sy hanao izany aza). What he drinks is called “the water of redemption” or of “deliverance” (ranom-panavotana). Because of the deliverance from the ties of the taboo he may eat prohibited food, and he will not be ill. This ceremony is performed only as a matter of necessity, to remedy the effects of a “force majeure”, the inability to observe the taboos owing to conditions in the world outside the village.
CHAPTER XVII

Lifting of taboo

Sacrifices and purifications have an important function in that they take away the barriers which have been set up by certain fady. As long as the taboo-breaker is in the state of guilt, he is bound by the punishing powers, and he is a taboo to his environment. He does not belong socially in the community, but he is separated from the others in his daily life, a more or less isolated individual. When, however, the ceremonial function has been conducted, these barriers are abolished, and he is reinstated into society. This abolishing of the isolation, which is extended to other spheres as well, has been stressed in a remarkable way by van Gennep. He calls it annulation du tabou or levée d’interdit, which does not only mean the lifting of taboos, but the reinstatement in society with full social rights. Some examples will show the great importance of this.

In the marriage and sexual taboos there are certain rules which cannot be changed: all the rules concerning incest in its narrow sense (see p. 219). If, however, cousins who are the children of a brother and a sister married at different places, are to be allowed to enter into marriage, this can take place only if the relation taboo has been removed from the two. Then the prohibited relationship between them is neutralized in that the taboo itself is lifted. When the newly-married woman has moved to her husband’s house, she is not allowed to visit her own parents for at least a month after the wedding. After this, however, the taboo is lifted and she may visit them freely. During the marriage ceremony the parents and relatives of the boy and the girl eat together, as befits friends and relations. This joint meal removes many of the barriers which might exist between the two families, and the taboos are lifted from them to a certain degree.
When a stranger settles in a village, he is treated according to the rules of hospitality, as explained in ch. I. If, however, as may happen, he enters into blood-brotherhood with one of the village people, the stranger-taboo will be lifted through the ceremony of entering into this union. He is no longer regarded as a stranger, but as a brother. But if no such union takes place, the taboos work as long as he is there. When he leaves, the taboos are lifted, so that the dangerous and mystic influence of the stranger is gone. During his stay people were reserved and careful out of fear of the stranger’s unknown power. Hospitality is not a matter of helpfulness and service only. It is quite as much a counteraction for the protection of the community, in order that it shall not depart from its normal harmonious course. This self-protective and strained attitude is taken away when the stranger has left the place, and people may turn back to their normal way of life.

As long as a woman is in child-bed, she is surrounded by many taboos (cf. ch. XIV). Nobody must enter her house except her closest relatives. A pole with a grass-tuft on top, placed outside her door, indicates “No admittance”\(^2\). After a month or two, she takes the child out for the first time, so that it may “see the sun”. But she cannot move about freely before her taboo has been removed. This she cannot do on her own. The elders of the village (or the ombiasa), decide on the time and the day, and the lifting of the taboo can be done only through a ceremony. The woman gives herself and the child a bath, puts on new clothes, and steps over a fire which has been made on a path. These are purification ceremonies accompanied by a family feast with congratulations and gifts. The water, the fire and the new clothes are means of delivering her from the taboos. From now on she may visit others and go to market on every market-day, as there is now nothing more to prevent her.

Both she and her husband are now free from the special taboos of the time of pregnancy. During this time the husband is bound to absolute abstention from intercourse with other women. When, however, the wife has given birth to a child, he is free from this taboo and may have intercourse with others, the customary atonement for the infidelity being a gift to his wife.

A child’s hair is cut for the first time at 3-4 months, before which (1) it is prohibited to touch its head, (2) or to make it laugh. The
first haircut is not only a matter of cutting the hair. It must be done by one whose parents are alive, and who has a good head of hair himself. Some of the locks are then put into manioc roots and eaten by an ox. The rest is carefully hidden under the sacred Tamarind or in the house³. With regard to the girls this is part of an initiation ceremony. When the girl has attained the age of 2-4 years, she has her ear-lobes pierced for ear-rings. Her grandmother performs this task with a long thorn, and small wooden pegs are inserted in the holes, in order to keep them open. This ceremony, in combination with the hair-cut, gives the girls full status as human beings. Both of the ceremonies are family feasts, and as such must not be held in secrecy. Before the feast the children are in several respects taboo-children.

The boy is taboo until he has been circumcised, and he must be treated strictly according to this, but the circumcision ceremony lifts his taboo and makes him a proper human being (p. 264).

A period of mourning ends with the lifting of the fixed prescriptions of sorrow (cf. ch. VIII). By washing oneself in the river, one is cleansed from the impurity. During the time of mourning one must wear rags and let the hair and nails grow. The great changes, from dirty rags to proper clothing, from straggling and tangled hair to a neat coiffure, from long and dirty nails to nicely manicured ones, all show that the taboos have been lifted, and everybody may go back to his ordinary life. When the deceased is still in the house, the event is felt as a heavy burden on the whole village. Nobody works, and nobody goes to the market place. But after the burial, when all these taboos have been officially lifted, everything returns to normal, the work starts, the children play freely, and people go to market with baskets on their heads, driving turkeys, geese, pigs and cattle along the road. Life has resumed its normal rhythm.

The phenomenon that the taboos last for a certain time and then are lifted, causes certain periods and intervals in the Natives’ lives, a kind of rhythmical programme consisting of periods of prohibition and periods of freedom, and they are both officially controlled. It is never a private matter. It is the village council that administrates and decides these matters. But at the same time the disposing of
these periods follows the consensus of public opinion, and it corresponds to each individual's inner conviction and voluntary acceptance. One might think that the outer law of power, which nobody can oppose, the consensus of opinion, and the free will of the individual were three incompatible factors, but in practice this is not the case. They are not contradictory to each other, but coordinated.

Another important distinctive feature of the lifting of taboos is that it always creates something new. The child is not the same as it was before the haircut or the circumcision. A child born on a dangerous vintana-day, but who has had its destiny changed by exorcism and sacrifice, is not the same as before. It is a new, undangerous and legitimate member of society. The lifting of taboos is not a negative action only, as one might think, an annulment of rules and laws, but creates a new situation, which both physically and mentally is better than the previous one. The lifting of fady with appropriate ritual will always work in a positive way.

All rules and restrictions which can be lifted may be classified as temporary taboos. The others are permanent and cannot be lifted. The special taboos of incest and those prohibiting the use of the father's plate and spoon, taking his seat, the seniority-taboos as a whole, are inflexible. Among the tribes of the South and the West Coast a house where a person has died must not be inhabited by anybody. The house is burned down, and the site is never used again. All taboos about deformed animals and people, the constant eating- and plant-taboos are always in force. Witches, a child who has so strong a vintana that it cannot be changed, one who is expelled from his family, all have taboos which can never be lifted, as there are in practice no sacrifices nor lustrations which can remove their guilt or impurity. The punishment which follows as a consequence of breaking the taboos must be borne to the bitter end.
The most comprehensive translation of fady is "prohibition" or "prohibited", referring to what one is not allowed to do, objects with which one must not come into contact, words which must not be uttered, places which must be avoided. They become fady-actions, fady-objects, fady-words, fady-places respectively. These are all negative expressions: thou shalt not. At the same time the taboos point to the objects, actions and persons concerned, and put a distinct mark on them. Fady is a sign of warning, indicating that it is very dangerous to have anything to do with what is prohibited. The transgressor becomes on the one hand taboo to himself, regarding the matter as personally felt, and on the other hand he becomes taboo to his environment and his fellows.

That which is taboo, however, is not dangerous as long as there is no profanation. A sacrificial place is simply a place where sacrifices are offered, and need only be dreaded if it is defiled by untimely actions or unseemly behaviour, in other words, if the sacred place is looked upon in a non-ritual way. It can only be approached ritually. A corpse is simply looked upon as a corpse, a dead human being, and a number of different reactions and feelings are linked to it. It is only by coming into contact with the corpse that one gets unclean. Thus fady is always connected with particular actions and situations where transgression is possible.

As "prohibited" and "prohibition" do not say anything about their basis, we shall have to consider the powers which create and provoke the taboos. One of the ethnologists who has studied this and similar problems very thoroughly is Sir James Frazer. He characterizes the taboos as negative magic. They are just a special application of sym-
pathetic magic, with its two laws of similarity and contact. According to the primitive way of thinking these laws regulate the course of nature quite independently of human will. To the magician's way of thinking there should be a fault in the line of argument. The two great principles of homoeopathic and contagious magic are a mistaken association of ideas. Because of the sympathetic magic's nature there should exist a mystic relationship, so that the things should work through the secret sympathy, even if they are distinctly separated from each other. The impulses are then transferred from one to another by means of some invisible ether². According to these theories the taboos should be primarily determined by an impersonal and independent power which works by its own dynamics, irrespective of the will and influence of man.

Whether or not Frazer's theories are applicable to Malagasy ideas and train of thought can be found out, for instance by a reference to chapter XVI, Transgression, Guilt, Punishment. Here we may put some questions. Are the individual and the collective group only left to the mercy of the so-called mystic power of magic? And does this power dominate the actions and the behaviour of people merely in a mechanical way in the many critical situations which they have to face because of the taboos? Are the taboos exclusively determined by the principles of this impersonal power?

It is obvious that the individual's personal attitude cannot be excluded with regard to consciousness and knowledge of transgression and guilt. Transgression leads to a mental revolution. The question is, however, whether this is "contagion" in itself, leading mechanically to this result, or if it is knowledge and consciousness of transgression and guilt (ota fady — heloka). According to Frazer it should be contagion, thus being an automatic result of magic. This, however, cannot be the case, as it is the consciousness and feeling of guilt which lead to the mental crisis. A grown-up and conscious human being does not feel contagion, nor will he break down spiritually and physically without being conscious of his transgression, and thus feeling his guilt. Contagion alone as an isolated phenomenon does not give sufficient basis for explanation. It is only when one is conscious of ota fady and heloka that one feels the contagious. The psycho-physical impurity does not work in an impersonal way, as if it were something like
cholera or a plague epidemic, but as a result of the taboo-breaker's feeling of having come into a new and dangerous position in his relationship towards definite authorities.

If a native has eaten something unclean without knowing it, he will not become ill. It is afterwards, if he learns that he has broken a taboo, that he panics and becomes sick. It is a misconception that the taboos may be explained by means of the two magic laws only.

I am aware that Frazer does not overlook the role which religion plays in people's daily life and in human history. But he sees religion as having developed from the so-called primitive stage of life, and in the course of evolution human beings have arrived at a higher level, which is the magic, and from this man has finally ascended to the religious stage. As magic in itself and its technique is a rationalistic method of mastering the different problems in human life, and as Frazer lays one-sided stress on the magic when explaining the taboos, the objection may be raised that he sees the matter from a rationalistic point of view only, that he generalizes too much in his theory, and puts it forward too schematically.

Neither the theory of evolution, nor the opposite view concerning degeneration from an ideal prehistoric stage and downwards to the so-called primitive level, with fetishes and polytheism, will, methodologically, give a correct picture of the taboos. As, therefore, the historical or prehistoric evidence of the very origin does not give any satisfactory explanation of the present topic, the empirical and documentary method — in other words, observation of facts from the every-day life of the people — must be decisive in this matter. In order not to omit real and concrete instances the matter will have to be dealt with in a wider connection.

There is certain conduct which the society expects of its members, for instance to respect agreements, whether they are between man and man, or between man and the gods. In the latter instance it is a covenant which is made with the gods. If they help in such and such a way and in a certain situation a sacrifice will be made to them. Failure to fulfil the covenant is a breach of contract. The obligations of the individual and the society are quite evident here. It is not only the taboo-breaking in itself that creates contagion, but the consciousness of guilt and punishment. This moral component throws a
clear light on the notion of taboo, as man's personality is here brought inevitably into the limelight.

The Natives' personal attitude and obligations are clearly seen from the type of ceremony observed when the taboos were originally founded. They are linked to tradition because they are "the ancestors' commandments". These are even called "fady which take vengeance" (fady mody), because they are initiated with commination. The importance of basing regulations and rules on comminatory ceremonies can hardly be overrated. Without these the taboos would be without importance and effect. A few of these comminatory rites are mentioned in this book. When it is said again and again: "If you kill, or if you eat this or that animal, you will suffer from leprosy", this refers very often to an official ceremony which the family has conducted some time in the past. This is imprinted on the minds of the children and forms an important part of their education. If one breaks the taboo one becomes guilty in relation to the ancestors, and one knows, according to what is learnt in childhood, that the punishment will come. It is the conscious feeling of guilt for having opposed the will of the sacred ancestors which results in contagion. If we ask a Malagasy why a transgressor is struck by disaster, he will usually reply that it is because the taboo has been broken, but as a further explanation he will say that in fact the person was to blame in relation to his forefathers (Nanan-tsiny eo anatrehan'ny razana izy ka niharan-doza). The disasters mentioned at the original initiation ceremony will strike, and then contagion follows. When we say that the taboos in a way work "automatically" when transgressed, we must see this in connection with the predisposed mind and attitude of the Natives, which is rooted in the personal conviction that it will always happen like that. When talking of this predisposed mind of the individual, we must see it in a wide and comprehensive meaning. Both the taboos themselves, the Natives' explanations about origin and tradition, and the causes and effects of the taboos are formed in accordance with the pattern of thinking and actions, the pattern of behaviour, which the society has inherited from the past. In this respect the individual has an innate taboo-mentality.

Frazer's one-sided explanation of the taboos is supported in van Gennep's book Tabou et Totémisme, where the author lays particular
stress on contagion and sanctity (*hasina*), when he says: "C’est sur les
deux notions de tohina (contagion) et de hasina (puissance extra-
naturelle) que repose, à mon avis, le fady". He identifies *hasina* with
*mana*. But to say that contagion is the main basis of *fady* is actually to
stop half way in the argumentation, because it is necessary to ask:
why does one have a feeling of being infected?

If the taboos are limited to *hasina* only, it will give too narrow a
frame which many of them will fall outside, yet even these have the
typical character of *fady*!

In connection with the Natives’ way of thinking Frazer says:
"In short, magic is a spurious system of natural law as well as a
fallacious guide of conduct; it is a false science as well as an abortive
art". And furthermore: "In short, to him magic is always an art, never
a science; the very idea of science is lacking in his undeveloped mind."
This point of view represents the traditional opinion that the Natives
are "primitive" and thus inferior and childish in their way of thinking
and reasoning. One is justified in asking: Is the witch-doctor, and for
that matter are the people in general, undeveloped in their train of
thought? And is there really a lack in rational thinking? In agreement
with Malinowski I maintain that to say that there generally is a fault
in the Natives’ way of thinking is a questionable theory. How would
the Native be able to support himself and to build up an organised
society if he had a fundamental logical fault in his way of thinking?
On the contrary he shows both intelligence, ability to think logically,
and common sense in his every-day life. We have only to think of the
rice-plantation and its complicated irrigation system. It is not seldom
that the farmer reaps a hundredfold and even more. This does not
require hard work only, but a fair amount of intelligence. He can
remember the family pedigree for 6—8 generations, he knows about
his family connections with most of its branches, and he can clearly dis-
tinguish between the different branches when there is a question about
relationship and the right to be buried in the family tomb. He does
not believe in any magic law about the force of gravity when he
observes a stone falling down to the ground, and nobody can expect
him to see things in light of the laws of physics and chemistry, as he
has never had any contact with modern physical thinking and tech-
nique. But does this prove that he is lacking anything in his ability to think logically?

When the time comes for the witch-doctor to prevent bad crops and disaster, he will not begin to cast his spells if, for instance, the rice has not been planted in a proper way, or if the farmer has not shown diligence and insight in good husbandry. He will never take action at an unsuitable time, nor will he turn a deaf ear to fair argument. He first makes use of all reasonable means, forbidding this and that, in line with people’s common sense. It is only when none of these means can help that he turns to other devices. These are not first and foremost based on reasonable thinking. They are on a different level, whether they are of a magic or religious nature or both combined. It is hard to draw a distinguishing line between the two.

When sound reasoning and calculation of probabilities fail, faith comes into the picture, and prayers and sacrifices are resorted to. To the Malagasy, reason is not incompatible with religion. On the contrary, his actions are determined by a religious view of life. Reasonable thinking and spontaneous faith are both used to reach his goal. The visible world is not the only reality to him, but the invisible world as well, with all the deified powers of nature, the world of the gods and the ancestors. All this is embraced in his monistic conception of the world of reality, the visible and the invisible. As this is mainly a matter of faith and religious conviction, the above-mentioned description of the “primitive” intelligence as lacking and faulty will not serve. The Natives’ actions are determined by his view of life, and therefore one cannot think of him as just a ball tossed between the so-called magic laws.

As to the view of life, faith and personal conviction, the cognition theories of the philosophers can lead to the expression of certain opinions. Theologians must form their judgments on principle. To the Christian Missions in the field the study of these things is a challenging necessity. It is not the purpose of this book, however, to say how a matter ought to be, but to find out objectively what it is.

R. R. Marett bases the taboos on the mystic power and characterizes them as “negative mana”. The place, the person, the thing are taboo because they are loaded with power. And like this author,
Nathan Söderblom lays particular stress on the mana idea, the more or less impersonal power. Let us try this theory in connection with a typical Malagasy example, the Vazimba graves. If anything is looked upon as deadly dangerous, it is these. But is this so only because these old graves are filled with mystic and impersonal power? That they are filled with power is only a half-way explanation of the places being taboo. This power is by no means there independently. The grave belongs to the Vazimba spirits, and it is this conviction that makes the people so frightened of the place. If someone by accident happens to come near to the grave, or a pig has polluted it, the spirits’ anger will be aroused. They reveal themselves in different ways, most commonly in dreams and visions. They might come right to the sleeping person at night in a terrifying appearance, with burning red eyes, and ask directly why they have been disturbed and offended. In such a situation it is not a question of an impersonal power but of a personal one. This is rooted in the belief in the real existence of the spirits, and this belief is manifested in the wide-spread Vazimba-cult. The power is linked to beings or spirits, who live their own life, according to common belief. The mana theory proves in many ways to be rather inapplicable when explaining such phenomena.

In support of the contention that the personal element is strong we have but to point to the Malagasy conviction that a thing or a person cannot exist in itself, or himself, independently, but must necessarily have an owner, a master, according to the well-known expression: Tsy maintsy misy tompony, it (or he, she) must have an owner, a master. This idea even prevails in the language, especially in the noun forms, which in many cases, especially among the coastal tribes stand in the possessive form, with the pronoun suffix -ny: its, his, her. For instance, the word vady, a partner, one of a pair, a husband, a wife, is most commonly found in the form vadiny. The most common form of the noun trano, house, is tranony: its (or his, her) house, and not trano, because the house must have an owner, a master. The same applies, for instance, to the parts of the body. The noun forms used are not loha, head; volon-doha, hair; sofina, ears; maso, eyes; orona, nose; etc. but the possessive suffix is added: lohany, its, his, her head; volon-dohany, his hair; sofiny, his ears; masony, his eyes; orony, his nose, etc. It is especially in the coastal dialects and in Tanala that we
find this usage. The real masters of a family tomb or of an erected stone are the ancestors, the master of the animals in the ocean is *Andrianananahary*, the owner of the wild animals in the Bemaraha Mountains is *Kidondo*, whilst the domestic animals belong to the people (p. 96); the owner of the virgin forests in the Tanala tribe is *Zanahary*. This possessive relationship is regarded as real and concrete, not as abstract, and this concerns not only the visible world, but also the invisible.

As seen from the list of contents, the taboos embrace all the spheres which are of vital interest to the Native. Out from these main interests we can find which powers are behind the taboos and form their basis. These powers may be divided into two groups, which we can call the supernatural and the natural powers. They both in their own way give the taboos their dynamic content, which in Malagasy is called *hery*: power. As already mentioned (p. 96) this is not a physical, but a spiritual power.

The supernatural powers include the power of the gods, which is the maximum of all that can be called power.

The sacred forefathers form another sphere of powers which animate and inspire the exact and strict rules about the relationship between the living and the dead.

The innate power of the fetishes is the source of their taboos, which are imperative and absolute. But the fetishes are "personalities" with wishes and wills of their own (p. 218). The witch-doctor is looked upon as a sacred person because he has a connection with the Supernatural Powers, which enables him to pass on the prohibitive order to his clientele.

Certain animal-taboos deal with omen-animals, which bring good news or have saved people (cf. ch. V, nos. 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82). It is often hard to say how great is the religious influence in these cases. Though they have a historical background, they are attended by a feeling of veneration and awe. The omen-animals did not appear by chance, but were sent by *Zanahary*. Thus the stories about them can be said to have a religious element.

It is only part of the taboos which have their basis in the ideas about the Supernatural Powers. The natural powers, as they are felt and as they work, also have the ability to create taboos, and these are quite as
vigorous as, for instance, the sacredness taboos. Impurity taboos show clearly a definite aversion to and escape from what humanly and naturally is felt to be dangerous. Death is one of the most destructive powers. Its power is identified with things like burial-tools, and everything that has anything to do with the burial, especially the body of the deceased. The fear of death pervades the thoughts, even the typically religious conceptions, so deeply that it becomes the basis of decisions when prohibitions are determined. A number of other rules about unclean things, like unclean food, unclean animals, abnormalities in plants and animals and people, menstruation, are not first and foremost religiously founded. They show the reactions of spontaneous and natural feelings. The uncontrolled desires that are revealed in incest and adultery are dangerous powers, regarded as destructive to the future of the family and society (cf. ch. XIV, nos. 36, 37, 38, and explanation of incest taboos in ch. XIII). The pure and natural antipathy, however, will not alone give a sufficient explanation of these phenomena. This we see from the ceremonies, sacrifices and exorcisms that must be conducted. Each one of the phenomena within the domain of impurity must be studied separately and be explained according to its own nature. With this reservation we may say that in most cases the rules concerning impurity are seen in connection with the powers which emotionally and intuitively are felt as dangerous. The farmer has the same belief about the destroying powers when his corn is growing, shooting ears, and being harvested (cf. ch. IV, nos. 1—43). To sit in the door-opening or to cut reeds at that time is strictly prohibited. But this prohibition is not necessarily directly based on religion. It may only show the association of one thing with another which creates this spontaneous aversion to the thing or the action.

However, this and other examples need not be expressions of magic in its special sense. It shows simply the natural ability to compare and then draw conclusions. The heavy storms create another, but similar situation. Behind these unbridled powers are the more or less personified spirits and weather-gods. Here the destructive powers, which can only be mentioned with antipathy and aversion, are placed together with the personified divine powers.

In the taboos of the vintana system it is the laws of nature, with the regular course of the sun and the moon and thereby the rhythm of
day and night which have their peculiar cosmic power. According to their conception of the laws of nature, the sun and the moon are aspects of Zanahary. This power is inflexible and unchangeable, forcing people to subject themselves obediently and to perform the most painful sacrifices, even giving away their own children.

The authority of the society forms a definite field of power. The one is confronted with the many, the individual with the collective group. The thoughts and desires of the single individual are confronted with consensus of opinion, and it is precisely at this point that the power of the old-established rules is felt. There is no choice, no compromise. The "private" wish of the individual is consumed by the unanimity of the community.

In chapter II we see how the authority of the father, of the elder brother, and of the village chief, as well as the priority of age, form the basis of certain regulations which work on the individual with an overwhelming power.

Some taboos belong simply to custom. They get their power and virtue from the family and community as institutions. Here it must be understood, however, that to the Malagasy a custom is something much more than a mere habit. Custom in general is reflected in a set form of demeanour and behaviour which everybody is bound to observe. These natural powers indicate the spontaneous and natural reactions in certain respects, and are not typical religious. They are expressions of the firmness, aim and energy of the will, of wishes, love, hatred and revenge, jealousy and desires, sympathy and antipathy, spontaneous aversion to and horror of something definite, the intuitive feeling about things which must be avoided. In a comprehensive term all these phenomena may be called the basis of emotional powers. As a whole, the taboos make themselves felt in multifarious circumstances and interests, and they show clearly that they exist and have their basis in several centres of power. Thus fady is not a one-sided, but a many-sided concept.
CHAPTER XIX

Conclusion

The taboos play so important a part in Malagasy life, — and death — that we are attempted to search for a pattern to which they conform. Their main form "Thou shalt not", is indeed so emphatic, that the word taboo has been adopted into the English language as a noun, verb and adjective, and is used to express prohibition in its strongest sense.

But apart from, or perhaps based on this form, can we discern a dominant trait, a guiding principle, common to taboos in all the fields? I maintain that we can trace such a common characteristic that is consistent with the stark negativeness of the form. With the present material as a basis I shall try to show that the taboos in all their many fields show a consistent tendency to point a damning finger at the contrast to the ideals which the individual and the group hold in all the different walks of life.

This pattern of antithesis, as we may call it, is by no means always easy to follow. For example, how can it apply in the case of the taboo on the eating of sparrows (ch. V, no. 78)? It may well be said: "Surely this is straightforward enough. It is pure superstition, even though most likely based on a historical event". Indeed, in the cold light of modern European reasoning it hardly seems admissible that the pattern of antithesis can apply in this and similar cases. But we have to go beyond the conclusion which it seems normal to us to draw, and try to understand the Malagasy train of thought. It is unlikely that a Native would agree that the reason for abstention from a meal of sparrow was only because the ancestors had imposed the taboo for services rendered by the species, — though this reason is very strong. He would admit the danger to himself or his family, the loss of the
ideal state through illness or worse, which the disregard of the taboo would involve. Religious reasons will weigh heavy. The curse pronounced at the initiation of the taboo many years ago will be remembered. But in the native mind the taboo still points to the contrast of his ideal, — his health and prosperity and that of the group.

If this aggressive attitude of the taboos is not easy to understand from a non-Malagsay point of view in the cases of the so-called historical taboos, the characteristic is to be seen quite clearly in the other fields, and especially where the taboos turn to symbolism to give strength and meaning to their edicts.

The starting point for the understanding of this matter is the primary sphere of interest, in other words the purpose of the taboo’s subject, and his aim. The primary interest of the soldier who goes to the wars is to have courage, be victorious and to protect his own life in the battle. One who wishes to start a revolt and the robber who wishes to plunder a village have the same aim. In order to obtain this, they use a fetish called “The famous wild boar” (ch. XII), and this must be used in accordance with its own fady. These again are concerned with the diametrical opposition to the primary sphere of interest: cowardice and fear, defeat and death. What then is the result of the relationship between these sharp oppositions and contrasted extremes? The result is that everything that might work against the purpose and the aim becomes taboo. Just here symbolism comes into the picture, making concrete what is detested and what is made taboo. It is brought to bear as a realisation of the fady-idea. To walk into a house where there has recently been a burial (ch. XII, no. 2), to eat burial food (no. 3), to eat animals which have been shot (no. 4) all have to do with death, whilst the purpose of the fetish is to protect the life of the soldier. Life stands opposed to death. Consequently everything which has to do with death is taboo. To lie down on the stomach to drink (no. 9), to drink from running water (no. 10), are actions contradictory to the purpose and the aim. To drink water in that way has, both in action and in word, similarity to being destroyed. The running water will bear him away, so that he will never return, whilst the aim is the opposite, to return home safe and sound.
If one uses a horn from a burial-ox (ch. XII, no. 19) as a container, this would mean one’s own burial. When a robber uses the fetish “Lost village”, he thinks that he is invulnerable. It is the purpose of the fetish to ensure this. The opposite of invulnerability is running blood, and consequently it is taboo to dream about blood (no. 14). Green plants symbolize life (no. 15). He associates his own blood and life with these two things, which he therefore detests. In the fight he needs courage. The opposite is cowardice, and thus it is taboo to him to eat hedge-hog (no. 17). Defeat in the fight is the opposite of victory. Consequently the robber makes taboo the cock or ox which has lost in a fight (no. 16). All these taboos are based on the fetish-owner’s primary wish of protecting his own life, but they all follow the pattern in that they deal with what is the opposite of the owner’s and the fetish’s intention and wishes.

When a robber plans to plunder a certain village, his thoughts are for his own safety as much as for the success of his plot. He aims to create unrest, flight and disturbance among the population. The fetish has exactly the same introvert and extrovert attitude. The sharpest contradictions to these purposes are steadiness, firmness and solidity among the inhabitants. Consequently it is fady to the robber to sit on a crag or on the ledge of a naked rock (ch. XII, no. 11), as these represent firmness and solidity. If he eats burnt rice which sticks to the pot (no. 13), that would lead the people to stick to their village, so that it would be impossible for him to chase them away.

If we analyse the relationship between the subject and the object of the taboo, we shall find that the contrast is very clear. A thing which is made taboo will always appear as an adversary to the subject, and it will move in the direction opposite to the subject’s goal. This antithesis in the relationship is a rule which the taboos will follow. If we know the taboo-holder’s main interest and his primary aim, be it temporary or for his whole life, and if we in addition to this know the local conditions, how the people earn a living, and their social and religious milieu, we can also know his taboos. They will consistently follow the rules of antithesis. The object of the taboos will counteract and be hostile to the subject. These objects are concrete things, which by means of symbolism are drawn into the sphere of the taboo. The thing which is made taboo has similarity to the evil which must be
avoided. The evil itself as a fact is a postulate, and as such it is not discussed by the Natives. Everything which concretely has some similarity to the evil, or, in other words, which might lead the thought towards the evil itself, by means of the association of similarities becomes an object of taboo.

We have already mentioned warriors and robbers as examples. In order to find out if the above-mentioned rule holds true, we may take a totally different example — the inhabitants of the village and their interests. Their ideal and principal interest is to live safely and peacefully, blessed with all the good things of this life. In order to achieve this a fetich called “Calming” is used (page 123). The eleven pieces from which this fetich is made speak for themselves. The opposite of these essential blessings is unrest and insecurity. Thus it becomes faidy to eat a wing-bone (ch. VI, no. 27) and to use bedding which contains fowls’ feathers (no. 26). The wing-bone symbolises the opposite of security and peace: aimless moving, tramping and instability. Consequently it becomes taboo. And why are the Natives so much against the use of down and feathers in their pillows? The reason is that it shakes some of their most precious values, the safety of the home and the village. They would rather feel cold during the night, and they prefer to sleep with the head pillowed on the hand than to act against their deep innate feeling about what is wrong. Here too we see how the rule of contrasts works.

Another enemy of safety is fire. The representatives of fire are red cattle and red cocks (ch. VI, no. 24). Every Native knows that these animals are not identical with fire, but are simply creatures of a certain hue. At the same time, however, they symbolize fire. Their similarity in colour with fire, through association of ideas, makes the animals objects of taboo. They not only remind one of the burning house, but they become its real enemies.

The ideal and aim of the new householder is to get descendants. The opposite of this ideal, a frightening enemy, is to die without children. These two possibilities form the sharpest possible contrast in the Native’s comprehension and natural instinct. The opposite of the ideal is realized in the fact that the householder cannot make up a fire in the new fireplace (ch. VI, no. 28). Nor must he or his wife prepare the first meal there (no. 29). That would mean eradication of
the family and no blessing. The value of having one’s father alive is that fertility and the indispensable blessing can be transferred to the new house in a ceremonial way, and this ensures the future continuation of the family.

In the use of the locust-fetich it is the witch-doctor’s aim to lead the hostile clouds of locusts away from the plantation. He is afraid that they will stop and descend for the night. Such a stop is the opposite of their passing by. Consequently it is fady to the witch-doctor to stand still or to rest (ch. XII, no. 50). The threatening possibility is that these millions of animals will open their jaws and consume everything. The opposite is closed jaws, and therefore he cannot perform with his mouth open (no. 52, see also no. 42). Furthermore he is afraid that the flying swarm will discover the plantation, which is a temptation to them. This temptation he tries to remove by appearing naked. To be dressed would be an invitation to a banquet in the well-clad fields, and would be tantamount to being on the enemies’ side (no. 51). It is the work of the women to collect locusts for food, both for animals and for people. Thus the women come into the picture as enemies of the witch-doctor, and they are banished from his field of operation (no. 54). Sexuality counteracts his power, so that he makes even his own wife taboo (no. 55).

It is always a temptation to take some locusts home from the field (ch. XII, no. 53). But to do this as well as to pull out a green stalk of grass (no. 56) are hostile actions, as having locusts in the village is the opposite of their being away from the place, and the destruction of something green will mean that the rice-plant will not grow in peace. Here also the taboos follow the rule of antithesis.

The other agrarian taboos follow the same rule. The ideal of the farmer is a rice-field with fully ripe and fully developed ears. He knows only too well the dangers of the growing period. The most critical time is when the rice “gives birth”. Its enemy is anything that might be a hindrance to this “birth”. It is not to be wondered at that they are constantly on the alert for any possible hindrance to the rice-birth. Nobody will be allowed to sit or stand in the opening of the door (ch. IV, no. 1). That would be working against one’s own strongest hope for a good harvest.

Many of the agrarian taboos may be put into the category of hind-
rancé to rough weather, storm and hail. These are the worst enemies of the rice-plants and of the farmer, and they are directly opposed to the dry and hot weather that is wanted. To make a noise (ch. IV, no. 2), and to have an untidy home (no. 3), or to make a fire with the grass-wreath (no. 4) are actions which work against the wishes and ideals of the farmer. Thus they are on the enemy’s side. It is this antithesis which throws the taboos into a clear relief. It should not be necessary to test whether this rule is dominant in the rice-taboos; it is enough to refer to nos. 5—43, pp. 66 ff.

We shall note, however, the fetich that is used during the harvesting time in order to obtain favourable weather. This is called “The one who causes the rain to vanish” (p. 208). Fog, rain, moisture, all that has to do with water, are detested by the fetich and thus by the owner, and the taboos which come into existence follow exactly the rule of antithesis. It is prohibited to spill water in the fire-place (ch. XII, no. 38), to drink water (no. 39), to wade in rivers and brooks (no. 40), to wash one’s head (no. 41), as these actions remind one of the thing that is dreaded more than anything else, the rain.

The authority taboos (ch. II) offer a very clear exemple of the rule of antithesis. The dominant factors are the power of the parents and of the local authorities, as well as of the priority accorded to age. The rule that the father’s dignity must never be dishonoured is inflexible. The opposite of this prohibited domain is the children’s disobedience and lack of respect. In certain situations some actions become hostile behaviour, which will hurt and dethrone the authority, for instance to sit on anything higher than the object the father is sitting on (ch. II, no. 7), to drink water before he drinks (no. 9), to take his seat in the house (no. 6), or to use his utensils (nos. 4, 5). The basic relationship here is two parts which stand in the sharpest contrast to each other. Taboo-subject number one is the authority, or the father, with his honour, and the object comprises the insubordination, the children’s disobedience and the father’s dishonour. It is the father who claims disobedience and dishonour to be taboo. His taboos are obviously also the children’s taboos.

We get an even clearer picture of this real relationship in chapter III on Vintana. We shall take as an example the opposing destinies (p. 57, and fig. 2). The interests and the point of view of the father take
precedence. The antithesis in this sphere is reflected in the vintana system itself as a concrete scheme in case of a child being born on a vintana day, which is directly opposite to the father's vintana. The relationship between these two is expressed in Malagasy literally thus: "Vintana which stand straight against each other", "Vintana which hurt each other", as in a fight, or "Vintana which butt each other", like angry oxen, and it is the child that must be done away with. We may simply ask: What does this phenomenon consist in, which is so contrary to the feelings of a human being? How can a father destroy the most precious gift life can give him? The only explanation is that the authority is sociologically founded and forms the basis of home and society. It is not first and foremost an expression of individual despotism and imperiousness. It is indisputable that the father thinks of his own honour and dignity, but at the same time he thinks socially and collectively. Both the individual and the social values are at stake. A child born on an evil day represents the antisocial, which is contrary to the social represented by the father. On one side we find the revolt, on the other side the society and its interests. The relationship between these two extremities is expressed in that the enemy of society and authority is made taboo, and the child is put out to die if it cannot be saved by sacrifice.

It is said that it is prohibited "to walk against vintana" (ny mano-hitra ny vintana), but in order to understand why this system is practised, we must see it in close connection with the economical and social interests which are dependent on it, not as an isolated system. It is not only the parents' lives and principal interests that are at stake, but the welfare of the whole village. This belief is strengthened by the conviction that behind the system is the ancestors' approval of the vintana and the age-old tradition which says that it was originated in the dawn of history by Andriamanimitra himself.

The joint destinies must be understood in the same way as the opposing destinies. A child born on its father's birthday has got an "evil vintana" (vintana ratsy) contrary to its father's vintana which is always good (vintana tsara). The evil as contradictory to the good is personified in the newborn baby.

This projected state of opposition is clearly seen in the dwelling
house as well. The door on the eastern wall may be used only at burials (ch. VIII, no. 36). It represents the unusual and extraordinary, and the opposite to the door of the western wall which is used every day, thus representing the ordinary. The contrast between these two doors is proclaimed by the fixed rules concerning their use.

In the relationship between the house and the village on the one hand and the tomb on the other, this contrast is easy to see, representing no less than life and death. The detested enemy appears even more present if, for instance, the tomb should have the same orientation as the house. The similarity between these two would create an intolerable and destructive position, and contrast is again apparent. The prohibitions concerning life are all the objects and actions which in one way or another may be associated with the enemy, death. Most of the taboos in chapters VI, VII, VIII, IX and X show in a sum the constant fight between life and death. Knowing the Natives’ attitude to matters we can state that the antithesis between life and death is basic feature of all these fady.

In chapter VI, no. 11, it is explained that the house must be placed in such a way that the sleeping position of those who live there will not interfere with the position of the dead in the grave, because the interests of the dead must be observed (cf. ch. VIII, nos. 12, 13, 14, 24). In chapter VIII, nos. 7—19 we find those who have fallen on bad times and cannot be admitted to the family tomb. The sympathy or antipathy of the deceased determine whether the blessing shall come to the living, and their commands and wishes are expressed in the taboos mentioned. This tells us two things. First, the purity of the tomb must be maintained. The opposite means impurity. The categories mentioned in nos. 7—19 all form a representation of this impurity, and those who belong to this category are not permitted to enter the tomb. Secondly, there are the personal needs of the deceased. The taboos, which show the wishes and will of the deceased, are nos. 33 and 47. In ch. IX, nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and in ch. X, nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, the ceremonies and restrictions mentioned are expressions of the wishes and needs of the ancestors. Oblivion, as a dreaded possibility, forms the contrast to respectful remembrance. To be forgotten means the “second death” (p. 184). Impurity, lack
of respect, care and nursing in the grave, lack of sacrifice, indifference on the part of the relatives, are in direct opposition to the fundamental principles of ancestral worship.

In order to protect the peace and honour of the village, the taboos are ranged against its opposite, — those destructive elements which the intrusion of the unknown can bring, upsetting the even tenor of life and creating a certain disorder. At one extreme are the honour and reputation of the village, in sharp contrast to the disgrace of being unable to offer the traditional and honourable hospitality, described in chapter I, no. 1. In no. 2 we find the crushing judgement and curse on hypocrisy and simulation, and no. 4 shows a similar example. No. 6 is an example of the risk of the faulty behaviour towards the strange and unknown. No. 8 deals with common practice and custom which form the protecting elements of society. No. 7 includes the fear of having the integrity of one’s name destroyed, and this again is connected with the fear that the mentioning of the name may arouse the attention and desire of the spirits (cf. ch. XIV, no. 57).

Chapter XIV discusses the four main desires of the Malagasy home: fertility, successful birth, shapely children, and protection of children against evil. An unbiased study of the taboos connected with these will show how in each case they turn to the symbolic, and prohibit what is directly opposed to the realisation of the above ideals. Thus are formed the taboos connected with sterility (ch. XIV, no. 1), complications at birth (nos. 13, 14, 15, 24, 39, 44, 52), deformity (nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 21, 31), and exposure of the child to evil (nos. 55, 56, 57). The threat of these hated possibilities cannot be met directly, but the taboos, with their characteristic attack on that which is opposite to the ideal, come to the rescue by prohibiting absolutely all that can call to mind and thus encourage these dreaded domestic disasters.

It can be seen how the circumcision-taboos (ch. XV) are uniform both in structure and design with the taboos in chapter XIV. Chapter XIV and chapter V have many points of resemblance. Chapter V shows how the breeder of domestic animals aims to raise well-bred, faultless, and normal animals, which not only give economic profit, and are suitable for ceremonial functions, but which have a benevolent attitude to the owner as well, both with regard to temper, colour and shape. The taboos, however, deal with cattle which have faulty horns, hare-
lipped calves, stump-tailed pigs, hens which crow, etc. The varied forms of animals with blemishes are shown in nos. 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 33, 36, 44, 45, 46, 49, 50, 58, 60. Together with these are those which have a dangerous and hostile colour. Because of their nature they ruin the owner economically and work against him in his daily struggles. The fatal meaning of the colour symbolism makes them hostile, not only to the other domestic animals, but to the owner and his family. They work against his efforts to attain prosperity, and he must weed them out.

In chapter XIII, Marriage taboos and sexual restrictions, it is seen that marriages are permitted between distant relatives, even though they are descendants of the same ancestors, members of the same clan and tribe, and persons of the same social standing. But taboos forbid the opposite, marriage between certain close relations, persons with foreign or unknown ancestors, members of different clans and tribes, and persons of unequal social standing. As is seen in this chapter, taboos nos. 1—20, and 23, 33, 34 and 35 do not resort to symbolism, but forbid directly. Even in these cases the taboos point most sternly to the dreaded opposite, the evil effect on the individual and the group of forbidden intercourse. In the other cases, however, the taboos forbid actions symbolising physical connection, — a brother and sister must not shake hands (no. 24), a girl must not wash her brother’s clothes (no. 25), or walk to market with him (no. 28). The Sakalava term olo faly (in Merina, olona fady) means taboo-persons, and is commonly used with reference to forbidden intercourse in general. A person is olo faly in relation to certain other persons, and sexual intercourse with these is condemned in the strictest moral sense, as tantamount to adultery. Outside the forbidden category sexual intercourse is not frowned upon, even if the parties are not married according to the traditional laws. Thus a certain parallel can be seen with the Native attitude to theft (halatra). To steal from someone in the village or from some close relatives is a crime, and the punishment is imposed by the village council. In certain tribes, however, stealing from outsiders is tolerated and looked upon as a legitimate means of acquiring wealth.

In this study of the rule of antithesis I have taken my examples from many different branches of work, from trades, institutions and
important events in life. So far, however, these examples have been of a social and positive character. At the same time there is an antisocial sphere which is generally called black magic. It might seem impossible to apply a rule which all along has been used when explaining the positive and moral side, to the antisocial and negative side. But let us see if this rule will apply here. The intention and main interest of the witch is to destroy, create terror and kill. She is fanatically interested in the troubles of others, like serious illness and death, and in the most critical moments of a woman giving birth to a child. It is typical of this representative of evil that she feels contented where life is in danger. She detests peace and happiness in the home and in the life of a family, a successful child-birth, healing of serious diseases, love and harmony in marriages. The 7 parts of "The decomposed Toloho-bird" (p. 201) give a good expression of her plans and wishes. All these antisocial plans explain what her primary sphere of interest is. Her special taboos are all the things which work against her interests. A tomb from which a corpse has been moved over to another tomb is intolerable to her, because she is interested in filling the tomb with corpses. Empty tombs are her fady (ch. XII, no. 29). When she wishes to dissolve a marriage or to alienate the love of the husband, she uses the "Love-fetich". The symbolic objects that it is made of point to love and union. Her hypnotic influence and dynamics will master him, and he is bound to leave his wife and marry the other woman. The fady of the fetich and of the witch is well-roasted meat (no. 60). It expresses something one can often hear in marriage-disputes: "The love is dried out" (Ritra ny fitiavana). There is no more juice left in the piece of meat, and if she eats it, she "dries out" the new love-affair. Thus the taboos follow the same rule in the antisocial matters as in the ordinary, social ones.

By taking the rule of antithesis into consideration we can understand better the nature of the taboos, both in their inner structure and their outward manifestations. We can get a clearer insight into the Malagasy mind, and perceive the constant war being waged against the detested opponents of life and health, of happiness and prosperity, of security and obedience to the ancestors, of all those ideals which they cherish as necessary for the right way of life. From the womb to the grave — and beyond — the Malagasy believe that they are beset by
perils in the shape of the dreaded opposites to these ideals. Against every one of these dangers there is found a protective taboo. Whether it be based on ancestral history and tradition and fortified with a curse, on the consensus of opinion, or on their observation of natural phenomena, the taboo, often clothed in symbolism, always attacks a direct opponent of Malagasy ideals of existence.

The humblest action, the most critical situation, the struggle with nature, the attitude of one individual to another, to the group, to the dead and to the supernatural powers, in fact every aspect of native life is influenced by taboos. One may say that the path of their life is dotted with signposts. But these are unusual guides. For on them is written "Not this way!", and the finger points grimly to the peril that awaits the disobedient.
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Notes

INTRODUCTION

2 p. 342.
3 Merina is the name of the tribe, but the districts which they inhabit are known as Imerina.
4 Neunzehentens Heft, p. 113.
5 A method of finding out what will happen in the future, pointing out the origin of a disaster, and indicating powerful counter-charms against evils. It regulates enterprises and arrangements, and works oracles. The diviner (ny mpirikidy) uses such things as sand, seeds, beans, and grains of maize, which are divided and handled in many different ways. For instance, when using beans or grains, which are arranged on a mat, according to a special system, he draws the objects towards him in pairs. The last draw must be either two or one, and from the figures the diviner deduces the prophecy and oracles. The figures have secret names with symbolic meanings, and owing to their broad and comprehensive scope they are applicable in almost every situation. A useful description of the sikiidy divination is to be found in “Sikidy and Vintana” by L. Dahle (see References).

CHAPTER I

1 Vakinankaratra comprises the districts Betafo, Antsirabe, Faratsio, and Ambatalampy. They are very fertile districts, and the population is relatively dense. The inhabitants are Merina and Betsileo, who have lived here since olden times.
2 From Ambohimiarivo village, which gives its name to the canton in the Antsirabe district.
3 In the Tanala dialect: manantso mihinana.
4 In Tamenarivo, canton Solila, Fianarantsoa district, among the South-Betsileo.
5 From Ambohimiarivo, see note 2.
7 From Ambohimiarivo, see note 2. The word “havana” mentioned in the parentheses means both relatives and guests.
8 According to the Merina tradition the Vazimba are the aborigines of the interior, and lived at the lakes in Imerina. They were driven away by the intruding Merina, and fled at first southwards to the Betsileo, who received them with friendliness and gave them rice. Later on the Vazimba went westwards, and settled in the Bemaraha Mountains on
the West-Coast. According to their traditions, which in many respects agree with the Merina traditions, their ancestors came to the Bemaraha Mountains as refugees from Imerina, and they lived independently, giving the Sakalava king an annual gift of game or produce only, as a token of recognition. There is still friendship between them and the Betsileo. A few of the extended families are troglodytes, planting a little manioc, but their main occupation is food-gathering in the forests. The majority of the Vazimba, however, are now living in villages on the plateaus in the far mountains of the districts Antsalova and Maintirano, and they are ordinary taxpayers. They have a very dark complexion, they are tall and strong, their hair is curled. Their dialect does not differ much from that of the Sakalava who live beyond the mountains to the West.

9 Living in the big forests between Morombe and Manombo, north of Tulear, they are nomads and food-gatherers. Each extended family has its own camping-place and its own area, where they dig wild roots, collect honey and hunt wild animals. The head of the clan has unlimited authority and power. The Mikea are very shy, and do not mix with others. Articles needed from without, for instance small spade-heads, spear-blades and snuff, they obtain at night by barter with merchants outside the forest. In the open they eat and sleep by the fireplace, whilst from the morning to the evening they wander about searching for food. The Mikea clan today is not large numerically. Last century many of them left the forests and settled in different villages east of their old areas. Their descendants are still living in these places in the districts Morombe and Tulear.

10 The word is here a term for gods in general. It may also mean the Creator-god, the Supreme Being, synonymous with Andriamanitra. I have given a more detailed treatment of this word in: Panthéon et religion chez les Tanala, pp. 85 ff.

11 Small and low prehistoric graves in Imerina and in Vakinankaratra from the Vazimba period, — very often situated on the top of hills.

12 Cultivators and breeders of cattle on the big plains on the West-Coast.

13 A common name for all Africans sold in Madagascar by slavers.

CHAPTER II

1 Soamamonja village and canton, Fort-Dauphin district.
2 Sihanakara village and canton, Behara district.
3 Lit.: "leaf of Via", a species of the large arum growing in damp ground (Typhonodorum Lindleyanum).
4 Antsirabe-Lokofo, canton Farahalana, Sambava district.
5 Androrangavola village and canton, Marolambo district.
6 7 Sahamadia village and canton, Fandriana district.
8 Andrombona, Ambareotelo canton, Sambava district.
9 10 Anivorano Avaratra, Anivorano du Nord canton, Diégo-Suarez district.
11 Masinandraina, Belazao canton, Antsirabe district.
12 Fisakana village and canton, Fandriana district.
13 14 Salary Avaratra, Manombo canton, Tulear district.
15 Antanandava, Belo-Tsiribihina canton and district.
16 Kianjavola, canton and district Ambositra.
18 Androrangavola village and canton, Marolambo district.
20 Ambohimiarivo village and canton, Antsirabe district.
21 Bevomanga, Ambatomiady canton, Ambatolampy district.
22 Iaka village and canton, Ambositra district.
23 Ambahona, Ambohimotombo canton, Ambositra district.
25 Antsiriribe village and canton, Ambatolampy district.
26 Andonabe, Andonabe Sud canton, Marolambo district.
28 Soalafadray, Belazao canton, Antsirabe district.
29 Ambatondrafara, Mandritsara canton, Betofo district.
30 Lit. “flower of grass”. But “honour” has a very comprehensive meaning. Voninahitra is a principle of life and an integral part of man. If the honour is lost, one of the constituent elements of a human being is lost as well. Synonymous with the losing voninahitra is afaporaha, to lose honour, to be disgraced, put to shame, and consequently to be deprived of the most appreciated values of life.
31 Ambodivona, Antsiriribe canton, Ambatolampy district.
32 Antanifotsy Administrative Centre and canton, Ambatolampy district.
34 Andohavary, Ankazomirioitra canton, Betofo district.
35 Ambodiata, Iaka canton, Ambositra district.
36 Ambohimasina Administrative Centre and canton, Betofo district.
37 Ambahona, Ambohimotombo canton, Ambositra district.
38 Ambodyfiakarana, Belazao canton, Antsirabe district.
40 Betafo Administrative Centre, Betofo canton and district.
42 Masoaravana, Ambohimanga du Sud canton, Ifanadiana district.

CHAPTER III

1 Aarhus 1905.
4 Tome 1, pp. 20 ff.
5 pp. 2–3.
6 Tome 1, p. 36.
7 p. 22.
8 p. 23.
9 pp. 27–28.
10 Tome 1, p. 36.
11 p. 23.
12 p. 36.
13 p. 23.
14 Details of this Chart are from L. Vig, pp. 21–23, 27–28.
16 Tome 1, pp. 31–33.
17 Tangena (Tanghinia venenifera) is a poisonous fruit used to test the innocence or guilt of a person accused by the community. Forced to take the poison, the suspect proves his innocence by vomiting, and thus survives. If he dies, his guilt is regarded as proven.
18 p. 15.
19 p. 15.
20 p. 21.
21 Tome 1, p. 34.
22 23 24 25 Andramingafotsy, Antsirabe canton and district.
The name is used especially on the West Coast, but is also well known by all the other tribes. It has the same meaning as Zanahary and Andriamanitra. See Ruud: Panthéon et religion chez les Tanala, p. 87, and Guder og fedre, p. 144.

CHAPTER IV

1 Sahamadio village and canton, Fandriana district.
2 Soavina, Ankazomiriotra canton, Betofo district.
3 Andasimbahivavy, Soanindrariny canton, Antsirabe district.
4 Ampamohoa, Soanindrariny canton, Antsirabe district.
5 Andramingafotsy, Antsirabe canton and district.
6 Beseva, Belazao canton, Antsirabe district.
7 Ambohitrandria village and canton, Betofo district.
8 Andranonantsakaina, Mandritsara canton, Betofo district.
9 Ambohimarina, Antsirabe canton and district.
10 Ampitantafika village and canton, Ambatolampy district.
11 Somisiky, Manambondro canton, Vangaindrano district.
12 Andranonantsakaina, Mandritsara canton, Betofo district.
13 Sahanikitina, Ambohimiarivo canton, Antsirabe district.
14 Mandritsara, Ambohimasina canton, Betofo district.
15 Andramingafotsy, Antsirabe canton and district.
16 Andafofo, Andonabe canton, Marolambo district.
17 Ambatondrafara, Mandritsara canton, Betofo district.
22 Androrangavola, Ambohimanga du Sud canton, Ifanadiana district.
23 Mandritsara, Ambohimasina canton, Betofo district.
24 Bemahamasina, Belazao canton, Antsirabe district.
25 Andasimbely, Soanindrariny canton, Antsirabe district.
26 Savina, Ankazomiriotra canton, Betofo district.
27 Andlafofo, Antsirabe district.
28 Antanosy.
30 Andrafofo, Antsirabe district.
31 Ambodiara, Fasintsara-Sakaevy canton, Ifanadiana district.
32 Masinandraina, Belazao canton, Antsirabe district.
33 Ambatondrafara, Betofo district.
34 Andrafofo, Antsirabe district.
35 Andranonantsakaina, Mandritsara canton, Betofo district.

CHAPTER V

1 Ambatondrafara, Mandritsara canton, Betofo district.
2 Ambohimiarivo village and canton, Antsirabe district.
3 Ambatondrafara, Mandritsara canton, Betofo district.
4 Ambatondrafara, Mandritsara canton, Betofo district.
5 Belamosina, Belazao canton, Antsirabe district.
8 Ilémponbe, Sandrandahy canton, Fandriana district.
9 Andramingafotsy, Antsirabe canton and district.
10 Antsirabe town.
11 Ambodifiakarana, Belazao canton, Antsirabe district.
12 Belamosina, Mandritsara canton, Betafo district.
14 Betofo Administrative Centre, canton and district.
15 Soanindrariny village and canton, Antsirabe district.
16 Antanety Faharoa, Ambatomiady canton, Ambatolampy district.
17 Ambohimanga du Sud, Administrative Centre and canton, Ifanadiana district.
18 Andranonantsakaina, Mandritsara canton, Betafo district.
20 21 Ampamoha, Soanindrariny canton, Antsirabe district.
22 Ankaditany, Fisakana canton, Fandriana district.
23 Andohavary, Ankazomirotra canton, Betafo district.
24 Ambodiala, Ilaka Centre, Ambositra district.
26 27 Ambodivona, Antsiriribe canton, Ambatolampy district.
28 Malazafehanirivo, Mandoto canton, Betafo district.
29 Iavomalaza, Mandritsara canton, Betafo district.
30 Betofo Administrative Centre, canton and district.
31 Ambodiramiavona, Androangovala canton, Marolambo district.
32 Belalanda, Maromiandra canton, Tulear district.
33 Miadanimerina, Ambohimiarivo canton, Antsirabe district.
34 Fisakana village and canton, Fandriana district.
35 36 37 Bemahamasina, Belazao canton, Antsirabe district.
38 Andohavary, Ankazomirotra canton, Betafo district.
39 Antsahamarana, Ambohimanga du Sud canton, Ifanadiana district.
41 Ambodifiakarana, Belazao canton, Antsirabe district.
42 Bemahamasina, Belazao canton, Antsirabe district.
43 Ambohimasina village and canton, Betafo district.
44 Antanifotsy Administrative Centre and canton, Ambatolampy district.
45 46 Isandra, Antsirabe canton and district.
47 48 Sahanihitina, Ambohimiarivo canton, Antsirabe district.
49 Ambodiriana, Antsiriribe canton, Ambatolampy district.
50 Sahanihitina, Ambohimiarivo canton, Antsirabe district.
51 52 54 Antanety Faharoa, Antanifotsy canton, Ambatolampy district.
53 Morarano Faharoa, Ambano canton, Antsirabe district.
54 Antanety, Antanifotsy canton, Ambatolampy district.
55 Andonabe, Andonabe Sud canton, Marolambo district.
58 Andramingafotsy, Antsirabe canton and district.
60 Tananarive city.
61 62 Bemahamasina, Belazao canton, Antsirabe district.
63 64 Bekopaka village and canton, Antsalya district.
65 66 Angodongodona, Ampasinambo canton, Nosivarika district.
67 Ampasinambo-Belanitra, Fasintasara-Sakaevy canton, Ifanadiana district.
Ambodiramiavona, Androra-nagavola canton, Marolambo district.

Amborompotsy village and canton, Ambatofinandrahana district.

Andonabe, Andonabe Sud canton, Marolambo district.

Iavomalaza, Mandritsara canton, Betafo district.

Ambatondrafara, Mandritsara canton, Betafo district.

Ambodiramiavona, Androra-nagavola canton, Marolambo district.

Belamosina, Mandritsara canton, Betafo district.

Andramingafotsy, Antsirabe canton and district.

Sahamadio, Fisakana canton, Fandriana district.

Ankazomandiladongo, a little village inhabited by Vazimba near Tsiandro, Antsalova canton and district.

Sahanikitina, Ambatomiarivo canton, Antsirabe district.

Ambatomiyadi village and canton, Ambatolampy district.

Betampona village and canton, Marolambo district.

Belamosina, Mandritsara canton, Betafo district.

Mahatsinjo, Mandritsara canton, Betafo district.

Mahazoarivo, Betafo canton and district.

CHAPTER VI

Ambodiriana, Antanifotsy canton, Ambatolampy district.

Mahatsinjo, Mandritsara canton, Betafo district.

Soanindrariny village and canton, Antsirabe district.

Anjamanga village and canton, Ambatolampy district.

CHAPTER VII

Ankaditany, Fisakana canton, Fandriana district.

Ambatondrafara, Mandritsara canton, Betafo district.

Mahatsinjo, Mandritsara canton, Betafo district.

Ilaka village and canton, Ambositra district.

Ambohimbolafotsy, Fisakana canton, Fandriana district.

Bepaiso, Antanifotsy canton, Ambatolampy district.

Antanambao, Ambatomiarivo canton, Antsirabe district.

This fetich is different from that mentioned on p. 123.
10 Antsahamoha, Soanindraryny canton, Antsirabe district.
11 Antanety Faharoa, Antanifotsy canton, Ambatolampy district.
12 13 Antanambao, Ambohimiarivo canton, Antsirabe district.
14 15 16 17 18 Ambohiandra, Soanindrany canton, Antsirabe district.
19 20 21 Andasibe, Soanindrany canton, Antsirabe district.

CHAPTER VIII

1 Maromanana village and canton, Ifanadiana district.
2 Ilemprombe, Sandrandahy canton, Fandriana district.
3 4 Iandrianana, Belazao canton, Antsirabe district.
5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 Antanosy.
14 Manombo Administrative Centre, Tulear district.
15 16 Ambianindrano village and canton, Ambositra district.
18 19 Antanosy, and from Tananarive City.
20 21 Tsingarivary, Ambodinonoka canton, Marolambo district.
22 Tananarive City.
23 Voatomato, Mirinavatra canton, Fandriana district.
24 Ampasimbola, Ampasinambo canton, Nosivirika district.
25 Tananarive City.
26 27 28 Ampasinambo Administrative Centre, Nosivirika district.
29 Ankafotra, Fisakana canton, Fandriana district.
30 Ambohizafy, Belazao canton, Antsirabe district.
31 Ambatondrafara, Mandritsara canton, Betafo district.

32 Molet, pp. 75 ff. gives another explanation of hena ratsy (bad meat) distributed at a burial. According to him the expression refers to an old custom, where the bereaved ate the corpse in a ritual way. The purpose of this anthropophagy was to hinder decomposition in the grave, but also to obtain the qualities of the dead one. Later on, maintains Molet, this custom was changed to slaughtering of cattle, and the meat was called bad meat, because it was a substitute for the dead one. He suggest that hena ratsy was a euphemism for henam-paty, i.e. meat from the corpse. After widespread investigations, I have not been able to find evidence to prove that anthropophagy is a custom in Madagascar nowadays.
33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 Vangaindrano Administrative Centre.
41 Befody village and canton, Nosivirika district.
42 Mahaiza village and canton, Betafo district.
43 Ambatomiady village and canton, Ambatolampy district.
44 This kind of cairn should not be mistaken for the other kinds. There are cairns (tato, or fanataovana) by the cross roads made of twigs or small stones. The travellers throw a twig, a palm-branch or a stone on the mound, in order to prevent spirits from following them. A cross road is always a “dangerous” place.

But a cairn may be used, not only in order to prevent evils, but also in a positive way. A trader, for instance, who is about to make a long journey, throws a small stone onto it, asking for profit. If he gains money during his travels he returns to that place and offers a gift as thanksgiving, convinced that it was this
cairn which caused the success of his venture.

A third kind of cairn is a mound of stones, which may be found everywhere, be it in the bush, in the field or on the plantation. It is connected with a certain event in the past, for instance, when a man has fallen and broken his leg, or a woman has suddenly been taken ill. The event is understood as a collision with Zanahary, or with another god or spirit. This extraordinary happening very often becomes the occasion for the siting of a sacrificial place, where people put down small gifts, like coins, a bit of sugar-cane or a ripe banana.

45 Ambohiandra, Antsirabe canton and district.
46 Ambatolahy Andrefana, Mahatsinjo canton, Fianarantsoa district.
47 Antanosy.
49 Sihanapara village and canton, Behara district.
50 51 Andranonantsakaina, Mandritsara canton, Betafo district.
52 Masinandraina, Belazao canton, Antsirabe district.
53 Ambohimasina Administrative Centre and canton, Betafo district.
54 Fitsitike, Manombo canton, Tulear district.
55 Antanosy.
56 57 58 Andramingafotsy, Antsirabe canton and district.
59 60 61 62 63 Sihanapara village and canton, Behara district.

CHAPTER IX

1 2 Ambohidranandriana village and canton, Antsirabe district.

3 4 5 Sahanikitina, Ambohimiarivo canton, Antsirabe district.
6 7 8 9 Ampamoha, Soanindrariny canton, Antsirabe district.
10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 Ialasaola, Anjamanga canton, Ambatolampy district.

CHAPTER X

1 2 Betafo Administrative Centre.
3 Ihosy Administrative Centre.
4 5 6 7 Manombo Administrative Centre, Tulear district.
8 Salary Avaratra, Manombo canton, Tulear district.
9 Tsiaandro, Antsalova canton and district.
10 Morombe Administrative Centre.

CHAPTER XI

2 p. 83.

CHAPTER XII

1 Richardson J. sub verbo valo.
2 In form it is similar to the taboo mentioned in chapter IV, no. 28. But in chapter IV it is taboo to all people, whilst here it is directly connected with the fetish, and it becomes a personal taboo to the fetish and to its owner, and therefore it has a more limited meaning: the taboo of the fetish (fadin’ody).
3 The river runs into the ocean south of Vangaindrano on the East Coast.
CHAPTER XIII

1 Ambodiramiavona, Androrangavola canton, Marolambo district.
2 3 4 5 Morarano Nord village and canton, Diégo-Suarez district.
6 7 Antanosy.
8 9 Ambatolahy Andrefana, Mahatsinjo canton, Fianarantsoa district.
10 In the Bara dialect troky means a treaty, and it may take this meaning here as well.
11 Manarantsandry, Sakaevro-Fasintsara canton, Ifanadiana district.
12 13 Ankafotra, Fisakana canton, Fanandrana district.

35 Vangaindrano Administrative Centre and district.
36 Ambohitrandriana, Betafo canton and district.
37 Ilaka village and canton, Ambositra district.
38 Ihosy Administrative Centre and district.
39 40 Antanosy.
41 42 Belo-Tsiribihina Administrative Centre and district.
43 Antanosy.
44 45 46 47 Mandritsara, Ambohimasi\-na canton, Betafo district.
48 49 Sihanakara village and canton, Behara district.
50 Iaborano, Manambondro canton, Vangaindrano district.
51 Mandratromby, Sandrandahy canton, Fanandrana district.

CHAPTER XIV

1 2 3 4 5 Ambano village and canton, Antsirabe district.
6 Ambatomilo, Manombo canton, Tulear district.
7 8 9 10 Soanindrariny village and canton, Antsirabe district.
11 Tsingarivary, Ambodinonoka canton, Marolambo district.
12 Antanifotsy Administrative Centre, Ambatolampy district.
13 Ilampombe, Sandrandahy canton, Fanandrana district.
14 15 16 17 Antanosy.
18 19 20 21 Ambohimanjaka, Manandona canton, Antsirabe district.
22 23 24 Voatamota, Miarinavatra canton, Fanandrana district.
25 26 Antanosy.
27 Ambatolahy Andrefana, Mahatsinjo canton, Fianarantsoa district.
28 29 30 31 32 33 Soavina, Ankazomirio\-tra canton, Betafo district.
34 Antsirabe town.

CHAPTER XV

1 2 Antanosy.
3 4 5 6 7 Anjamanga village and canton, Ambatolampy district.
8 Ambohimiarivo village and canton, Antsirabe district.
9 Antanosy.
10 Belanitra, Antsalova canton and district.
11 Tsiandro, Antsalova canton and district.
12 13 Antanosy.
14 Ambodivona, Antsirirebe canton, Ambatolampy district.
15 Andranonantsakaina, Mandritsara canton, Betafo district.
16 17 The Vazimba in the village Bevary, Antsalova canton and district.
18 Antanosy.
19 20 21 22 Mandoto Administrative Centre and canton, Betafo district.
CHAPTER XVI

1 Chapter XII, pp. 195, 211, 215, 217.
2 Ruud, 1947, p. 115.

CHAPTER XVII

1 p. 25.
2 Antanosy.
3 Manombo Administrative Centre, Tulear district.

CHAPTER XVIII

3 Instances of comminatory rites see ch. IV, nos. 23, 47, 48, ch. V, nos. 13, 14, 17, 30, 34, 35, 44, 46, 47, 51, 52, 68, 70, 71, 72, 77, 78, 81, 82, 84, 85, 88.
4 p. 17.
6 pp. 8 ff.
7 Marett’s article on tabu in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, section II. He says that taboo is an aspect of a rudimentary religion where the unreflecting feeling of fear and awe is dominating. The power is “spiritual electricity”, and the taboos belong to “the perceptual stage of religion, when values are massively apprehended without analysis of their grounds”. In the book: The Threshold of Religion, pp. 73 ff., he maintains that the fundamental idea is an indwelling supernatural power, “the mystic power”, that is mana, and that taboo becomes negative mana.
8 In Gudstrons Uppkomst, pp. 37 ff., where the taboo is explained as rooted in the conception of the sacred power.
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According to the census of 1954 (Bulletin mensuel de statistique no. 1, Tananarive, 1955,) the totals of population per tribe are as follows:

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Malagasy who have been granted French citizenship are not included in the above total.
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