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The Lords of Muskets

Influx and Integration of Firearms into Precolonial Madagascar: Insights from Robert Drury's Account

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Abstract. – When firearms first arrived on the island of Madagascar at the beginning of the 16th century, they soon became a very much sought-after commodity for the local population. This contribution traces for the first time the history of firearm technology on Madagascar during precolonial times, until the French colonization in 1896, in a systematic perspective. A case study on the use of firearms around 1710 shows that firearms became integrated into an already long-established logic of intensive war. On the political level, the firearms gave rise to a new form of chieftaincy that has endured for more than three centuries: the "lords of muskets." *[Madagascar, Antanosy, Robert Drury, firearms, warfare, technological change]*

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"We, who formerly were insulted by … other nations around us, are by these Englishmen's guns made too powerful for them … ."
The Sakalava Prince Ramoma [Rer Moume], ca. 1716 (Drury 1826: 289)

Introduction

A number of rare early photographs, mostly taken around 1900 on Madagascar, allow for a first iconographic approach to that particular period which will be the center of this article. These photos (and one painting), scattered in some contemporary as well as more recently published books,[1] are reminders of a world that was already on the edge of disintegration at that time. One can see on them serious and fierce-looking warriors or chief warriors of different regions of that island, mostly of the west and south. They are often armed with two kinds of weapons: spears and guns, the latter rather old-fashioned models, probably of the "musket" style, perhaps even dating back to the 18th century.

These pictures document a specific period that started around the beginning of 17th century in Madagascar, when firearms became a very attractive and desired commodity. Soon, they were used by many warriors as parts of their regular military equipment, and as such they had to be viewed as an integral aspect of local warfare. The local expression "lords of the muskets" (Barendse 2002: 264) appears to have been coined in the 18th century by the Malagasy people for designing an ex-

1 E. g., Gallieni (1908: plate 23); Kent (1970: 125, 132, 165, 168, 232); Raison-Jourde (1983: plate 10); Fee (2004: 95); Randriamamonjy (2008: photo of Ralo, Fig. 1).

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pressive aspect of a number of west coast polities, nowadays usually recognized under the name of Sakalava kingdoms (Kneitz 2014). Although Barendse does not reveal the exact source of this term, it seems very appropriate to use it as a designation of the very special period of Malagasy cultural history in which firearm imports flourished. As the overall dynamic and effects of the new military technology were probably comparable throughout this era and in most regions of the island, I will use this term in a more general sense to highlight a characteristic aspect of Malagasy culture in a period of nearly three centuries, between ca. 1600 and 1900.

Recognizing the historical value of these photos and the stories behind them means that we have to do with a situation in which the access to a new kind of military technology contributed, directly or indirectly, to important structural change in the Malagasy society, even if the exact extent and cause-effect relationships in this process remain open to discussion. Going beyond the direct impact on the military strategy and warfare, scholars have regularly associated the trade of firearms with important sociocultural changes. Other issues addressed here include the new technical demands related to the use and maintenance of the new technology, the meaning and symbolic function of firearms, and, most importantly, the impact on local relations of power and the process of state-building.

While the spear-and-musket type of king, the lords of musket, vanished at the beginning of the 20th century, the memory of these times persists today in very distinct ways in the Malagasy society. It is recreated, for example, in the practice of possession cults – when mediums embody ancient kings and evoke the historical memory related to them (Kneitz 2003) – as well as in the popular tales concerning zebu-stealing bandits (*dahalo*) and their presumed lifestyle that challenged social order – aspects that remain attractive to certain members of the younger generation.[2]

The principal purpose of this article is to summarize and critically review, for the first time, some of the main aspects of the trade in firearms and the impact of that commodity on culture of precolonial Madagascar, which allows for labeling this period – in a more general sense – as the time of "the lords of muskets." Secondly, it also examines the integration and the impact of the newly acquired firearms into warfare and the Malagasy society as a case study based on available sources.

2 McNair (2008); Lambek (2016); Scheidecker (2016).

The article begins, therefore, with a short review of the current state of knowledge on this topic, including the broader context of the Indian Ocean cultural circle, the general dynamics of firearms' technology, a short presentation of relevant literature on precolonial warfare and the use of firearms on Madagascar, as well as some theories on the technological and sociocultural change caused by firearms, especially on the Great Island.[3] Based on this general assessment, I will further offer and discuss the historical dynamic of the influx of firearms in three main periods. Following the account of Robert Drury, I shall focus more precisely on the time around 1700. His formerly famous but nowadays quite forgotten "adventures" (as is stated in the title, Drury 1826) of his stay in southern Madagascar between 1702 and about 1717 constitutes a major but surprisingly not sufficiently known primary source. My particular purpose is to examine the dissemination and the use of firearms according to this account, the specific way of their integration into society, and, naturally, their use in warfare and conflict situations, as well as the dynamics created within the broader field of power. My findings will be further discussed within the context of existing knowledge on the use and importance of early firearms and their impact on Malagasy culture.

1 State of the Art and Sources

The study of the Indian Ocean as a major cultural area on its own right – the "Indian Ocean World," as it was labeled about two decades ago[4] – has developed significantly in recent years. Several excellent general works on the historical dynamic of that region[5] and on its important subfields, such as like the slave trade (e. g., Harms et al. 2013) are now available and provide a good access to major topics and issues discussed within this field of study.

The historical development of firearms and the related technology, the early trade in this commodity, its impact on warfare and society, and the imagery and ideology that became associated with these phenomena, have been widely discussed in the course of recent decades. Far beyond the issue

3 "Great Island" is a well-established synonym for "Madagascar" in the academic literature.

4 Pearson (1996); Barendse (2002); Campbell (2003); Vink (2007).

5 Barendse (2002); Kearney (2004); Pearson (2003); Beaujard (2012); Alpers (2014).

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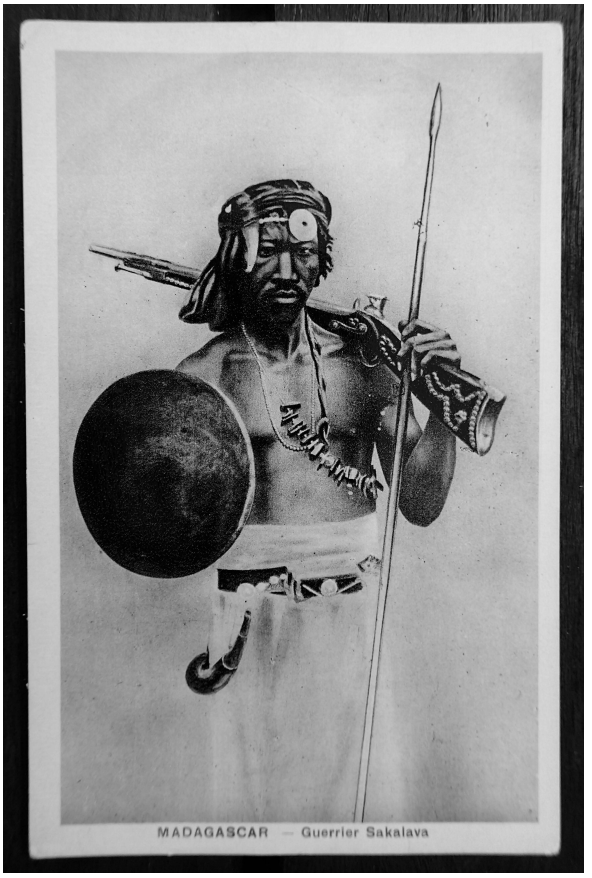

Fig. 1: Sakalava Warrior (ca. 1900). This postcard (Édition des Établissements J. Pauli et Fils, Tananarive), probably based on a photo of a prototypical Sakalava warrior, was used abundantly in the beginning of French colonization, as one finds today many examples for sale (s. Kent 1970: 168).

of pure technological evolution of firearms and their military importance, the focus on the firearms as a commodity has allowed researchers to gain a better understanding of the relation between technological change, trade, politics, economy, and symbolic aspects. One recently published study (Chase 2009) gives a good overview of historical trends in firearm trade on a global scale. Other works concern less studied periods and regions, such as the Islamic world (Cook 1994, Elgood 1995), medieval Asia (Roy 2014), medieval India (Khan 2004), or the Ottoman Empire (Ágoston 2010). The technological and manufacturing process of firearms is the subject of a more specialized literature, including the detailed studies on the development and production of firearms in 17th- and 18th-century France (which were subsequently brought to Madagascar) by Bonnefoy (1991) or by Bacher et al. (2007). The work of Eric Wolf (1982) is pertinent for the anthropological discussion on the impact of firearms on local warfare and politics, and as an example of acculturation. More recent anthropological publications include works on the use of muskets in New Zealand (Crosby 2014) and in Central Africa (Macola 2016). A general picture of the shifting historical role of Madagascar within the Indian Ocean World and, more specifically within patterns of trade, including firearms, has already been presented by authors like Barendse (2002: 259–274), Randrianja and Ellis (2009: 77–122), or Beaujard (2012/II: 473–512). Another frequent topic of present studies is the slave trade from and to Madagascar – slaves having been for a long time the preferred commodity in exchange for firearms.[6] Other commodities, including firearms, have received far less attention.

1.1. Warfare and Firearms in Precolonial Madagascar

The more specific issues of warfare and armament in precolonial Madagascar, as well as the possible impact of firearms on local warfare, have been only sporadically chosen as research topics – quite surprisingly, to be sure, as it is a very common topic addressed in contemporary reports written by European travelers and colonial officers. There are, for example, no detailed studies concerning the origin of traded firearms, the manufacturers concerned, the models and the imported quantities, even if it is possible to find certain direct and/or indirect information concerning these issues that is scattered in these sources. Moreover, there is no systematic study of the early warfare in Madagascar, including the use of firearms. Besides, the sources available are quite biased in multiple ways. This means that important aspects of the early history of firearms on Madagascar are still not sufficiently known.

Nonetheless, three specific studies shed more light on the issues signaled above. The first one, authored by Decary, appeared five decades ago (1966); it presents a comprehensive review of the cultural impact of firearms, with an emphasis on the Merina state, but without providing any detailed theoretical discussion. Two other authors addressed the topic of cultural change caused by the introduction of new military technology, but again only with reference to the early Merina state (Thompson 1974; Berg 1985). The article by Gerald Berg, up to now the most challenging work,

6 See also more recent works by Rakoto (2000); Allen (2003, 2015); Campbell (2004); Clarence-Smith (2013).

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provides important theoretical perspective by focusing on the state building processes as well as on the symbolic dimension of firearms.

Because of this still patchy picture of the impact of firearms on Malagasy culture, the research on the general importance of firearms as a trade commodity in early European-Malagasy contact, its connection with the slave trade, the heavy use of firearms in local warfare, and its possible sociopolitical implications is today particularly intensive. It is important to mention here the works on historical events in Madagascar in the period between 1600 and 1900, such as those by Armstrong (1983), Barendse (2002), Westra and Armstrong (2006) and Randrianja and Ellis (2009). However, even while there is only such a small bundle of works on precolonial Malagasy warfare and the effects of the introduction of firearms available, it is possible to recognize some tendencies in interpretation and theorization of which three will be considered in more detail. The first author mentioned above, Decary (1966), takes on quite a descriptive position, allowing for a multitude of sometimes contradicting sources and voices to appear. While, for example, he attests at the beginning, that "the wars were not too bloody, the Malagasy rather greedy than cruel" (1966: 13, transl. by P. K.), he later gives many examples for a quite belligerent disposition for nearly all of the different ethnic groups (14–28), with the example of the Antaisaka who were living in a "semipermanent state of war" (18, transl. by P. K.) and among them "the conflicts broke out for the slightest reason" (18, transl. by P. K.). Concerning the effects of firearms he cites a French observation in 1754 that the Sakalava wars became much "deadlier" (49, transl. by P. K.) since they acquired a large number of guns.

With Thompson (1974), however, starts a clear tendency to downplay the brutality of precolonial warfare and the importance of firearms for state building and for warfare on Madagascar, as a counterexample for important theories current at that time. Exemplarily, Thompson cites the French traveler Nicolas Mayeur and his observation of a 12-hour battle with 12,000 men in central Madagascar resulting in only one dead and 22 wounded (1974: 419). In the following paragraph he questions the view "that the introduction of European firearms in Madagascar, and especially into Imerina [the central region], was crucial for the process of state development in the island" (419). Later he gives another example of a rather ritualized warfare in Imerina (426).

While Thompson does not develop his critique further, Berg (1985) advocated a critical view on military importance of early firearms and their impact on state building. He rightly argued, for example, that there existed no direct proportionality between musket introduction, scale of violence, and state building. Thus, the Sakalava kingdoms in the west, which dominated the influx of firearms for more than a century, later came easily under control of the expanding Merina Kingdom located right in the center of the island, and hence without any direct access to ports (1985: 263 f.). Instead, Berg gives much more importance to the symbolic value of firearms – their "sacredness" (276) – within the cultural system of the Merina Kingdom, and concludes: "The sacredness of firearms matched their relative technical insignificance in determining the outcome of battle" (276). Later, he cites an "astute observer of eighteenth-century Malagasy warfare" (277), a French explorer de Bary, who wrote in a 1764 letter "that even though muskets were plentiful they were primarily marks of affluence" (277). In comparison with the "35 to 50 percent" (276) who died in European battles of that time, Berg argued further, the battle "casualty rate lower than 2 percent" (276) appears surprisingly low. In another article, he reflects again on the rather small efficiency of muskets and guns by giving a number of examples and concludes that warriors "favoured ruse over firepower, noise over marksmanship" (Berg 1988: 209). Another author, Gwyn Campbell, addresses these issues in his research on the Merina empire and argues that traditional "warfare was probably the least demographically important cause of death … because it normally took the form of a ritual game which cost few lives, despite the influx of European musketry in the eighteenth century" (1991: 437, see also Campbell 2009). One problem with this kind of argument is, as it will be later demonstrated, that it judges Malagasy warfare on the ground of contemporary European forms of military engagements.

So far, only Barendse (2002) has critically (but not systematically) reviewed the argument in favor of a rather low impact of imported firearms on the state building in Madagascar. He concluded that although such conclusion might by "partly true" (2002: 266), one should not nonetheless underestimate the impact of Europeans on local political developments on the island. In this context, he pointed to the "grisly vicious circle of war and enslavement" (266, 264) that was caused by the increasing demand for firearms.

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After the presentation of my case study based on a primary source from the beginning of the 18th century, it will be also important to critically revisit the contradictory theories which – on the one hand – underestimate the precolonial warfare in Madagascar and point to the only symbolic importance of firearms, and – on the other – focus on military impact of imported muskets on local warfare. In what follows, I will attend to all these issues and address the following three questions: Was warfare, based on the insights of Robert Drury's account, really a ritual game or a harsh and brutal reality? Were the firearms valued more for their symbolic or for their military function? Was greed for the new military technology the main cause of the "vicious circle" (cf. Barendse 2002: 266) of war and enslavement?

1.2 The Account of Robert Drury

As my argument is based on the information provided by Robert Drury (1687 – ca. 1734), it is therefore necessary to introduce already at this point certain key elements of his work, its editing history, and the critique that followed. The account of Robert Drury concerns his experiences and "adventures" (according to the well-chosen title) during the 15-year-long involuntarily stay of that young Englishman in the south and in the west of Madagascar – from June 1702 to January 1717. Drury, who was shipwrecked on the Malagasy coast at the age of 15, belongs to those few early European travelers who spent a relatively long time in a close contact with the Malagasy people. These circumstances, described in detail in the book, forced him to master the local language and to get familiar with the local culture, thus allowing the reader to enter the precolonial world of the island from the point of view of an "insider."

Drury's work first appeared in 1729, which was rapidly followed by its second (1731) and third (1743) editions. Reprints were published again in 1806 and 1826, and this latter version, republished in 2002, was used as the starting point for my argument presented here. A French translation of that book, with a critical commentary, was published by Alfred Grandidier (1906), and its revised edition, by Anne Molet-Sauvaget, appeared in 1998 (recognizing Defoë as its author). The authenticity of this book was for a long time the topic of a heated debate. Nonetheless, through scrupulous research it was possible to verify all principal assertions with reference to the person of Robert Drury, his travels to East India, and the shipwreck of the "Degrave" off the coast of southern Madagascar in 1702. On the surviving muster rolls of the shipping company, Robert Drury, to give just one particularly intriguing example, is registered as "number 118 on the crew list" (Parker Pearson 1996: 235). More importantly, historical and archeological work allowed for ascertaining the accuracy of nearly all cultural, historical, and geographical facts provided by Drury – details that a short-term visitor would not be able to obtain, even if several inconsistencies still remain. An excellent overview of all these problematic issues was provided by Parker Pearson (1996; Pearson and Karen Godden 2002: 196–209).

Drury's book is not only a "dry" account of events but a lively and carefully structured presentation meant for the general public, and as such it must have been co-edited by another person, presumably even the famous Daniel Defoë who assisted as "an editor and transcriber" (Parker Pearson and Godden 2002: 251). Nonetheless, it is also clear that "much of the narrative and the observations are most unlikely to be theirs [i. e., of possible assisting editors]" (251). One can, therefore, legitimately state that all detailed descriptions of local costumes, events, and politics were most probably provided by Drury, while more general lines of presentations, the style, and perhaps a number of more general historical, philosophical, moral, religious, or political reflections were authored by the silent editor. While this book "has always to be used with care" (251), it still presents incredibly dense and rare ethnographical insights into the main aspects of life in south and western Madagascar at the beginning of the 18th century. Strangely enough, scholars have been quite hesitant to exploit this enormously rich primary source, apart from a few references to particularly pertinent points (e. g., Robert Drury's observation of contact between highlanders and the Menabe Kingdom, see Randrianja and Ellis 2009: 82).

2 The Influx of Firearms in Precolonial Madagascar. A Three Stage Model

The development of firearms is a Eurasian phenomenon par excellence (see Hann 2016 for the concept). The first indications of gunpowder are dated to "the mid-800s" (Buchanan 2006: 3, see also Chase 2009: 31) in China, followed slowly by the invention of the completely new category of fire weapons. This technology arrived in Europe most probably around 1250 (Chase 2009: 58) and spread from there back to the east, to the Arabs, Inner Asia and India, and later to Japan. In about

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1500, an impressive "firearm belt" was established encompassing all Eurasia and North Africa, with Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and Japan as the three main innovative centers. Further technological advancement in Europe, and to a lesser degree in the Ottoman Empire, led to the invention of handheld firearms which allowed for their systematic use within the infantry. These early guns of the 16th to the 18th century were those commonly called "muskets" (Safra 2005: 449).

Seen against this geographical background and evolution, it is not surprising that firearms had already available within the extended Indian Ocean World long before the Europeans arrived; but this development was mostly confined to the eastern part of the area. Apart from India, where firearms had been used most probably since the beginning of the 14th century (Khan 2006: 55), one has to focus on Southeast Asia that remained for centuries in close contact with India, China, and on the Austronesian world, including Madagascar (Chase 2009: 138). Among the testimonials available, there are indications of gunpowder weapons transported as part of the first exploration by the impressive Chinese ship armada led by Admiral Zheng He in 1405 into the Bay of Bengali (Sen 2016). The example of the successful attack of the Portuguese on Melaka (today Malaysia) in 1511, where "they also captured several thousand guns" (Chase 2009: 138) is particularly telling.

In the western part of the Indian Ocean, though, and more specifically sub-Saharan eastern Africa and the adjacent islands, the situation was quite different, being only the periphery to the long-standing connectivity between Arabia, India, and Southeast Asia. Nonetheless, one has to assume that also here some knowledge of the existence of firearms "could not have been completely unfamiliar even before the Europeans arrived" (Chase 2009: 111). One main argument to sustain this judgment is the existence of long-established trading routes along the east Swahili African coast, including Madagascar since about 800 (Vérin 1986), going to the Middle East and India, on land and by sea. A rare early contemporary testimonial of the early presence of non-European firearms in this region is the sight in 1500 of "an Indian ship armed with guns at Malindi … in 1498" (Chase 2009: 234) by Vasco da Gama. Other sources show that the Ottomans and the Portuguese "helped put firearms in the hands of local powers in the early 1500s" (Chase 2009: 111), which would be one of the first historical indications of such a technological transfer towards eastern Africa/western Indian Ocean societies. But this was still a marginal beginning and far from the dynamics to come. Only when the rising demand for slaves in the New World created a situation of strong concurrence among the newly arrived European powers (Chase 2009: 110), the potential dangers of a transfer of the powerful military technology did come to be overlooked by them. Suddenly, from 1650 onwards, muskets became a regular, a "prime" commodity, and to be exchanged in increasing numbers for slaves, with the island of Madagascar offering a particularly pertinent case.

Within the context of the European expansion in the decades and centuries to come, the new military technology entered Madagascar. It will be seen that while the Europeans, according to the data available, played a key role in initiating the technological transfer and in dominating the trade of firearms until colonization in 1896, other sources of firearms – trade via the Swahili coast from East Africa, Arabia and India, and local production of firearms – were added subsequently. The following periodization into roughly three distinct stages or phases – early, central, final – is elaborated by synthesizing the main literature by hand,[7] and by adding additional information from primary sources available, for example, from the "Collection des ouvrages anciens concernant Madagascar" (Grandidier 1903, 1904). A huge part of firearms traded, produced, and used, it has to be noted, were of the gun style and most information available is connected to this technology. Smaller firearms (e. g., pistols) or canons played a more minor role and are not studied here in detail.

2.1 The Early Period (ca. 1506–1650)

In accordance with the above-given general outline, a review of published primary sources confirms that firearms definitely were not used and most probably not known at all by any of the diverse local populations on Madagascar until the Portuguese arrived in 1500. In a first 1506 Portuguese document hinting at the armament of a group of men in a pirogue noted somewhere on the eastern coast and armed with "spears, shields and bows and arrows" (Grandidier 1903: 11) is followed by many comparable observations in the following decades. According to a first tentative description of the island of Madagascar by the Portuguese historian Duarte Barbosa in 1516, the typical armament of local people of this island consists of "very light spears, with the top made

7 Decary (1966); Thompson (1974); Berg (1985).

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out of iron" (Grandidier 1903: 54). In general, descriptions of the island of Madagascar, which started to multiply throughout the European age of discovery, the armament of the islanders was for many decades described without mentioning any firearms (e. g., Grandidier 1903: 139 [1575], 147 [1585], 441 [1609], 498 [1613]). In the reports written in 1613 and 1614, the Portuguese noted that the Malagasy population was clearly afraid of firearms and they subsequently used this particularity to their advantage in armed conflicts (Grandidier 1904: 27, 62). Similarly, a Dutch report from 1654 contains the information that "one might chase 400 men with assegais away with a single musket" (Barendse 2002: 266).

This does not necessarily exclude that at least some kind of vague knowledge of gunpowder technology was available to those who were in commercial contact with the outer world, most probably the Islamic traders living in small settlements located primarily in northwestern and northeastern Madagascar, and connected to the Swahili coast in Africa and to the Arabian Peninsula (Vérin 1986). Nonetheless, this technology, according to the primary sources, was neither familiar to nor used by them. Even among the most flourishing of these settlements, Lulungane (later Old Masselage) that was located on what is today the island of Nosy Manja in the Bay of Mahajamba (Kneitz 2014: 88), at the northwestern coast, no firearms were used as the following event indicates. When the Portuguese sacked Lulungane at the end of 1506 and killed many of its inhabitants, the attacked traders and their Malagasy allies did not use firearms but defended themselves only with "spears and shields" (Grandidier 1903: 21), or as is noted in another Portuguese document, with "lances with a peak made by animals' bones" (34). Therefore, it seems safe to conclude that firearms were not present on Madagascar up to the arrival of Europeans, in spite of the above given indications for firearm use or trade in Malindi or East Africa.

It was Europeans, therefore (not Arabs), who first introduced firearms in Madagascar during what is referred to in this text as the "early period of firearms." In any case, the earliest known written evidence of the use of firearms on Madagascar is linked to the passage of a European vessel. When on February 7, 1505, a small Portuguese expedition was attacked by natives on the eastern coast, the attackers could be fend off only with salvos from the ships' guns (Grandidier 1903: 12, according to a book published by the Portuguese historian Castanheda in 1555). During the following about 150 years (1505 - 1650), firearms became available on the Great Island, although only in small numbers – most likely in the low hundreds.[8]

The very first firearms (guns and pistols) known to have arrived in Malagasy communities were brought by the Portuguese around 1527, according to the information collected by the French Governor Flacourt in the year 1650 (Flacourt 1661: 33, see Grandidier 1903: 60–62). "Five of them [of the Portuguese] stayed in the stone house, with thirty Negros …, or slaves, to whom they gave guns, who made from time to time persecutions in the country, where they set fire on all villages …" (Flacourt 1661: 33; transl. by P. K.). According to a Portuguese history published in 1574, the Portuguese had "recently" ("récemment", Grandidier 1903: 41) taught the use of firearms to the Malagasy population. Definite contemporary reports on firearms in the hands of Malagasy based on eyewitness accounts date from 1614 (Grandidier 1905: 9), 1620 (Grandidier 1904: 365), and 1635 (439). A closer look at those early documents though shows that during that time firearms were still not regarded as a regular trade commodity. Instead, they were acquired as presents (Grandidier 1905: 9; 1904: 365), by plundering shipwrecks (Grandidier 1904: 365; Decary 1966/I: 49; document of 1650), by an improvised bartering (Grandidier 1904: 439) or from French troops stationed in the area (Decary 1966/I: 49). Nearly all sources from that period indicate that firearms entered Madagascar via the southeastern or southwestern shores, and were brought by Europeans (Portuguese, Dutch, and English).

While the recipients of firearms were predominantly inhabitants of coastal areas, it seems plausible that guns soon became a trading commodity between Malagasy groups and, as such, they were bartered with groups living in the interior. The oral Merina tradition, dating back to the end of the 19th century, according to which the first firearm had already reached the center of Madagascar before 1600 might, be therefore, correct (Decary 1966/I: 48; Thompson 1974: 418). The claim by the same tradition that King Andriamanjaka (beginning of the 17th century) already possessed 50 firearms, however, looks dubious in the light of contemporary sources, considering the rather

8 "… ils [the Moors] se mirent à tirer sur les Portugais, qui mirent alors le feu à leurs pièces d'artillerie, sans toutefois arriver à en prendre par manque d'embarcations" (Grandidier 1903: 12).

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small number of firearms in circulation at that time.

An important statement by the Portuguese missionary Luis Mariano, written in 1614, indicates that it was the Dutch and the Moors (Arabs) who have given a small number of guns to local kings (Grandidier 1905: 9, s. above citation at the entry of part 2). This observation indirectly corroborates the fact that the Portuguese largely abstained from the trade in firearms in the years directly following their discovery of the island in 1500. Moreover, this statement is the first currently known proof of firearm imports by Muslim traders. Sometime between 1506 and 1614, however, the Muslim traders coming of the Swahili zone should have included that commodity into their offer, certainly in response to the growing demand.

2.2 The Central Period of Firearm Influx and Circulation (ca. 1650–1820)

It was during that period, decisive for firearm imports, when the gunpowder technology became quickly available as the prime commodity provided by the expanding European trade on Madagascar. It was also the time when the culture complex of "lords-of-the-muskets" – that is, a particular elite lifestyle based on the use of firearms – emerged and flourished. Obviously, European traders appreciated the growing demand for weapons on the part of local headmen. Miller estimates that the typical cargo destined for Madagascar consisted of 25-30% firearms, thus exceeding by far the usual 10% of firearms in the transatlantic trade, which suggests that Malagasy population had indeed developed a relatively high demand for this commodity (1988: 75).

The list of about 50 known voyages of English and Dutch slavers until 1700 (Armstrong 1983),[9] to which an unknown number of voyages has to be added, allows for estimating roughly the influx of several thousand firearms[10] already in the first five decades of this period, mostly again at the ports of southwest and southeast Madagascar (e. g., called Lightfoets [today Morondave], St. Augustin [near modern-day Tuléar]). But there are also records of slaving voyages going to the east (Antongil) and to the northwest, especially to New Magelagie (today the island Antsoheribory) – likewise a settlement of Islamic traders (Armstrong 1983). There are further indications showing that firearms at this time (at the latest) had entered all the more important political entities in the south, more precisely the early Betsileo and Antemoro kingdoms (Deschamps 1960) as well as the east coast (Berg 1985: 265–267), but probably the northern interior (the Imerina region) as well. First canons also became available in this time, again by plundering shipwrecks (Decary 1966/I: 48). The Robert Drury document, based on observations shortly after 1700, allows us to observe how this situation evolved at an early point in time.

The influx of weapons and the associated material – such as gunpowder, flint stones or plumbs – increased rapidly in the first half of the 18th century, with the recently founded Boeny Kingdom of the Sakalava in northwestern Madagascar as one of the most important trade destinations for Europeans on Madagascar (Kneitz 2014). The passage of the Dutch ship "Binnenwijzend" in 1732 at the Boeny Kingdom offers a particularly well studied example (Thiébaut 2015).[11] On this occasion, 190 slaves were bought in exchange for cash (mostly Spanish piasters), 124 guns and 505 livres of powder, and a small quantity of other commodities (60). Another 12 guns of superior quality were offered as presents and six guns were needed to barter cows (60). The remaining eight guns of the original cargo of 150 were probably dysfunctional and refused by the Malagasy traders (60). Thiébaut estimates that guns were the commodity preferred by the Sakalava, but as the Dutch could only offer an insufficient number of them, the payment had to be made in cash (60). Concurrently, four more traders were present at the same time in the Bombetoka Bay[12], three French ships and one trader from Surat, India (56). During the same time, in about 1730, approximately 130,000 guns were imported to the East African coast (Lovejoy 2000: 106) – to give an indication about the scale of the ongoing trade within the greater region.

The limited available data do not allow for a clear determination which European country (as well as the United States) participated most in the trade of firearms and which models came to be preferred. It seems very plausible that the weapons were traded primarily by English, Dutch, French, and American traders, with the south and west

9 The number of European (French, Dutch, English) and American vessels in the two centuries between 1600 and 1800 is estimated at 800 by a recent publication (Hooper 2017).

10 The number of 5,000 might be a sound base for further discussion if one assumes about 100 guns per ship.

11 Another example is that of the Dutch ship "Leijdsmann" in 1715 (Westra and Armstrong 2006).

12 Thiébaut wrongly localizes the Bay of Boina as a trading place.

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ports more frequented by the English and perhaps by the Dutch (at least according to the Drury source), and the ports to the east – by the French. Barendse (2002: 267) is the only author who points to the possibility – unfortunately without any specific references – that non-European traders continued importing firearms in this period as well. He states, for instance, that "Muscati traders on the northwest coast also peddled arms – and in great numbers," and even Bantu warriors, "skilled in firearms" were transported from Muscat and the Comores "for use as mercenaries" (2002: 267). Another author observes that the early Merina Kingdom of Andrianampoinimerina "was ultimately dependent from foreign muskets imported by Arab traders by the west coast" (Campbell 1987: 398). However, apart from the already cited 1614 note by Luis Mariano, I could not find any direct, i.e., contemporary confirmation of such early (before 1800) extra-European sources of weapons in Madagascar, even if later sources that refer to the west coast would allow for reaching such conclusion. Still, it is safe to assume a continuous influx of firearms via the Swahili coast since the end of the 16th century, although the quantity of important weapons were with great certainty far below of those offered by the Europeans.

According to Decary (1966) and Berg (1985), one of the main providers of muskets after 1750 was France, where they were produced in manufactures of St. Étienne and Charleville.[13] Decary published several lists – that "could be multiplied" (1966/I: 51; transl. by P. K.) – demonstrating that around 1770 the French government prepared stocks of about 10,000 firearms (different models of guns, muskets, pistols) and components (50 f.) for a three-year trading period. Berg estimates the minimum influx of firearms to Madagascar in this period at about 3,000 pieces/year – presumably one of the most significant inputs of firearms into Madagascar during that period. However, Berg continues, after 1780 firearms "came to the island [only] in the hundreds, not in the thousands as they did in the 1760s" for reasons that largely remain unclear to him (1985: 269 f.). As King Andrianampoinimerina (reign ca. 1787–1810), who unified central Madagascar into the Merina Kingdom under his reign after 1787, "placed great emphasis on the acquisition of firearms" (Thompson 1974: 422); such a slowdown, if there was one, was most probably temporary. In about 1816, his son Radama I (reign ca. 1810–1828) is said to have had already about 40,000 soldiers armed with muskets (423), while in 1820 the number of firearms is amounting to "69,784" (423), a sudden increase which Thompson, however, sees as dubious. These firearms, probably of English origin, were acquired mostly "after 1810, when the British conquered the French establishments in the Indian Ocean" (422 f.).

Along with the European and Muslim traders, other possible providers of firearms in Madagascar were local workshops in which weapons were manufactured. The first undisputable indication of homemade firearms dates back to 1850 and refers to the Merina region, at the center of the island. However, certain primary sources from the second half of the 18th century, most notably the writings of the French Nicolas Mayeur, point to the possibility of an earlier production of firearms on the island. Mayeur observed in the northern, Imarina region that gunsmiths were able to make "all parts of a gun" and even gunpowder (Thompson 1974: 420, citing Mayeur 1785: 106); iron bullets were also produced and distributed locally (Mayeur 1913 [1777]: 153). In this context, another author points to certain technical problem, namely the inability of native blacksmiths to produce gun barrels from one piece of metal, and hence the necessity to weld pieces, which meant the rifles unreliable (Fremigacci 1976: 178). In any case, local craftsmen were able to repair firearms and produce supply, thus reducing the dependency on European imports. This, however, does not rule out the possibility that certain technically unsophisticated firearms were indeed produced by skillful Malagasy artisans, which could have led to the more industrialized production of firearms that indeed took place later under the direction of Jean Laborde.[14]

Even if the first two decades of the 19th century seemed to mark a return to important numbers of firearms freshly imported into Madagascar, the overall context was by now very different from the situation since 1650. There are several reasons to open up a new, third, period of firearm influx: the emergence of the unified Merina Kingdom in central Madagascar after 1787 and its important territorial expansion after 1820 meant that most established trade harbors on the coast fell into the hands

13 Decary (1966/I: 50 f.); Bonnefoy (1991); Bacher, Brun et Perrin (2007).

14 The production and the processing of iron, among other materials used in making arms, and firearms, have a long history on Madagascar. The production of firearms on the island, in this perspective, added just another branch of production to a long existing craft.

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of the newly arrived conquerors. The Merina tried to monopolize the firearm trade from the Europeans, while all others in the independent and more isolated regions were forced to take refuge in clandestine commercial channels. At the same time, Europeans began to interfere increasingly strongly in Western Indian Ocean politics. The treaty of 1817 between Radama I, King of the Merina, and England, including the recognition of the Merina Kingdom as the "Kingdom of Madagascar" and the abolishment of slavery on the island (Randrianja and Ellis 2009: 123–154), constituted an important movement towards the end of the old slave-firearm trade system of the foregone century.

2.3 The Final Period of Precolonial Firearm Propagation (1820–1896)

The final period of the precolonial firearm imports was characterized by two very different dynamics. On the one hand, the succeeding kings and queens of the Merina Kingdom, dominating the island politically and by military means, tried to monopolize the trade and possession of firearms to their benefit. The development of their well-equipped army is comparatively well-known (Decary 1966/II; Thompson 1974: 427–434). On the other hand, there were all the other still autonomous Malagasy populations, whose kings and chiefs had to trade to supply with firearms under more difficult conditions than the centuries before. As one might assume, there is only scarce evidence available concerning their situation and the success of their efforts, and it will be presumably, due to the given circumstance, rather difficult to find out details. Their continuing resistance to Merina attacks and the fact that they still were fairly well-equipped with firearms until 1896 (Decary 1966/I: 55) shows overtly, though, that they had their own channels.

Let us now summarize the present discussion concerning the Merina Kingdom and its role in the spreading of European military technology on the island. Following particular agreements with the monarchy, the British had to send for an unspecified period a number of "100 muskets, 10,000 flints, and 10,000 pounds of gunpowder" (Thompson 1974: 424) each year to the King of the Merina. This was, nonetheless, only a tiny part compared to the very important number of firearms imported in a few years according to the sources already cited above. During the reign of King Radama I, the armed force of the kingdom was trained by European officers – the training including new military technologies and forms of organization. Later, under Queen Ranavalona I (reign 1828–1861), in 1844, the Merina ordered 22,000 guns on the French market (Decary 1966/II: 32). In the course of 10 years prior to this order, the kingdom had already received an annual payment of 7,000 piasters from the French, which was usually paid in firearms; this could have produce an influx of about 1000 guns a year (32). Still, the queen intended to reduce the dependence on European imports. For that purpose, she supported for several years (ca. 1837–1857) the project to establish a manufacture that was managed by the French adventurer Jean Laborde. The workshop, geared at producing gunpowder and firearms, did not have much success, however (Campbell 1988: 482–485; 2009: 92–102; Jacob 1989).[15] There are no numbers available concerning the ratio of the locally produced arms to the imported ones, however. It is known that in the last years of her reign, Queen Ranavalona II (1868–1883) ordered 10,000 Snider guns and 5,000 Remingtons from an English trader, and another 10,000 Sniders from the German trading house Oswald (Decary 1966/II: 69). Again, it can be, nonetheless, safely assumed that the figures presented in the sources constitute only a part of the real numbers imported. When in 1896 the Merina prepared the defense against the French army, the number of modern guns available were estimated to about 20,000, with an ammunition of far beyond 2.5 million; a further 60 canons were counted (Decary 1966/II: 85 f.).

Far less is known about the regions outside the Merina sovereignty, as already has been pointed out. Some information dispersed in the available literature, nonetheless, do allow for certain general estimates. Thompson, for instance, argues that the Merina succeeded in "reduc[ing] considerably the supply of … weapons to the other Malagasy people" (1974: 425) and had tried, sometimes with success, to "requisition the firearms possessed by the conquered people" (425). On the other hand, however, it has been established that independent Malagasy groups were very well equipped with weapons until the beginning of colonization in 1896.

According to Decary (1966/I: 55 f.), at that point in time French officials estimated that nearly every second man in the south and the west had a

15 Self-produced firearms (pistols and guns) are regularly used by bandits today, as newspaper articles report frequently. One might ask if there is a continuity of craftsmanship going back to the 18th century.

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gun, while the number of guns on the east coast would have been lower. If we take into account that the total Malagasy population on the eve of colonization would have been somewhat over 3 million and with the population of the central Imerina region nearly one million (Campbell 1991: 419), the coastal population would add up very roughly to two million, or about one million men. These figures would allow for a narrowing of the maximum number of "coastal guns" in 1896 to less than half a million – perhaps closer to 200,000 – certainly with a considerable range, but an estimation, which, nonetheless, indicates the scale of that development. This coincides well with the citation of Decary that the French troops gathered "tens of thousands" (1966/I: 55; "des dizaines de milles") of guns from the population after 1895, without the possibility of giving any exact number. Most of these guns, though, most probably were older ones.

One of the best contemporary surveys for the independent coastal population concerning access to firearms is certainly that of the French Captain Charles Guillain (1845) who documented the situation around 1840 all along the west coast (from the island Nosy Be to the Menabe). According to his observation, among the estimated total population of about 160,000 of what he summarized as independent Sakalava people, he counted about 27,700 warriors (i. e., roughly between one third and a half of all adult men; Guillain 1845: 322). He does not specify the total number of firearms available, but from his observation of the individual groups (243, 279, 287) one must conclude that less than half of the warriors possessed one, which means that about ten to fifteen thousand guns were available to the independent Sakalava group. The guns of at least the Milanja county (between the Boeny and the Menabe kingdoms) were visibly old or in a bad state (288).

What makes the report of Charles Guillain particularly interesting, apart from these numbers, is his observation concerning the import of firearms via the long-established trade connections between the west coast and East Africa. Since the above given citation of Luis Mariano in 1614, this is the first source based on eyewitness of this kind of observation available. Guillain's report corroborates the import of firearms (among many other commodities) from the Swahili coast – in particular from Mozambique, Zanzibar, Comoros, and the Malagasy island of Nosy Be – to Kiakombi (Bay of Marambitsy, Guillain 1845: 246), as well as from the neighboring Bali Bay (280) and on Madagascar. The trade with the more southern and isolated regions of Milanja (186) and the Maraha (292) became interrupted by Merina troops only shortly before Guillain's mission. He notes for Kiakombi, for example, that the trade was limited ("très peu étendu"; 246) but growing ("voie ascendante"; 246), and that "some" (246; "quelques") trading ships passing by were offering commodities like draperies, glass jewelry, or mirrors as well as "powder, bullets, flint stones, and guns" (246; "poudres, balles, pierres à feu et fusils"). Furthermore, he confirms that for the Milanja country, more to the south, the most urgently sought commodities were firearms and munition (286). The probably non-European production site of the firearms traded remains unknown, unfortunately. Nonetheless, these few indications allow for the deduction that such kinds of trade of firearms by non-Europeans certainly should have started much earlier, perhaps at the latest as a direct consequence of the new Merina domination on the main coastal ports since about 1825 (if not in continuation of the Moor trade indicated by Luis Mariano in 1614). A later source allows us to confirm that the trade of firearms by non-Europeans was continuing throughout the second half of the 19th century. Sanchez (2007: 122 f.) evaluated cargo documents from the ship that belonged to the Indian trader Djafou Ali Baye, anchored on the island of Nosy Be, which left the port on November 6, 1873, in the direction of the Tambohorano region (north of the Menabe) with "a box of guns, one hundred barrels of French powder – 10 kilograms each,"[16] as well as other goods, such as coffee, sugar, and clothes.

When French troops arrived in 1895 on Madagascar, they were confronted by a population that was relatively well armed, as the number of guns, pistols, and guns available, mostly of European but also of non-European and Malagasy origin, would add up to, according to the above-given review, something like 250,000, with an important range. Most of these, though, were old, technically outdated, and dysfunctional or semi-functional, often even going back to early times of trade, and it was perhaps only the Merina regime with about 20,000 modern guns and trained soldiers who had a real possibility of confronting openly the French corps. Only a few examples of precolonial firearms have survived to the present.[17]

16 "une caisse de fusils, cent barils de 10 kilos de poudre française …".

17 For example, in the *rova* (royal residences) of Antananarivo and Ambohimanga, in central Imerina, and in the Museum of the Gendarmerie in the town of Moramanga, a num-

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The king was sitting on a mat, … with a gun leaning on his shoulder, and a brace of pistols lying by his side … (Robert Drury about Kirindra [Dean Crindo], the King of Antandroy, June 1702; 1826 [1729]: 35).

3 The Drury Experience: Muskets and Malagasy Warfare, 1702–1717

The presentation of the influx of an important new technology like firearms, leads inevitably to other and even more important questions: What might be the impact of that technology on society and culture? How will such technology be integrated into society? How does it change society and, conversely, how do society and its specific context shape its use? Weapons, and more specifically firearms, have often and somehow naively, been seen as a major "engine" for promoting more effective forms of state building and violence. Some scholars, though, have also highlighted the possibility of a cultural interpretation and use of the new technology and have formulated counterarguments to a deterministic view of the effects of firearms. The Malagasy case, it will be seen by now, has followed these contradictory trends. The Drury case presented further on, however, offers a fascinating way to return to these arguments, and to offer new insights.

3.1 The Study of Cultural Effects of Early Firearms on Madagascar

For a number of years, the investigation on the effect of European firearms on indigenous societies around the world has been an important field of study, beginning, in the first place with Eric Wolf's well-known study (1982). Here, I shall summarize the principal issues addressed in that discussion.

The invention and increasing use of firearms was typically related to political developments. In this context, a number of authors argued that the integration of firearms into society fosters more violence, brutality, the centralization of power, and hence the state building process (cf. Barendse 2002: 266). Put it differently, if the number of firearms wielded in a group increases, the more likely it is that a small predatory elite will emerge which probably would try to dominate its own political entity as well as to try to expand (Wolf 1982: 181, Crosby 2014: 11). However, over time it has become clear that there is only a "limited value of deterministic understandings of the relationship between technology and society" (Macola 2016: 75), as an author of a recent study on the use of guns in Central Africa stressed. Case studies elaborated in contexts as different as that just cited on Central Africa or New Zealand (Crosby 2014) concerning the political effect of the introduction of European firearms, show that such technological introduction had many effects, including those presumed by early theoretical thinkers. Nonetheless, at the same time, it became clear that the existence of firearms in itself leads not necessarily to those dynamics, but that it represents just one option in a very broad field of possible effects.

The Malagasy case allows for the assertion of these different strains of contradictory argumentation, as it has already been noted. On the one hand, the emergence of a centralized political power from the 16th century onwards coincides with the introduction of European firearms and with the emergence of the important Sakalava kingdoms in western Madagascar since the 17th century, as the most prominent example of a general trend towards early state building on Madagascar in this period (Kent 1970). In the view of authors around the middle of the 20th century, this was not a mere coincidence but a causal relationship (Deschamps 1960). Later, however, critical reviews led to a revision of this argument, allowing for it to be argued that these two dynamics – firearms and the trend towards state building – were not connected in a direct deterministic relationship. It was, after all, not too difficult to present counterarguments, as Berg has worked out. If, for example, the simple possession and use of the new firearm technology would be the main condition for military strength, why, then, did the coastal kingdoms (Sakalava, Betsimisaraka, Antanosy), that were the first to have easy access to firearms, not do better? Why, in particular, were they all defeated by the Merina people of central Madagascar, far away from the coast, who politically were divided until the end of the 18th century and "fought for control over a myriad of tiny principalities" (Berg 1985)? Other anthropological and historical informed investigations of scholars on Malagasy studies have argued in a similar way

ber of 19th-century canons of European origin are exposed (two canons in Ambohimanga might be of local production). In the museum one finds, in addition to a small number of 19th-century guns, one musket and a few examples of locally produced firearms. A number of muskets might still be hidden throughout the island or might have been part of sacred royal objects, e. g., as it is the case at the royal shrine in Mahajanga with several guns used during rituals (Kneitz 2003).

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(Barendse 2002: 266). At the same time, the symbolical and cultural changes, conditioned by the introductions of firearms, became more and more apparent, as Berg emphasized (1985). For Barendse (2002: 266 f.), who briefly summarized this debate, though, it is necessary to put these argumentations in the right equilibrium. Even if the old deterministic view is naïve, he argues, effects of the import of firearms (by Europeans and possibly other origins as well) into Madagascar on political processes and the state-building process are visible and should be interpreted in a more nuanced way. The report of Robert Drury, as will be shown in the following paragraphs, allows us to go into unprecedented and nuanced details of what the import and use of firearms meant at the beginning of the lord-of-the-muskets era. This might contribute to a revision of the simplistic view of the deterministic effect on state building as well as the simplistic negation of any direct impact of muskets on political processes, warfare, and state building.

3.2 The Wild Boar's Defeat in 1711: A Battle in Southern Madagascar

What was the experience of fighting with firearms in south Madagascar in the beginning of the XVIII century, and what were the effects of that still rather new technology on the communities? The following description of an armed confrontation will allow the reader to share the experience of Robert Drury in this regard.

About 1711, two allied kingdoms of Fiherenana (Feraigner) [18] and Antandroy (Anterndroea), located on the southern tip of Madagascar, combined their forces to and thus created an army of about 6,000 men. The purpose of that decision was to fight against their "common enemy," King Hosintany (Woozington) of the neighboring Kingdom of Mahafaly (Merfaughla). Robert Drury states that, at first, "orders were sent to the three towns" under the particular command of the prince among whom he lived, to inform them that instead "of hunting the wild cattle, they should make proper preparations for hunting the wild boar"; boar is here an expression used to name the opposing ruler. Immediately the arms were kept at the ready, because, as one reads, "there are artificers here, who can make or mend a spring [of the musket] and do twenty other things to guns as well as lances." The armies of both allied kingdoms met some days later and performed a short "welcome ceremony": the Antandroy army "formed a line of above a quarter of a mile in length," while the Fiherenana army "appeared … dancing, each with a gun in his left hand, and a lance in his right, their shells sounding, and their drums beating. Then, at a small distance, they fired some pieces by way of salutation, which we immediately returned …" (cf. Drury 1826: 187-195).

In the following days, the armies marched into the territory of their enemy until they reached the environs of the capital town. The population had left all the smaller villages and towns "for Woozington [Hosintany] was a politic man, and would leave nothing for us to subsist on; neither would he weaken his army by fruitless skirmishes." Then "three men called to our people" and informed them that Hosintany "proposed to pay … a visit next morning," i. e., to announce his readiness for an open battle. Immediately, "we went hard to work to fortify the camp." At the "break of the day," the soldiers had just put their "guns through little holes, which we had left in our wall on purpose," when their enemies were "coming down with fury upon us" and the battle took its course (Drury 1826: 190ff.). Drury remembers the central part of the clash in the following words (192 f.):

> Whilst we were preparing to receive them, another party appeared on the contrary side … . Our shells were immediately sounded, and our drums beaten, but we soon altered this for another kind of noise. When they came within thirty yards of us, they fired briskly, still approaching … . I observed their eyes red with smoking jermaughla [a drug], which made them more resolute than usual. … Ry-Opheck [a nephew of King Hosintany], with a body of men, attacked one of our entrances; he came skipping along, his eyes glowed like fire; he had a lance in one hand, and a gun in the other; his people ran after him in so furious a manner, that Trodaughe and his people [a group belonging to Robert Drury's party], who should have defended the passage, gave way. We were employed on our side, and knew nothing of it till he had got within our camp; at which time one of our chief men turning about and seeing Ry-Opheck stabbing our men, fired at him, and shot him in the belly. … . But when they [his people] saw him fall, they returned to bring off his body, and this brought on a warm engagement in the open field. … Here, one who was distinguished from the rest by his yellow complexion, and who seemed of superior rank, took aim at me, but luckily missing me, I wounded him in the thigh and ran up to him. I found his hand was full of powder, in order to charge again, and he threatened me hard, but I snatched his lance from him … . Another such push on the con-

18 The topographical or ethnic names are given according to Parker Pearson and Godden (2002), with Drury's original writing – his Cockney pronunciation of the Malagasy words (1826: 89) – in brackets.

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trary side so totally defeated the enemy, that they flew for it … .

Afterwards, the victors counted the casualties on both sides. Robert Drury's army had lost 16 men, while 13 warriors were wounded. On the other side, "the dead bodies … amounted to one hundred and seventy-five; among whom there were sixteen persons of distinction." King Kirindra then "gave orders that the bodies of these sixteen great men should be cut to pieces and scattered about the field, that their friends might not bury them. Two or three days later, we marched farther into [kingdom] Merfaughla [Mahafaly], plundering and spoiling all their plantations" (Drury 1826: 194).

This lively account of what was the bloodiest encounter Drury experienced during his stay of 15 years, allows us to enter the world of indigenous warfare in southern Madagascar shortly after 1700 and to grasp most directly some aspects of the employment firearms in local conflicts. The following paragraphs present a more concise presentation of Robert Drury's observations on the Malagasy warfare and the importance of firearms.

3.3 Politics, Conflicts, and Warfare in the South of Madagascar

Robert Drury left London in 1701 for India on the ship "Degrave," aged about 14. He was part of the ship's crew, but was offered a small cargo from his father to engage in the trading business on his own. In 1702, on their way back to England but still in India, the ship was badly damaged by a river reef. After a difficult journey, it was decided to land on the southern tip of Madagascar, the land found closest nearby, while the situation onboard was running out of control. The landing operation was accomplished successfully and all but one of the 160 people onboard reached the shore safely. The local king of the Antandroy country, called Kirindra (Dean Crindo), received them friendly and hosted them in his town for a number of days, but when it became clear that he was unwilling to let them go, it was decided to take the king hostage. This plan was put in practice but it ended dramatically when natives eventually killed all the passengers, except three ship boys, including Robert Drury. For the period of nine years, he became a slave of one of the king's grandchildren, before he decided to escape toward west around 1711. It took another five years before he returned to London in 1717, at the age of 29.

There existed, therefore, a number of political entities in the south of Madagascar that were bound by shifting alliances. During his stay on the island, Drury came in contact with five of them – namely, Antandroy, Antanosy, Mahafaly, Fiherenana, and Sakalava – extending between the southeastern and southwestern coast of Madagascar. There was a number of smaller polities inland as well. In 1702, Robert Drury became integrated into the social system of the Antandroy Kingdom, which had no port and, therefore, no direct access to the overseas trade. More to the northeast was the Antanosy Kingdom, which had access to the port Fort Dauphin – with long-established commercial links with France – while the kingdom of Mahafaly (Merfaughla) was situated in the west. Both political entities were Antandroy's bitter enemies, however, and the reason for that was the killing of father of Kirindra, Antandroy's king, by Mahafaly forces at one point in the past. The southwestern kingdom of Fiherenana had access to the then important port of St. Augustin, although its strategic position at that time was rather complicated as its existence was threatened by the political ambitions of the Mahafaly Kingdom in the south and the expanding Sakalava Kingdom in the north. The latter was already the most powerful entity in the region, with an estimated number of 9,000 warriors – a rather high number in comparison with neighboring polities, e.g. the Mahafaly that could muster no more than 3,000 men (Drury 1826: 253).

Robert Drury experienced local warfare as an essential component of regular politics of those kingdoms. Indeed, during the first decade of his stay on Madagascar, he took part in several bitterly fought armed conflicts, and it was only after he had arrived in the particularly powerful Sakalava Kingdom, in about 1712, that he experienced a more peaceful time. The following list of armed confrontations, witnessed by Drury after 1701, gives certain idea about the extent of violence on the island:

1703: war between the Antandroy and Mahafaly kingdoms (pp. 61–63);
1704: conflict between the kingdoms of Antandroy and Antanosy (pp. 74–79);
1707–1710: civil war of the Antandroy Kingdom (pp. 94–149);
1710: war between the Antandroy Kingdom and a small kingdom to the north (pp. 156 f.);
1711: war of the allied kingdoms of Antandroy and Fiherenena against the Mahafaly Kingdom (pp. 182–197);

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1712: war of the Fiherenena Kingdom against the kingdoms of Mahafaly and Sakalava (pp. 227–257).

Between 1702 and 1712, therefore, Drury reported only three years of peace. The remaining time was marked either by "civil wars" or by conflicts with external enemies. War and physical violence were everyday aspects of life on the island at that time.

3.4 The Firearms: Numbers and Origins

It should not be surprising, therefore, that the employment of firearms – guns and pistols – was a matter of course within the societies in which Robert Drury lived. Unfortunately, he did not provide much information about the number, quality, or the origin of the firearms that were in use among the Malagasy population in that part of the island. Still, the following details can be extracted from his descriptions.

First, for the kings firearms were not only weapons but also a prestige article. On official occasions, they always kept a musket at hand, for example, when the castaways from the shipwrecked "Degrave" were received for the first time by the Antandroy king, Kirindra:

> The king was sitting on a mat, cross-legged, in the open air, just before the door of his palace, with a gun leaning on his shoulder, and a brace of pistols lying by his side; his sons and kinsmen sat in the same manner on the ground on each hand of him, armed with guns and lances; … (Drury 1826: 35).

Drury observed on two occasions that the kings were in fact keeping an entire arsenal of firearms. When the crew of the "Degrave" overpowered King Kirindra in 1702, they plundered his house and found "about thirty small arms, a small quantity of powder and shot, and a few lances" (Drury 1826: 40). About 14 years later, when Drury sought refuge in the mighty kingdom of Sakalava, and asked the eldest son of the king for protection, he was given the function of taking care of the royal's chest of arms, "which are a hundred or more in number; and see that my flints and shot are all kept in order" (285). The sheer number of arms points to power wielded by the kingdoms – that is its control over a considerable territory with a relatively large population, and, of course, its access to foreign trade.

Apart from the king, an important number of warriors also owned firearms, but obviously not all of them. Drury stated in this regard, "the carrying [of] a gun here, like wearing a sword in England, is the mark of a gentleman" (1826: 182). Those who were just armed with lances were called by the nickname "mall-a-cross" (182), an idiom relating to the crossing of two or more lances carried by the pedestrian warriors. By contrast, it was the right of a "freeborn man" (182) to have guns (in similar way: p. 156). The use of firearms was therefore a matter of social prestige – the sign of distinction and power. It remains unclear, though, if (or how) the access to firearms was regulated by the king; most likely, it was a king's award and, as such, it was restricted to his family members and loyal friends.

What one can observe based on Drury's document is that in conflicts there was normally a mixed use of muskets and lances, as becomes clear from the introductory example of the war conducted in 1711. When the master of Robert Drury returned to his hometown from an attack, Drury observed that the people were "dancing before him all the way with their guns in their hands" and on "his first approach, the foremost men fired their guns towards the ground." (1826: 63). Later, when his master made preparations to attack another neighboring town, he ordered "an ambuscade of thirty men, who were ordered not to fire" (98) because they should wait for women and children escaping from the town. There are many similar cases in Drury's account, which indicates that muskets and firearms were used intensively and on regular basis – although usually in combination with lances. Such combination resulted, most likely from certain technological limitations: muskets had to be reloaded constantly – which was a time-consuming procedure – and their accuracy was rather bad, whereas lances were always at hand and ready to be used; they were also indispensable in situations of hit-and-run, surprise attacks in a guerilla-like fashion.

It is difficult to estimate the total number of firearms available at that time in Madagascar, although certain ballpark assessments are possible. The combined forces of all five major kingdoms in the south would have had a number of about 25,000 men according to Drury. Based on Drury's descriptions as well as on the general situation on Madagascar analyzed above, suggesting that in about 1700 the import of firearms on the island was a blossoming business, one can safely assume that about a third of the combatants were equipped with firearms. In other words, about 8,000 to 10,000 muskets in total could have been available to the combined forces of five southern kingdoms.

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The European origin of all firearms is evident in several parts of Drury's account. In the first place, the kingdoms with access to seaports – namely, Antanosy, Fiherenena, and Sakalava – are mentioned as being in a relatively permanent contact with European traders. The link between the firearms and the European technology and military organization is repeatedly highlighted. The fact that King Kirindra first intended to integrate the shipwrecked crew of the "Degrave" to his army should be viewed as a measure to improve the efficiency of his army, as the kingdom lacked any direct possibility to obtain firearms through regular commerce. Europeans were associated with a competent handling of firearms and disciplined fighting. On one occasion, Drury notes that "their fears proceeded from a natural dread they have of white men, ten of whom will drive fifty black men before them" (1826: 77). On another occasion, Drury's masters allowed him to follow them in war because "… the sight of a white man in arms will strike terror into the people upon the mountains where we are going." Moreover, "here is one of your grandfather's arms; you can manage this, I presume, somewhat better than ours." Interestingly, Drury insisted on a lance, however, indicating that being armed only with a musket was insufficient (156).

At the same time, there is no indication at all with regard to the trade of firearms with Arabs or Muslims. On one occasion, the Sakalava Prince Ramoma (Rer Moume in Drury's account) – the oldest son of the reigning King of Menabe – stated: "many benefits we have received from the English, and we were insulted by all our neighbors, till they furnished us with arms" (1826: 286). He then asked: "is it not the white men, but more especially his [Drury's] countrymen, the English, that we are indebted for the riches we enjoy? We, who formerly were insulted by the Amboerlambo people [people of the interior], and other nations around us, are by these Englishmen's guns made too powerful for them; …?" (289). Even a few years earlier, the ruler of Fiherenena reasoned in the same way: "The English, for the general, said he [the king], were very good people, and by the trade which they drove with them, were of singular service to their country" (219). True, these direct statements about the European origin of firearms, in principle, do not exclude the possibility of other trading routes. Still, one has to assume that the trade with firearms in southern Madagascar was nearly exclusively linked to European traders.

3.5 The Use of Firearms in Warfare

Drury's report makes very clear that war and the physical violence associated with it were a well-accepted method of politics. Thus, we can read in his account what was being later frequently repeated in many other reports concerning Madagascar:

> The epidemical evil of this island is, their frequent animosities and open quarrels with one another, which is the principal reason why such numbers of them are sold to the Europeans for slaves. This is a dangerous and destructive misfortune to a people, otherwise good-natured and well disposed (1826: 93).

Although this statement resembles that of Etienne de Flacourt (1661), and as such it could have been edited by Daniel Defoë or another, anonymous, editor, it does reflect Drury's personal experience and the historical fact that warfare was a commonplace in southern Madagascar at that time. It also took on many different forms, ranging from open and well-orchestrated confrontations, including several thousand men, to ambushes and partisan-like strategies. One might argue if the word "war" for guerilla tactics is appropriate, or it should be rather replaced by "feuding." Still, it remains clear throughout the report that these activities were far from being "ritual games," as some authors cited here suggested. These were, indeed, serious and deadly practices, very different from the European warfare of that epoch, which were typical for the time of Drury's stay and frequently caused high casualties of 30-50% of participating combatants (Berg 1985: 278). In what follows, I shall discuss three mains aspects of that Malagasy warfare: the reasons for war and political violence; the strategies applied; the military and cultural impact of firearms on Malagasy communities.

According to Drury, there was a general tendency to solve smaller and greater quarrels or animosities by means of violence; they just "fight it out, making slaves of, impoverishing, and destroying one another" (1826: 93). It was a series of continual revenge and counter-revenge. The following account offers an insight in this situation. The master of Drury, Miavaro, was going to war against the Kingdom of Mahafaly, since some time before the Mahafaly people had murdered the brother of the ruler of Antandroy "in a most barbarous manner." The hostility/dissonance between the kings of St. Augustin (called Rer Vovven by Drury) in the west and King Hosintany (Kingdom of Mahafaly) were caused by "several very gross affronts. Amongst others, he [King Hosintany] had

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called a dog by the name of Rer Vovvern." Between the different families or clans of the Antandroy Kingdom, difficulties arose by mutual zebu stealing, with each party blaming the other. "Our master [Miavaro], it seems, had been found guilty of stealing three of deaan Frukey's [another prince and uncle of Miavaro] cattle, and this [the stealing of Miavaro's cows] they did by way of retaliation" (1826: 61, 94, 150).

Now, be it as it may, it appears that the actual reason for the war-making ran far deeper. Drury himself seems to be aware of that silent or structural cause, as he describes the Malagasy warring as an "epidemical evil" of "otherwise good-natured and well disposed [people]; who have wholesome laws for the determination of all disputes" (1826: 93). While it is certainly difficult to provide a definite answer, one might remember that first scholars have a vicious circle of bartering for firearms, and enslaving as a plausible reason fostering violence and early state-building in Madagascar (Barendse 2002: 278). Such logic cannot be found in Drury's account concerning the Kingdom of Antandroy. Instead, he describes slave-making as very "normal" or even trivial part of feuding and wars, including the internal, "civil" wars (e.g., Drury 1826: 64, 99, 114, 157).

A silent reason for warfare was most likely the issue of prestige. Drury himself gives certain clues when he observes "that the sovereign prince of any country has seldom force sufficient to oblige the lesser chiefs in his dominions to answer, in a judicial way, to the wrongs they do each other" (1826: 93). Similarly, the French Governor Étienne de Flacourt noted that the causes for the continued stealing of zebus are less economical or political but are based just on the fact that the other, neighboring king has more cows, compromising therefore his own prestige. "Those are their enemies who have more cows"[19] (Flacourt 1661: 95; transl. by P. K.).

In other words, two domains of social life must have been responsible for the permanent warring in Madagascar at that time: the economic (acquisition of resources) and the sociopolitical (acquisition of power on the local and trans-local level). Each ruler intended to enhance real (resource-based) and symbolic power, and to improve his relative position in the hierarchy of local polities. This, in turn, was linked to fundamental Malagasy ideas about life and cosmos (e.g., Delivré 1974; Bloch 1983).[20] Among these, the notion of cosmic and social hierarchy was of particular importance. Specifically, each cosmic entity possesses a sort of sacred legacy called *hasina* which must be maintained and enhanced. On the socio-political level, this produced the dynamic of concentric and pulsating political entities – a specific aspect of the early state-building process on Madagascar and, possibly, in the entire Austronesian culture area (Ballarin 2000: 59; Kneitz 2014: 88). Drury's observations concerning warfare fit well within this pattern. By linking it to the deeply engraved conceptions of a hierarchical cosmos, driving the social actors to ascend necessarily to an upper hierarchical position, one can explain the never-ending war or disputes, caused by seemingly secondary causes. The true causes of war dynamics are, therefore, in this reading most importantly related to culture, and the "interior," and are less the outcome of given contemporary dynamics or a new technology.

It is necessary to add, however, that war was seldom a sudden, or unexpected event but it rather resulted from a political process, and specifically, long discussions and negotiations, as in the case of Miavaro, the master of Drury, who had to decide with whom to ally and engaged in hours of consultations (Drury 1826: 110–113). The same author also mentions attempts at reconciliation during an ongoing war, but as the warring parties were not able to find an acceptable solution, the fighting went on, sometimes to the point of self-destruction, as in the case of the Kingdom of Antandroy Kindgom where a civil war ended up in hunger because no cows were left (146ff.).

As for the tactics of war, one has to observe the prevalence of surprise attack and ambushes. Drury describes this guerilla-style warfare in the following paragraph (1826: 67):

> It is a common practice for parties to stroll out and surprise their enemies by night, when least they expect them: on these expeditions it is customary for every man to carry a piece of meat in his hand, and when they have entered a town in the dead of night they throw the meat to the dogs, in order to prevent their barking. Whey they are all got in, one fires a musket, but makes no other noise; the inhabitants thereupon being alarmed, and hastily creeping out of the doors of their low huts in a stooping posture, are stabbed with lances: as to the women and children they take them captive, and drive

19 "… ceux là font leurs ennemis qui ont beaucoup de bœufs" (Flacourt 1661: 95).

20 These authors worked more specifically on the Merina society, but the principles elaborated seems valid for most if not all Malagasy societies.

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away with them all the cattle they can find, set the town on fire, and return home by private unpractised ways.

Typically, such an attack caused a counter-attack of the enemy, which in turn would lead again to an attempt at revenge. After Miavaro, for example, had attacked some "remote and defenseless towns" of a king in the west, King Hosintany, the latter declared war on the Antandroy by sending a messenger to King Kirindra and "mustered up an army of three thousand men … with a firm resolution either to fight the deaan [prince] in the field, or attack him in his town." Kirindra decided to defend his main residence Fenoarivo, but some of his sons "had no patience" and attacked King Hosintany at first in an open battle "in which deaan Woozington's [Hosintany's] son was dangerously wounded." Later they defended a "pass between two hills," but without preventing the enemy from forcing ahead. Finally, Hosintany "arrived at Fennoarevo [Fenoarivo], and attacked in a vigorous manner. Finally, the enemy succeeded to breach it. The parties "disputed every inch of the ground, till deaan Crindo [Kirindra] himself was obliged to cut down several trees, … to make a way for their escape" (Drury 1826: 67-69).

This kind of war – a mixture of open attack and partisan tactics – is certainly far away from the contemporary but very unique and odd European logic of a carnage war, leading to very important losses. Different from this, everybody here is trying, with good reason, to minimize the danger of a deadly strike or shoot, which explains the relatively low number of victims. The military attacks, nonetheless, were led with much audacity, strength, and courage. Once the circumstances allowed for it, the warriors did not hesitate to kill as many men as they could, and even to destroy whole parties and "cut to pieces" all the men. For example, all but four (including Robert Drury) of the 160 shipwrecked Europeans were killed or later, from among the 200 warriors who were surprised in an ambuscade, only 20 survived. The sketched battle against the "wild boar" also counted about 200 dead warriors out of 7,000 (Drury 1826: 252 f.)

Finally, it is necessary to look more precisely at the use and technological or cultural integration of firearms in local societies in the south of Madagascar. According to Drury, the firearms played a visibly important role as part of the war technology at the time. They were heavily used in all kinds of attacks, in ambuscades as well as in open battles both for defensive and offensive actions. In fact, the use seemed to be conditioned by practical and strategic reasons.

At first, it is necessary to look briefly at the particularities of the musket technology, as, e.g., advantages and disadvantages. Thus, muskets would allow for hurting or killing somebody in an effective way, as no time-consuming movement was necessary and an attack from a substantial distance became possible. These were important advantages which put the musketeer in a rather safe position while his readiness to act and react and his radius of actions was extended considerably. At the same time, though, several handicaps have to be enumerated as well: muskets needed to be reloaded after every shot, which was a time-consuming procedure. Further, the accuracy was still low during these times, particularly from a long distance. Hughes (1980: 26 f., 164 f.) explains that a musket was only effective within a distance between 10 to 90 meters, with early muskets (18th century and earlier) subject to particular severe ballistic deviations. Firearms would also need a constant supply of powder, ammunition, flint stones, or plumb, which was not always easy to organize. It was also a noisy technology, not for use in ambuscades or silent attacks.

One can conclude, therefore, that warriors in southern Madagascar opted for a mixed use of available arms – and this for a good reason. While muskets were always kept at hand for defensive purposes, as well as for attacks and in wars, their actual use was clearly conditioned by much practical considerations and by circumstances. For example, when Drury, as an enslaved person, was responsible for a herd of cows, he was also guarded by men armed with guns who could react quickly to any attack (Drury 1826: 94). In case of a surprise attack on a village, the muskets were used only initially in order to draw attention of the villagers. When these were creeping out of the small entrances to their houses, they "were stabbed with lances," to avoid the constant and time-consuming reloading of muskets, a rather difficult operation at night, and to save ammunition (1826: 67).

In open battles, as already explained at the example of the battle of 1711, the warriors with firearms used them only in the beginning, but later resorted to lances and other cold weapons. For example, in the context of the civil war of 1708, "[the] enemy [the warriors of King Kirindra] began the attack" in the early morning and at first "fired so briskly upon us, that for nearly a quarter of an hour together we could not see them for smoke." Later "they drew nearer and the lances flew briskly at one another; one of which went

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through my *lamber* [cloth], and scratched me." On this occasion, Drury was responsible for the continuous reloading of two guns used by his master, allowing him to fire as quickly as possible (1826: 103). However, a discussion about the use of firearms would be incomplete by focusing only on the technological conditions and tactics with reference to muskets. One should also ask for an evaluation of the symbolic value and the specific cultural appraisal of firearms in the south of Madagascar, as this could account for the use and the impact of firearms in cases of violent encounters, a point in particular made by Berg (1985) for the central Imerina region.

Although Drury does not discuss this topic directly, his account does contain, nonetheless, some relevant information. In the first place, firearms were used only by free members of Malagasy communities. On several occasions, for instance, Drury was allowed by the king to handle a gun. The first of them occurred during an armed conflict and Drury indeed "felt like a soldier." Subsequently, he was even given a slave to carry his sleeping mat and other personal objects, which made him walk in a "gentleman-like" fashion. He explains repeatedly that the "carrying of a gun" is "the mark of a gentleman" and of "a freeborn man" (1826: 97, 156, 182, 285).There existed, therefore, a clear link between the social status and firearms that went beyond its pragmatic military utility. Such conclusion is corroborated by circumstances when gunfire was used to announce the arrival of the king or a prince, with "crowds of people dancing before him [the arriving Prince Miavaro] all the way with guns in their hands. On his first approach, the foremost men fired their guns towards the ground; which with them is the signal of a victorious return." On another occasion, when two allied armies were approaching, the arriving party danced "each with a gun in his left hand, and a lance in his right," before "they fired some pieces by way of salutation, which we immediately returned." Finally, when King Kirindra welcomed the shipwrecked guest with "a gun leaning on his shoulder, and a brace of pistols lying by his side" (1826: 36, 63, 187). These few instances give us some insight into the relation between firearms and the demonstration of royal power – the combination that to be seen even at present on occasions when the power of the Sakalava royalty is officially staged.[21]

21 To shoot a salute is a way to signal the presence of the royal ancestors on the occasion of the main yearly Sakalava ritual in the port town of Mahajanga (northwestern coast of Madagascar) in July, the "big royal work" (*fanompoa be*). At the very moment of each salute, the adherents are bowing down, raising their arms with the palms turned overhead, and greeting the arrival of the royal ancestors, a dense emotional moment.

4 Discussion: The Effects of Firearms and Warfare in Early Madagascar

On the grounds of the data presented, I shall now address three already mentioned issues concerning the relation between the firearm technology and warfare in early Madagascar, and specifically: the reality of war and violence; the military vs. symbolic function of firearms; and the link between the firearms and the state-building process.

4.1 The Reality of Malagasy Armed Violence

It has been argued by several authors[22] that the execution of a "real war," including the display of strong physical violence and the use of firearms for killing people, was not the main intention in cases of disputes in precolonial Madagascar – an argument in particular related to the central Imerina region. Based on the evidence of the selected sources by these authors, it was only consequently that warfare was seen as a form of "ritual games" (Campbell 1991: 437), an interpretation which allowed for a focus more on the symbolic function of firearms.

By contrast, most of the confrontations described and lived by Robert Drury were by all means "real" and physical disputes were intended clearly to injure, to kill, and to destroy the enemy, to "cut him into pieces" (1826: 194, 253). Following the preferred strategy of surprise attacks by night, ambuscades, and guerilla tactics, the toll of dead, nonetheless, in general was relatively low, at least in comparison with contemporary European military tactics standardized by Berg (1985: 278). These low numbers, though, cannot be interpreted as an indication of a strategy centered on ritualized menace but as the outcome of the sketched general strategy, which simply implied doing the best to avoid one's own killing. Further, a comparison on the basis of European practice is not adequate and is, ultimately, Eurocentric. Why, one must ask, should the unique European willingness to accept heavy losses in the context of early musket technology be the decisive base upon which to judge the Malagasy practice?

It is not, therefore, possible to generalize about the praxis of ritual games for the entire island. War and the experience of physical violence was an ev-

22 Thompson (1974); Berg (1985); Campbell (1991, 2005).

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eryday and inevitable aspect of life in southern Madagascar, according to Drury. In addition, based on this case, but also on the general impression concerning the very real practice of warfare in the 17th-and 18th-century Madagascar dispersed in many contemporary documents (as they were collected by Grandidier 1903 and 1904, or cited by Decary 1966 and Kent 1970), it would be necessary to critically reanalyze the data available for the Imerina region to understand more thoroughly the given circumstances of the "ritual games" observed. It should be much more probable to expect for the Imerina region a practice of warfare comparable with that of the south of Madagascar (and most other regions) than not. The observed "ritual games" might be the result, perhaps, of very specific circumstances and should not be taken immediately, as the cited authors did, as the general model for warfare in the Imerina region, or, implicitly for Madagascar altogether.

4.2 The Military and Symbolic Function of Firearms

Contrary to the argument of a dominant symbolic function of firearms in Madagascar (Berg 1985; Campbell 1991, 2009), this case study aims at demonstrating that the imported firearms in Drury's time were perfectly integrated into the military tactics displayed, and that they played a visibly important role in which all warriors had to count. Firearms became integrated, and this is being discussed extensively throughout Drury's document, with the different possibilities of making war, including surprise attack by nights, well-orchestrated open battles, and ambuscades. They were used as an effective technology to intimidate, threaten, and kill the enemy, but the technological particularities and obstacles of the muskets were such that lances remained as important as ever.

The muskets, as a closer look revealed, did not replace the older war technology of lances, but allowed for the addition of important new possibilities: to threaten the enemy in a comparatively easy way and to increase the distance of action considerably, while putting the warrior out of immediate risk. Firearms, therefore, had important, real effects on the conduct of war, as they offered new opportunities – which is suggested here – rather on basis of an already well-established kind of war strategy before the advent of firearms.

It is true, though, that in the time of Robert Drury's passage, firearms also had gained a symbolic meaning. They represented the power of the king and were a symbol of the freemen, as well as an indicator of prosperity. These symbolic and social meanings, however, were not at the focus of attention of the use or function of firearms, as Gerald Berg (1985) has interpreted the situation for the Imerina region, but rather added to the military use. Again, the overt emphasis on the symbolic function in the Imerina region seems to be strange when confronted with the practical military reasoning of the southern Malagasy warriors. Even if the connection between the firearms and the sacred (*hasina*) made by Berg and Bloch seems well established for the Imerina region, one might expect, at the same time, the same appreciation of the military capacities as in the south, and a reinterpretation would appeal as an interesting task for the future.

4.3 Firearms, Wars, Slaving, and the Dynamics of Early States

Although it has been argued that by importing firearms a vicious circle of a war for slaves and the bartering of slaves for guns had started and, on the other hand, the sole presence of firearms did contribute to a dynamic towards violence or sociocultural developments, including the creation of early states, the Drury document, however, does not confirm this.

Attacks by night on neighboring villages, wars between kingdoms, and the making of slaves are rather described as an ordinary, probably old "business," certainly existing before the arrival of firearms, and connected to an "eternal" concurrence between all or most princes, kings, and their polities, or more precisely, to a firmly and deeply rooted cultural sociocultural logic of a hierarchical ordered cosmos. The presence of firearms and the quest for slaves necessary to buy firearms, it is suggested, were therefore rather integrated into an already and perhaps long existing dynamic. Once there, however, they added their own conditions, possibilities, and constraints and certainly created quite a new situation with new opportunities for those able to perceive them.

The sole existence of the new military technology, it is therefore argued, by its presence did not cause continual warfare or violence, or a dynamic of slave-making and state building. All these components were decidedly in place, if one follows Drury's account and early documents. Once firearms became accessible, they allowed for the enlargement of a space for action, for threatening the enemy, for domination, and for killing people. In this way, firearms certainly contributed to an increasing violence and "their wars [became] much

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deadlier" (Decary 1966/I: 49; transl. by P. K.), as a contemporary author observed. In this way as well, the need for slave-making became much more urgent and the possibilities for domination over more important territories and greater populations were enormously enhanced.

The historical review reveals clearly that such new dynamics of war were not compulsory and unidirectional, but that it depended upon the actors to recognize and to use the new *possibilities* established by the new technology at hand. Those who were the first to have firearms did not automatically become dominant. Those who were connected to ports and had primary access to European traders were not those who could act out necessarily the advantages of firearms. Rather, an extraordinary effort was necessary from those in power, i. e., a unique and personal capacity to organize and to pursue resolutely one's aims until the end. King Andriandahefotsy (reigning between ca. 1645–1682), the founder of what would become the Sakalava Kingdom in the west, and King Andrianampoinimerina (ca. 1787–1810), the founder of the unified Imerina Kingdom in the center of Madagascar, had such capacities and successfully manipulated the new possibilities created by firearms. They became the central figures of this long period of the lords of muskets, personalities of the two most important political constructions in precolonial Madagascar.

4.4 Some Consequences for Future Theory-Building

These short reflections on three aspects of theory-building related to the effects of the new firearm technology on Madagascar suggest a double turn – towards culture and towards the necessity of a systematic analysis of historic sources at hand. There is a turn towards culture, as the reading suggested here shows that the objects discussed did not create the effects described to them by themselves. The firearms imported on Madagascar did not create warfare, violence, and the vicious circle of slaving, but rather, it is proposed here, they became added to an already long-established cultural logic of feuding and of improving one's place in a deeply hierarchical cosmos, offering, at the same time, new possibilities to those who were able to recognize and force them through. There is a turn towards historic, primary sources, because the assertion of some authors, that firearms can be seen as mostly symbolic instruments and of early warfare in Madagascar as a ritual game, clearly fail to coincide with Drury's experience and observations of the reality with which he was confronted in southern Madagascar.

Conclusion: Firearms and the "Lords of the Muskets" Culture

This article addressed a particular topic of the Malagasy technopolitical history, namely the sociopolitical developments related to the arrival of firearms (around 1500), their trading on the Great Island until the establishment of the colony (1896), and their impact on warfare and culture. As the new military technology quickly became a pertinent aspect of most Malagasy societies, with firearms as a symbol of royal power, the denomination as a time of "the lords of the muskets," referring originally to a local idiom, seemed appropriate for characterizing this particular period.

The arrival of firearms in Madagascar occurred in three steps. After an extended preliminary period, firearms became a much sought-after "prime" commodity for the Malagasy elite, although the expanding Merina Kingdom later monopolized that trade. The key provider of weapons during the precolonial period were definitely European entrepreneurs. The long-established contacts of the island with the Islamic and Indian traders operating in the Indian Ocean also contributed to the spread of firearms but, as far as it is known, to a far lesser degree. Local manufacturers had their impact, too, but only to a minor degree. Throughout the four centuries of the precolonial history, several hundred thousand firearms (a safer estimation is not possible for the moment), mostly guns, were imported and used. However, many questions are still open and need detailed research, and specifically, which countries (including the non-European ones) contributed to the import of firearms and when?; which particular models of muskets and rifles were in use in a given period? What were the effects on European economics and on the Malagasy side, respectively?; how different were the regional dynamics, including a possible variety of acculturation processes?

Drury's account provides a good basis for addressing the problem of integration and use of firearms at a particularly interesting moment in Malagasy history. The influx of firearms in the second half of the 17th century was strong enough to have established firmly, already in 1700, a new military technology in southern Madagascar and to have created what appears in retrospect as the culture of the "lords of the muskets." Most importantly, the practice of warfare and the use of mus-

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kets are described by the author in a close, sometimes ethnographic way. The data furnished by this source allows us to gain access to original aspects of war-making, the importance of muskets, and the cultural logic at work. New insights are emerging, however, in the light of the most recent research.

First, southern and western Madagascar were definitely regions of intense warfare and feuding, within and between the existing polities. In contrast to the (probably not sufficiently investigated) findings given for central Madagascar, the use of arms definitely was not intended to be part of "ritual games," but a practice clearly designed for killing and even aiming for the annihilation of the enemy.

Second, the relatively low number of casualties caused by the warfare in southern Madagascar should be understood as a sound strategy to preserve lives, particularly if one considers the Malagasy tactics of the guerilla-style fighting.

Third, firearms, indeed, were very well integrated and heavily used, but by their sheer presence did not foster any increase in warfare and violence. Rather, the new techniques seemed to have been added to an already long-established logic of war practice and to a cultural perspective, urging the main social actors to do their best to improve their relative hierarchical position and that of the socio-political units they are linked to. This opened, at the same time, new possibilities for those who were able to see them. For example, within the practice of surprise ambuscades at night, guns were used only once to alarm the village people, who subsequently were killed "silently" by lances. Or they were heavily used at the beginning of a battle, but later, as a consequence of the difficulties of reloading, they were mostly replaced by lances.

Fourth, the relation between the early state building and the appearance of firearms, as suggested by earlier authors, should be linked to the military potential of guns and pistols, namely the ability to engage enemies from a distance. Most probably, the symbolic understanding of firearms as an aspect of royal (sacral) power should have also played its role, but this needs further clarification. I would suggest again, more specifically, that the presence of firearms was not decisive in itself but added new possibilities to the established cultural trend towards more centralized states as part of the hierarchical thinking already present in Malagasy political elites. In other words: the guns, pistols, and cannons available did not create by their sheer presence the dynamic towards more important state building, but they were useful instruments in achieving this long existing but somehow concealed cultural aim.

Fifth, at least for the Antandroy society in which Robert Drury lived, the "vicious circle" of slaving and warfare should not be seen as something new. Rather, slave-making in neighboring villages was probably part of a long-established cultural logic of continual concurrence between princes and kings. It is suggested that the arrival of firearms would have offered new, additional reasons for slave-making, but did not create an entirely new dynamic.

This contribution proposes a new heuristic reading of the period linked to the introduction of firearms to Madagascar. The social and cultural change initiated by the military technology was new and important in many ways, but at the same time regulated by already existing and deeply anchored Malagasy cultural logics. Neither a materialistic understanding of the acculturation process seems (linking arms and violence), nor its symbolic explanations seem to be adequate. Rather firearms became added to, and integrated into the cultural fabric already in existence, while, at the same time, offering new possibilities of action and symbolic representation for those able to grasp them. Such results not only shed new light on the "lords-of-the-muskets" period but also call for further theoretical exploitations of issues related to cultural change.

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