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"… with 800 Men" – The Foundation of the Boeny Kingdom (ca. 1683–1686)

A Critical Reconstruction of a Major Event in Malagasy Political History

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Abstract. – The foundation of the Boeny Kingdom at the end of the 17th century marks the emergence of a new political unit, which was added to similar constructions of the same dynasty along the west coast of Madagascar. Within a few years the Boeny Kingdom became the island's most impressive polity in terms of territory, or military and economic power realized up to this point in history, and it was to play a decisive role for more than a century. In spite of later political decline, the Boeny Kingdom constitutes even today an important neo-traditional unit in Madagascar. This article for the first time offers a detailed reconstruction of the main events between 1683 and 1686 that allowed the future King Tsimenata to defeat and integrate his main adversaries, Islamic traders living in a number of entrepôts along the northwestern coast. The analyses, based on a critical study of all the main historic documents available, are placed within the framework of the political dynamics of early states on Madagascar. *[Madagascar, Boeny kingdom, Sakalava, king Tsimenata, ethnohistory, early state, historical reconstruction]*

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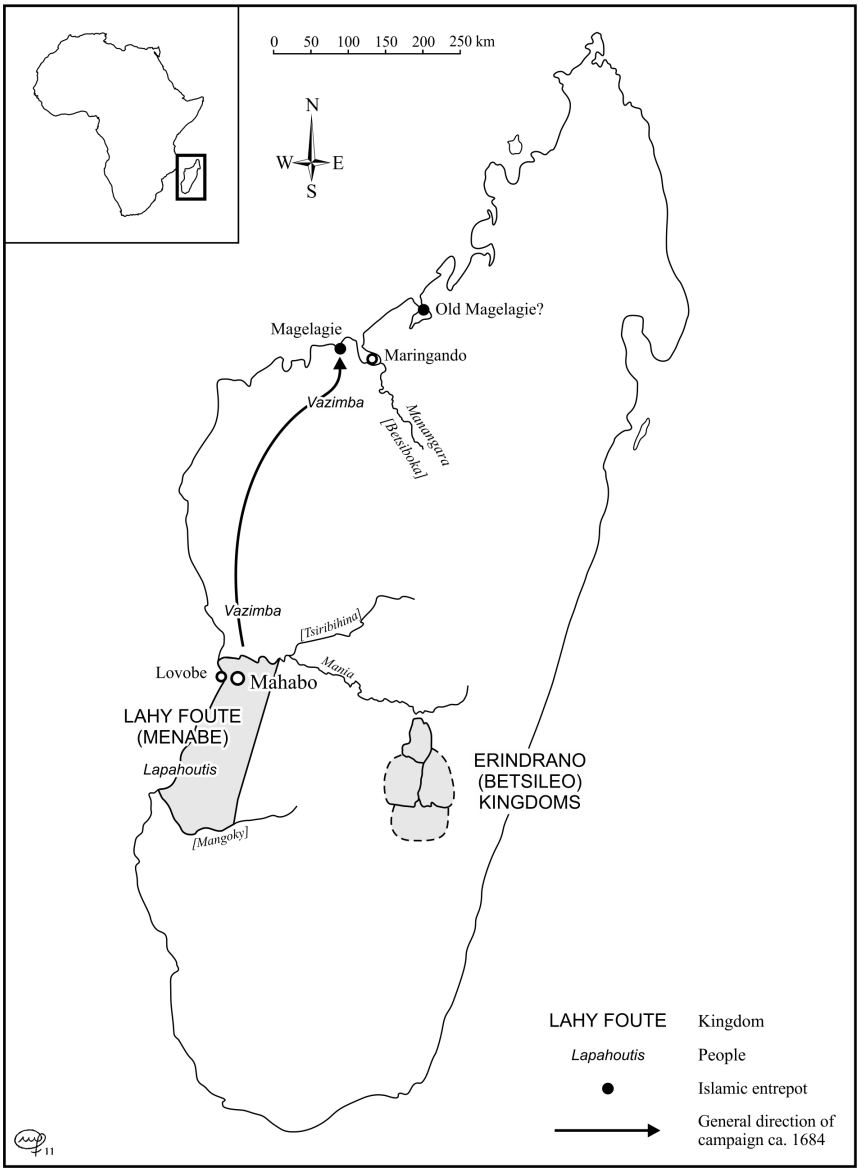
> [Tsimenata] is a man, clever, strong and robust … much feared by his courtiers and subjects, in whose eyes and in his own he is a second Alexander ([1695] in Leibbrandt 1896: 29).

1 Introduction

Around the year 1683, Tsimenata (or posthumously Andriamandisoarivo), an unsuccessful aspirant to the throne of the then most important kingdom on the west coast of Madagascar, the kingdom Lahe Fouti (later called Menabe), made a most remarkable decision. Instead of attempting to occupy territories in the direct neighborhood of his father's kingdom, or to become integrated in other polities and alliances, which for many generations was a typical strategy, he seized a promising opportunity. Leading "about eight hundred men" (Drury 1729 in Oliver [ed.] 1969: 274), as it was reported some 30 years later, he crossed more than 400 km of land to the north, arriving at the towns of Islamic traders on the northwestern coast, renowned as one of the most prosperous regions in Madagascar at the time (Map 1). There he "conquered a large swath of territory including the vital port of Mazalagem Nova," as Randrianja and Ellis write in their recently published overview on the history of Madagascar. As "Tsimenata made himself into the island's leading slave-exporter and most powerful king" (2009: 100 f.), the new kingdom dominated a main part of Madagascar and flourished for more than a century.[1]

1 Three European visitors have left comments directly to the person of King Tsimenata, in 1695 Brons (in Leibbrandt 1896: 29–31), in 1708 La Merveille (in La Roque et Cham-



Map 1: Madagascar in 1684: Political situation and campaign of Tsimenata (Andriamandisoarivo).

In recent decades, the success story outlined above, based on a singular military expansion, has regularly been mentioned in the context of different historical analyses of Sakalava[2] or Malagasy history, with two publications of Vérin offering a most comprehensive account.[3] Most authors content themselves with summarizing roughly what is evident by citing one or two of the handful of primary sources available, more or less as it has been sketched above, without bothering too much with details and precise dating. The result is uncertainty, as it is so often the case with Madagascar's historical facts: It remains unclear why some versions of sources available are preferred to others, and how to resolve evident or subtle contradictions between the accounts, leading to the existence of several versions of historical facts, and the dating of events. A

ploret 1716: 9–13), and in 1708 or later Johnson (1728: 263–265). The characterizations are varying between a "tyrannous" and tricky despot to a generous and helpful king.

2 The name established today for all people in Western Madagascar accepting local royal costumes of the Maroseraña dynasty, who rules in all Sakalava kingdoms. The meaning of this term, today used to signify an ethnic group and a particular identity, is introduced more in detail in the main part of this article.

3 Most important are: Deschamps (1960: 100 f.); Kent (1970: 201); Fagereng (1971: 40–42); Vérin (1975: 133–139, 273–275, 532; 1986: 106–110); Armstrong (1983–84: 214–216); Lombard (1988: 32 f., 40 f.); Feeley-Harnik (1991: 76); Ballarin (2000: 41 f.); Lambek (2002: 61); Kneitz (2003: 61; 2008: 40); Randrianja and Ellis (2009: 100–107).

distinct and systematic reconstruction of this outstanding event in Malagasy history, based on a careful confrontation of all relevant sources available, has been missing up to this day.

A closer look at the historical documents, an effort of historical reconstruction and precise dating would reveal, I propose through this article, a number of shortcomings or even misinterpretations inherent to the versions given hitherto. It would enable us to know more of the complex story of the conquest of the Boeny[4] region, which had such important consequences for Madagascar. The problems arising from the neglect stated are not minor (e.g. a question of precise dating or of historical knowledge), but they are of heuristic importance for the understanding of the respective sources and, therefore, bear consequences for our knowledge of the times they are related to. As well such an analysis is seen as a basic task for our understanding of the constitution of memory and memory politics related to these events, elementary for the enacting in a neo-traditional context.

The following article aims to fill this important gap in historical reconstruction and thus makes at the same time a further contribution towards a concise history of the ancient period of Sakalava society, which up to this day has not been available, in spite of notable historical-science and anthropological publications and progress on this subject in recent years.[5] First, I present the primary sources upon which all knowledge of Tsimenata's campaign is based. Second, a short overview on the sociopolitical context is provided by touching on the development of early kingdoms in Madagascar and those important features of the political situation in the 17th century which are relevant to our case. The main body of the article is dedicated to a detailed discussion of the five most relevant accounts about the conquest of the northwest by Tsimenata, which enables finally the production of a synthetic and critical version of the event. The particularity of the methodology proposed is that of a first systematic (re-)evaluation and confrontation of all available – partly fairly well-known – published documents and evidence on historical events related to the conquest by Tsimenata.

> It may be an Amusement to the Reader to have a short History of this King, who was called Andian Chimenatto [King Tsimenata] (Johnson 1728: 263).

2 An Introduction to Primary Sources

There are only a small number of primary sources available which provide information about the campaign of Tsimenata (Andriamandisoarivo)[6]. I will now introduce the textual corpus, including some clues of the reception by scholars, in a chronological order, i.e., the sources most contemporary to the conquest are introduced first. This paragraph as well provides the first hints for justifying a classification of the relevant sources in four periods, facilitating the analytical task and their interpretation (see Table 1).

To start with contemporary sources and testimonials of the event, only one account commenting directly as an eye witness on any aspects of Tsimenata's campaign is available. This single document is a report of the Dutch ship "Jamby" visiting the Bay Manangara (today Bombetoka[7], see Map 1) in 1686 and relating the attack on the otherwise unknown "Sakalava of long ears" nearby. This document, particular important for the dating, was discovered by Armstrong (1983–84: 215). Unfortunately, the original text remains unpublished and all what is known about it is the citation of a small key paragraph and a short summary by Armstrong on which I will rely later.

4 Boeny is today the name for the whole region once under attack by Tsimenata and the still existing kingdom (not recognized as political entity by the Malagasy state) around the port-city Mahajanga. At the time of the conquest, the word "Boeny" was apparently used to designate only a bay south of today's town Mahajanga (today still Boeny Bay) and the approximate island (today called Antsoheribory), a main center of Islamic traders (for a summary of early accounts see Belrose-Huyghues 1983–84, as well as fn. 28).

5 See, e.g., Baré (1980); Lombard (1988); Feeley-Harnik (1991); Ballarin (2000); Lambek (2002); Kneitz (2003); Goedefroit et Lombard (2007).

6 Ancient king's names and their spellings are subject to a number of particularities: A king at the western coast receives posthumously a new name (today: *fitahina*), which can only be spelled. In literature sometimes the contemporary and sometimes the posthumous name is preferred. To prevent possible misunderstandings, a king's name will be introduced by both names, with the posthumous name always in brackets. As there are many different and sometimes confusing spellings to be found in documents and in the literature, I chose the form "Tsimenata" following a recent publication of Randrianja and Ellis (2009: 100) and "Andriamandisoarivo," as an old and well established variant in literature (e.g., Noël 1843a: 290–292; Guillain 1845: 18; Rusillon 1922–23: 173; Deschamps 1960: 100; Lombard 1988: 36; Vérin 1986: 106).

7 Throughout this article I prefer to give the contemporary toponyms and names (with the present-day name in brackets) as to prevent anachronistic confusions, with important consequences for interpretations. Manangara (with many variations) is the ancient name for what is today the Bay Bombetoka and the adjacent riverside of the Betsiboka as well as a settlement (Vérin 1975: 443–447; Hébert 1999).

Table 1: Primary sources concerning Tsimenata's campaign and their use within secondary analysis, classified chronologically in four periods.

Contemporary Sources ca. 1680–1695	**Memory Period 1 ca. 1695–1720**	**Memory Period 2 ca. 1840**	**Memory Period 3 ca. 1910–2005**
Concerning the campaign: **Report of the ship "Jamby" (1686) in Armstrong (1983–84: 215)** Cited by: Feeley-Harnik (1991: 76); Kneitz (2003: 61; 2008: 41)	A first account of the campaign in 1695: **Brons [1695] in Leibbrandt (1896: 29)** Cited by: Armstrong (1983–84: 215)	**Noël (1843a: 290 f.)** Cited by: Guillain (1845); Kneitz (2008: 40)	**Rusillon (1912: 41; 1922–23: 173 f.); Birkeli (1926: 33); Poirier (1939: 64–67); Lombard (1988: 32 f., 40 ff.)**
Report of Brons (1695), ship "Standvastigheit" in Leibbrandt (1896: 28–31) Cited by: Armstrong (1983–84: 214)	A second account of the campaign ca. 1710: **Johnson (1728: 259–267)** Cited by: Kent (1970: 201); Fagereng (1971: 40 f.); Vérin (1975: 138, 274; 1986: 109 f.); Lombard (1988: 40 f.); Ballarin (2000: 41); Kneitz (2003: 61; 2008: 41); Randrianja and Ellis (2009: 100)	**Guillain (1845: 14 f., 17–20, 357–360)** Cited by: Prud'homme (1900: 412 f.); Mellis (1938: 105); Deschamps (1960: 100); Kent (1970: 201); Vérin (1975: 133–137, 273–275; 1986: 106–109); Kneitz (2008: 40 ff.)	
Concerning the context: **Reports of the ships "Philip" (1682–83), "John and Mary" (1684), "Standvastigheit" (1694), "Tamboer" (1694), "Soldaat" (1696, 1698), "Peter en Paul" (1699), "Noordgouw" (1701–02)** Summarized by: COACM (1905: 381–383) and analyzed by Armstrong (1983–84: 215, 220)	A third account of the campaign (ca. 1715): **Drury 1729 (in Oliver [ed.] 1969: 274)** Cited by: Noël (1843a: 290); Guillain (1845: 8); Kent (1970: 201); Vérin (1975: 138)		

Apart from this exceptional document, though, a number of interesting sources can be found, delivered by those Europeans whose ships are known to have passed the west coast of Madagascar between 1680 and 1700, the period of study. None of these are eyewitnesses of Tsimenata's campaign, but they are contributing a lot to the understanding of the context, including the possibilities of dating and verifying the general tenor of the oral history. A number of these early logbooks have been summarized at first by the Grandidiers (COACM 1905: 381). Later Armstrong (1983–84) published a short but valuable presentation of these and some additional 17th-century logbooks (see Table 1). Only one logbook, the report of the Dutch Jeremias Brons of the ship "Standvastigheit," has been published in a summarized English version of the original Dutch account (Leibbrandt 1896: 28–31). It is a very rarely cited document but of particular importance, as it contains not only a testimonial of the situation in the Boeny region in 1695, including a valuable characterization of Tsimenata himself, but as well the first account of the campaign known to exist, which leads already to the next period of the classification of sources.[8]

The historical process of the construction of memory began precisely once Tsimenata had established his victory and settled down. It seems appropriate to me to distinguish three periods of the making of memory concerning this campaign, according to available sources (see Table 1). The reasons for the classification of sources proposed will become clearer once these sources are discussed in detail and when the advantage for the task of interpretation becomes accessible.

8 The primordial purpose of this article is a restudy of already published material and, therefore, I did abstain from archival work concerning these contemporary sources or eyewitnesses, which may contain some further hints interesting for the understanding of Tsimenata's campaign.

First, there is a period with documents which allow insight into the "fresh" construction of memory. These are reports delivered by an eyewitness or written by persons who themselves have been involved with the campaign, or who were at least in a more or less direct contact with the actors. I attribute three sources to this first period of memory: The earliest account, it may be recalled, is provided by the Dutch Jeremias Brons, in 1695 (Leibbrandt 1896: 29), just about ten years after the campaign. The text informs us about the person who has furnished the details in the following words: "This [the story about the campaign] was told to us by a native who does us various little services for needles, knives, or looking-glasses, &c." (Leibbrandt 1896: 29). The account, therefore, did not result from discussions with the king, the dynasty, or advisors, but was of a person with minor responsibility, a smith, perhaps belonging to that part of the local population subdued during the campaign.

Again more than ten years later, the pirate Cornelius received exceptional details of Tsimenata's campaign during a stay at the royal residence around 1708[9] and this was edited later by Johnson (1728: 259–267).[10] The details of this report indicate that it possibly relied on firsthand information given perhaps by the king himself or his close advisors. I would regard this account, therefore, like that of Brons, as a particularly precious source, even if the editorial process is shady. An important number of scholars have relied – sometimes uniquely – on this document for telling the history of Tsimenata's campaign.[11]

A third and very short document is based on communication reported a couple of years later by the famous English shipwrecked boy Robert Drury (1729 in Oliver [ed.] 1969: 274).[12] Drury, who lived several years in the western Menabe Kingdom, came to Manangara Bay (Betsiboka Bay) when it was already under the reign of Tsimenata's son, around 1717. Drury's account is rarely cited as reference to Tsimanata's campaign (Kent 1970: 201; Vérin 1975: 138), but he was already known and used by two authors who themselves produced important accounts of what they call Sakalava history (Noël 1843a: 290; Guillain 1845: 8). It is important to acknowledge that the accounts of Johnson and Drury were published at the same time and at the same place. Further, the editorial work of both books is attributed to Daniel Defoe (even if this common editorship remains open to discussion). This leads to the conclusion that similarities of these two sources should not be regarded immediately or self-evidently as an independent proof of authenticity.

Second, there is a period of memory proofing the existence of a sound oral tradition in the northwest of Madagascar, about 170 years after the northwest coast was conquered by Tsimenata. This development is represented by two documents, published by Noël (1843a: 290 f.) and, far better-known, by Guillain (1845: 14 f., 17–22, 357–360). When these two Frenchmen engaged in their research, the kingdoms in western Madagascar were already heavily under attack since more than twenty years by people living at the center of the island, the Merina (called Hova in these days). Noël has probably received his information by a narrator of Sakalava descent, who he encountered during his stay on the island of Mayotte.[13] This would explain the dominance of information concerning the northwestern coast in his text. Guillain, however, was assisted in his research by an Antalaotra[14] and a Malagasy well-ac-

9 The account edited by Johnson is not dated. 1708 is estimated as some months after the arrival of Cornelius. King Tsimenata is reported to be dead and the last historical confirmation of Tsimenata alive comes from a 1708 document (La Roque et Champloret 1716: 7–15). In COACM (1905: 615) a dating between 1703 and 1705 is estimated and Kent (1970: 201) proposes "before 1703." A critical reconstruction of a chronology of the kings of Boeny including a dating of their respective periods of government is still waited for.

10 The existence of Cornelius remains dubious. His report was produced in the second, less known, and scarce volume of the influential "General History of Pyrates" by Charles Johnson. The authorship was attributed a long time to Daniel Defoe, a judgment disputed in the light of recent studies (see, e.g., Deschamps 1972: 48 ff. and Cordingly 1995: 19 f.). The document was usually consulted in a French version, provided by the Grandidiers (COACM 1905: 614–622), containing some minor faults of translations.

11 Kent (1970: 201); Fagereng (1971: 40 f.); Vérin (1975: 138, 274; 1986: 109 f.); Lombard (1988: 40 f.); Ballarin (2000: 41); Randrianja and Ellis (2009: 100).

12 For an introduction to the long debate on the historical and finally confirmed existence of Drury as well as the complicated question of authorship, the problems of the editorial process and in particular the possible editorship of Daniel Defoe cf. Oliver (1969), Molet-Sauvaget (1992), and Parker Pearson and Godden (2002).

13 Noël is only explicit that his chronology of kings was dressed after informations given by Nahikou, an advisor of the king of Mayotte and of Sakalava descent ("*un Sakkalava parfaitement instruit de l'histoire de son pays*" – Noël 1843a: 294 f.). Guillain (1845: 354) writes that Noël has visited only the archipelago of Nosy Be and not any other part of Madagascar and, consequently, Guillain concluded, that he is less well informed about the history of the Menabe. Noël also cites as well a number of European publications he has consulted and he was in contact with Guillain (Noël 1843a: 294).

14 The name given at this period to the inhabitants of the Islamic entrepot at the coast. The Antalaotra later intermarried much with the royal dynasty and, therefore, became part of their lineage or were regarded as Sakalava. See fn. 31 for further explications.

quainted with the Boeny region.[15] The account of Noël was never cited in any version of Tsimenata's campaign,[16] in sharp contrast to Guillain's presentation, which was used as one of the main references by a number of scholars[17] and was paraphrased by others (Prud'homme 1900; Mellis 1938: 105). As it will be seen in detail later, both accounts are quite similar in their description of the events and their inherent structure, enabling us to see them as a particular subunit of the corpus of oral traditions concerning the campaign.

Finally, there is a still ongoing period in which the oral memory of Tsimenata and his conquest becomes much more reduced or adapted to new necessities, following the further decline of Sakalava royalty by the construction of a colonial and postcolonial state. The accounts of oral tradition which are part of this final period – a handful is known[18] – do regularly not allow one to deduce much more than the central historical fact of the founding of a new kingdom by Tsimanata and its positive effects on his descendants. The study of the documents of the third period prove what is known of the particularity of oral traditions and the transmission of memory (Vansina 1985): It tends to become shortened and condensed as time elapses, emblematic and subdued under new reasoning, offering increasingly fewer clues when a critical reconstruction of the historical background is aimed at.[19] Consequently, only the relevant primary sources of the period contemporary to the campaign and of the two following periods of memory proposed in my scheme have been included in the work of confrontation and interpretation proposed here.

This introductory review of all the available primary sources has revealed important similarities and differences, allowing one to suggest their classification into several periods of memory. At the same time, a look at the reception of sources by scholars reveals important inequalities. No one has yet included all available sources and most have chosen to base their version of this event on one document only (mostly Johnson or Guillain). No careful confrontation of sources, allowing one to clarify contradictions or misunderstandings and to establish a dating based on a critical reading of documents, has been offered. Even Vérin, who has provided a very careful and complete presentation of Tsimenata's campaign, just proceeds by a complete citing of the main parts of sources rather than a critical analysis. As it will come out later, such adaption and mixing of sources without regard to the adaption of memory within time, and without careful confrontation, favors a hiding of historical realities and prevents a sound understanding of the corpus of primary sources and their particularities.

> À l'époque où les Sakalaves s'établirent dans le Nord, il y avait donc à la côte Ouest de Madagascar quatre établissements antalaots' [Antalaotra] (Guillain 1845: 359).

3 The Context of Conquest: The Dynamics of the Early "Concentric" State and the Islamic Entrepots on Madagascar before 1680

Before presenting the foundation process of the later Boeny Kingdom in detail, it will be necessary to provide some information about the greater picture of the sociopolitical dynamics in Madagascar dur-

15 He writes in a footnote that he was accompanied by an Antalaotra pilot and a translator and precises: "… le pilote était un Antalaots' [Antalaotra] de Mondzangaïe [i.e., Mahajanga, the name of the main coastal town in the northwest in these days], qui avait fait plusieurs voyages à la côte et dans le pays de Ménabé: l'interprète était un Malgache qui avait vécu avec les Sakalaves de Bouéni et visité avec nous divers points de la côte Ouest; tous deux nous aidant dans nos recherches concernant l'histoire du pays" (Guillain 1845: 354). Noël (1843a: 295) confirms Guillain's words by noting that he received information by several persons, "tant Arabes qu'Anti-Bouéni" (the prefix "Anti-" would signify territory, land of …). Guillain, like Noël, had knowledge of several ancient works and documents concerning western Madagascar, including the just published version of Noël.

16 From all scholars working on these issues, only Vérin (1975: 138) notes the existence of this text.

17 Deschamps (1960: 100); Kent (1970: 201); Vérin (1975: 133–137, 273–275; 1986: 106–109); Ballarin (2000: 41).

18 See Rusillon (1912: 41, a short summary; 1922–23: 173, some few remarks on Tsimenata, and a genealogical scheme), Birkeli (1926: 33, a very short account of an oral tradition of the western Menabe region), Poirier (1939: 64–67, a collection of oral traditions in the northwestern region), and Lombard (1988: 32 f., 40 ff., some remarks based on a mixture of his own intensive research of oral tradition in the Menabe region and literature). Vérin (1975: 138) indicates a further oral tradition, an unpublished manuscript by the French Laporte, written about 1950 and kept in the archives of the district Ambilobe, northwest Madagascar (signaled as well by Kent 1970). I could not consult this document, the only primary source of Tsimenata's campaign not known to me yet, but most probably of not much importance as it seems to contain just another late summary of the conquest.

19 My own fieldwork program has allowed me to visit much of the part of the west coast which has been the stage of the events treated and confirmed that the fact of the conquest by Tsimenata was still well inscribed into the memory of mediums or functionaries of the local dynasties, the beholders of historical memory in Sakalava society (Lambek 2002). However, interviews produced regularly just brief recognitions, without particular interest for the analytical problem elaborated here.

ing these times, as far as it is relevant for the analytical task to come. While it has to be recognized that established knowledge of Madagascar before the 19th century is still scarce, often rather vague, and open to debate, the following general scheme of the political situation can nonetheless be developed in accordance with main contributions, combined with some new findings of my own research.

By looking at a map of Madagascar around 1680, on the eve of the conquest of the northwestern coast by King Tsimenata (Andriamandisoarivo), we could perceive the following political situation relevant for the analysis (Map 1): On the west coast lay a relatively young kingdom, called Lahe Fouti[20] at this time, nowadays known as Menabe. Its King Andriandahefotsy (Andrianihanignarivo) had succeeded in enlarging the region from a tiny polity to an impressive size during his long reign between ca. 1645 and 1682. The Lahe Fouti (Menabe) Kingdom is the first of a long chain of kingdoms coming into existence all along the western coast, summarized since the 19th century under the general and now very well-established name of Sakalava kingdoms. It is difficult to avoid the today widely used term "Sakalava" altogether, but it will become clear in later discussions that, contemporary to the events treated here, this word certainly had a different meaning at the end of 17th century from what it has today. Its use in the context of the events reconstructed, therefore, entails dangerous anachronistic meanings and consequences that one should be aware of.[21] The only other important political unit at this time was an agglomeration of about four kingdoms in the southern highlands, related by a common descent of their lineages, known collectively as Erindrano (Betsileo).[22] Their influence in the southwestern regions was already diminished by King Andriandahefotsy in fierce wars, but there political relevance still remained.

Finally, all along the western coast north of the Lahe Fouti (Menabe) Kingdom, the stage of the events to come, we find an unknown number of dispersed and autonomous Malagasy groups, clans, or kingdoms, about which only fragmentary information is available (Kent 1970; Kneitz 2008). As it will be seen, only the encounters with groups designated as Vazimbas[23] are confirmed by the oral traditions. A peculiarity of the northwest coast was a number of Islamic trading colonies or entrepôts which had acquired relative economic weight as part of the international slave trade to the Arab world since a long time. Its inhabitants were designated by the name Antalaotra.[24] Of particular interest for our study will be the Islamic entrepôt named Magelagie,[25] among many other spellings, situated on a small island at the Bay Boeny.[26] Around 1680, it was the most important and wealthy Islamic trading town, regularly visited by traders, mostly slavers, from the Islamic, Arabic, and increasingly European worlds (Vérin 1975: 243 ff.; Armstrong 1983–84). Nearby, in Bay

20 This was, at least, the name given to this region by the French governor Flacourt (1995) on his famous map around 1650. Guillain (1842: 8) reads the inscription on his map as "Lahefouti," Dubois (1938: 11) "Lahy Fouti," and Allibert (1995: 485) "Lahy Foty." The name is clearly a derivation of king Andriandahefotsy (Andrianihanignarivo). As "Menabe" is the established designation for this polity today and as well to avoid confusion, I will add "Menabe" to the contemporary name "Lahe Fouti" in brackets. Not only the kingdom but as well the people were labeled after the king: The Dutch Granaet has delivered in 1666 the name "Lapahoutis" (COACM 1905: 334).

21 Today, "Sakalava" means an ethnic group (the Sakalava) and is taken to designate all kingdoms of common royal descent in western Madagascar (the Sakalava kingdoms). The word Sakalava can be connected to a fascinating etymology going back plausibly to an old Arab word for "slave," hinting at first to the enslaving of Slavic population (Molet 1972). It was subject of a long process until its actual meaning, as critical analyses of the use of the first appearance of this word in the 1686-Dutch report already cited (Armstrong 1983–84: 215) later in this article will reveal more in detail.

22 This again is a name reported by Flacourt (1995: 144, 169, 196). Following my preference for terms attaining to the period discussed, I favor "Erindrano" and give the better known but anachronistic ethnic term "Betsileo" (as it was not in use in times of the conquest of Boeny) in brackets. See Dubois (1938: 24 ff.) and Deschamps (1960: 111 ff.) for an introduction to the Erindrano (Betsileo) kingdoms.

23 Most probably here an ethnic group with African roots is meant (Randrianja and Ellis 2009: 70–73).

24 "Antalaotra" is a term with Malagasy-Austronesian roots meaning "people of the sea" (e.g., Rantoandro 1983–84: 196 and Guillain 1842: 359). The Antalaotra people of the northwest group were defined as "Islamic immigrants who frequently bred with the Sakalava [i.e., the local Malagasy tribe]" (Vérin 1986: 25, fn. 22), hence I use "Antalaotra" and "Islamic trader" as synonym. Today there is no population known as Antalaotra on Madagascar, even if the term is still remembered at the west coast and some individuals are trying to reclaim Antalaotra descent and identity. For further indications see, e.g., Deschamps (1960: 44 f.); Rantoandro (1983–84); Vérin (1986: 72 f., 97); Radimilahy (1998).

25 Magelagie was established around 1580 (see Vérin 1975 but as well Belrose-Huyghues 1983–84). Among the many different variants of the name I chose "Magelagie" as it was used in a Dutch source of 1686 of particular importance for this work (Armstrong 1983–84: 215). Magelagie would derive from the Arabic word *manzalajy* (harbor; Randrianja and Ellis 2009: 14), but see Vérin (1975: 254) for another etymology.

26 The name for the bay – and for the ancient town situated here as well – was first documented by the Portugese Mariano in the 17th century as "Boene" (Vérin 1975: 254). Vérin identifies it as a Swahily word, meaning "place of stones" which again may stand for "place of stone buildings" (Vérin 1975: 254, fn. 1). The name is still in use and today's spelling is Boeny Bay.

Manangara (Bombetoka), the town Maringando was another regular port of the embarkation of slaves. It was not known as the Antalaotra colony, but was part of a local Malagasy Kingdom, perhaps supervised by persons of Arab origins (Vérin 1975: 444 f.; Hébert 1999).[27]

Another Islamic entrepôt was Old Magelagie,[28] situated in what is today the Bay Mahajamba, north of Bay Manangara (Bombetoka). It was probably the site of origin of the main Antalaotra families living in Magelagie in Bay Boeny around 1680, a link indicated already by the differentiation in New and Old Magelagie (Bay Boeny and Mahajamba) on many old maps. One of the oral traditions to be discussed names Old Magelagie as a target of Tsimenata's conquest as well (Guillain 1845), but, as will be discussed later in more detail, it remains rather dubious that this entrepôt was still active in 1680, at least as a trading town for international trade. European ships in these times,[29] are always reporting only their visits in Bay Manangara (Bombetoka) and of Magelagie in Bay Boeny, but do not name explicitly Old Magelagie.[30]

The conquest of the northwestern region by members of the dynasty, reigning over the Lahe Fouti (Menabe) Kingdom discussed here, may first look as a singular event. And by its contingent course and its historical consequences it certainly can be described in such a way. Within the perspectives of the early state[31] of Madagascar, however, the principal features of Tsimenata's campaign had nothing extraordinary but could be perceived as a rather regular event. Oral traditions of the ruling dynasty of the Menabe Kingdom, for example, are consistent in that they trace the arrival of their patrilineal ancestors from the deep south, just two generations before the advent of the great King Andriandahefotsy (Andrianihanignarivo). His antecedents were searching for new land and founded a tiny polity called Bengy Kingdom, which became the nucleus of the later Lahe Fouti (Menabe) Kingdom. The same pattern of migration and genealogical dynamic can be found again for the more ancient history of the Maroseraña dynasty as well as of many other dynasties in the south of Madagascar, a dynamic which continues at least until the end of 19th century.[32] The quest for autonomy among members of different dynastical lineages is still obvious even today (Kneitz 2003: 116). Behind this particular dynamic are obviously problems of succession and the always given opportunity to conquer "fresh" land combined with a new ideology of sacred royalty, perceived as superior by the inhabitants (Lombard 1988: 14 ff.). Within this broader view of the Sakalava development, the contingent history of Tsimenata and his conquest, therefore, appears as a repetition of a well-established pattern, continuing a long time after Tsimenata.

But it is possible to discover equivalent patterns even on a more general level as a particular aspect of a political dynamic intrinsic to the early state on Madagascar and, going further on, to be found as a typical feature of many similar ancient polities in other parts of the world. Concerning Sakalava kingdoms, scholars have already noted that power was seen as diminishing in concentric circles from the divine person of the king and his residence, in contrast to the demarcation of clearly-defined territorial states in Western tradition (Deschamps 1960: 92; Ballarin 2000: 59). In accordance with interpretations on similar polities in Southeast Asia of the 4th century, described as embedded into a dynamism of "cosmic pretension and chronic competition" (Huntington and Metcalf 1979: 124), which led to the construction of "concentric" and "pulsating"[33] kingdoms, it seems appropriate to borrow these terms to also characterize the early state of Madagascar. All of these many petty rulers tried, by means of continual attacks and complex alliances, to gain more sacred power and to subdue an increasing number of neighbors, in order to become stronger or to "pulsate," as the term chosen by Tambiah suggests. In this way, an ever-changing or fluctuating picture of smaller or more important points of political power, organized in a vague hierarchy, appeared. This vision would allow one to see Tsimenata as acting within a long-established cultural pattern and the construction of his impressive "pulsating" political unit, the later Boeny Kingdom, as the outcome of particular favorable conditions.

27 The exact and presumably changing location of Maringando remains unclear. "Maringando" means probably just "place to trade slaves" (Hébert 1999: 41), again an indication to the enormous importance of slavery for the west coast in this period.

28 Old Magelagie was founded in what is known today as Mahajamba Bay around 1400, probably as Langany, and was subsequently destroyed at least twice, leading to a rapid decline at the beginning of 17th century (Vérin 1975: 84, Hébert 1999). The differentiation between Old and New Magelagie (Bay Mahajamba and Bay Boeny) is clearly evident in maps until the 18th century (Hébert 1999).

29 E.g., documented by the Grandidiers (COACM 1905: 381–383); Vérin (1975: 525 ff.); Armstrong (1983–84: 219).

30 I decided, therefore, to use the name Magelagie for the entrepôt in Bay Boeny (not New Magelagie).

31 A term coined, among others, by Claessen and van de Velde (1987).

32 Fagereng (1971); Ballarin (2000: 33 ff.); Kneitz (2008).

33 Huntington and Metcalf (1979: 124), cited from Tambiah (1976: 102–109, 112 f.).

> Andrian-mandissou-arrivou est le fondateur du royaume de Bombétok ou des Sakkalava du Nord (Noël 1843a: 291).

4 The Foundation of the Boeny Kingdom: A Critical Review of Primary Sources

It is time now to turn back to the questions of historical reconstruction central to this article. What does a critical review of all available sources reveal about the various details described? What kind of historic truth appears, which, it may be added, is nothing else than but an approximation founded upon the quality of documents at hand and their careful interpretation? The structure of the following presentation was conceived so as to distinguish as rapidly as possible what could be accepted as saved from what seemed to be questionable, anachronistic, or even fictional. At first, the few sources contemporary to the conquest are discussed. The second paragraph makes us familiar with the five main narrations available, allowing us to identify different streams of memory and inviting a constant interdocumentary comparison.

4.1 "A Suggestive Dearth": The Sources Contemporary to the Conquest of Boeny

Understandably in the context of an oral society, as it existed in the western part of Madagascar in the 17th century, almost no testimonial contemporary to the breaking events taking place on the northwestern coast are available. Nonetheless, due to the presence of some English and Dutch traders on the western coast of Madagascar, we have information, which allows us to narrow down the period of conquest in a precise way. As well they provide clues about the time of the major turn and are providing various hints, which help gain a critical regard about the various versions of oral memory. Five points that have to be made here are:

1) According to the records of the two English ships "Philip" and "John and Mary" it is possible to conclude that King Andriandahefotsy of the Lahe Fouti (Menabe) Kingdom died between August 1682 and January 1684, most probably in 1683 (Armstrong 1983–84: 220).[34] Consequently, the earliest date of Tsimenata's departure would have been late in the year 1683. The king was most probably surprisingly young when he left his father's country, perhaps not even twenty, as Tsimenata was estimated to be "around forty years" ("âgé d'environ quarante ans"; La Roque et Champloret 1716: 10) in 1708.[35]

2) In August 1686, the Dutch ship "Jamby" traded in Bay Manangara (Bombetoka) near the Islamic entrepôts of the northwestern coast. The precious document is summarized by Armstrong as follows (1983–84: 215): It "reported Magelagie was burned and deserted, having been at war with the mainland, i.e., with the *Sacalave* (Sakalavas), and Maringando was also under attack by the Sakalava … This August 15 1686 reference to the *Sacalave of lang oren* (= long ears) is perhaps the earliest written reference to this name." Armstrong and later Feeley-Harnik (1991: 76) have interpreted this document as a given proof on the fall of Magelagie to the onslaught of the troops of Tsimenata.

However, a reflection on this note of 1686 reveals two difficulties, which have to be clarified: First, it remains to be discussed which town is behind "Magelagie" – Old Magelagie or Magelagie? This question appears because the name Magelagie was attributed in the 17th and 18th centuries to both Islamic entrepôts. On the maps they were regularly differentiated as Old and New Magelagie, but the similar names nonetheless facilitated confusion for voyagers (e.g., Armstrong 1983–84: 213). The possibility evoked here seems not only a theoretical one, as the oral tradition written down by Guillain (1845: 20, 359), discussed later in detail, seems to confirm clearly that first Old Magelagie was destroyed by Tsimenata, and only several years later Magelagie. Such an understanding would have important consequences for the reading of all documents.

To find a solution to this problem, a review of the sources of northwest Madagascar in literature was undertaken to unearth clues about the contemporary use of the two connected toponyms in question.[36] This methodology revealed first, that all European ships between 1680 and 1708 visited only the Bay Boeny with Magelagie, which was clearly the most important trading point in the region, and never the Bay Manangara (Bombetoka). Further, all these visitors are cited to have just chosen the spelling Magelagie (and variants), without adding "Old" or "New." This would lead to the assumption that they did not see the necessity to mark a difference – certainly because just one Magelagie

34 Armstrong (1983–84: 220), with reference to the English reports he has consulted, writes: "By late 1683 at the latest Lahefoutsy was dead …"

35 This figure is certainly too low, as it would lead to the conclusion that Tsimenata would have been about 15 years in 1683.

36 COACM (1905); Vérin (1975, 1986); Armstrong (1983–84); Hébert (1999).

in Bay Boeny was operating, at least as a trade center of international size. And there is another argument: Vérin (1975: 531) cites the French Captain Gigault as the last to have documented his visit in Bay Mahajamba long before the arrival of Tsimenata, in 1671. Gigault stated that the ancient town located on island Nosy Manja with its buildings was already "deserted," a hint which makes the account of Guillain concerning the defeat of Old Magelagie around 1685 not very probable. In ancient maps, it is true, a clear difference between Old and New Magelagie is not found until the late 18th century, but this should be understood as the outcome of the typically slow changes occurring in this particular medium. All these observations do give strong arguments for believing that, indeed, the 1686 document concerns definitely Magelagie in Bay Boeny.

But there is still a second problem posed by the 1686 document: The curious remark concerning the strange "*Sakalave of lang oren*" who were behind these attacks. Armstrong, again, accepted this without any particular comment as a reference to Tsimenata and his troops, certainly because they are known today under the name Sakalava. But the use of the term "Sakalave" in this historical context as well as the descriptive addition "of long ears" is not as easy to understand as it seems to be. It is the first documented evidence of the word Sakalave and was not used by any of the European visitors of the Boeny Kingdom during the next decades (see, e.g., the long Dutch report in COACM 1913: 52 ff.). Further, there is no other document available that states the existence of long-eared Sakalave. Why then would Tsimenata and his loyalists have been labeled as Sakalave only when arriving in Bay Manangara around 1686? Or, finally, does the 1686 document perhaps refer to another category of invaders hitherto unknown – again with major consequences for the understanding of the documents?

A preliminary review of documents and some publications enable one to suggest a satisfying answer. It seems, without going into too many details, that the term Sakalava was used at first on Madagascar within the context of slavery by Islamic or Arab traders, presumably based on an ancient Arab word for slave (Molet 1972). When the term Sakalava resonated at the beginning of the 18th century in European documents and maps, it was restricted to designate the population living within the territory of the Lahe Fouti or Menabe Kingdom (e.g., Drury 1729 in Oliver [ed.] 1969; a Dutch report from 1719 in COACM 1907: 33), but was not used to name the people or the kingdom founded by Tsimenata. Only much later, perhaps in the mid-19th century, reflected by the writings of Guillain and Noël, did "Sakalava" become clearly recognized as a term encompassing all people ruled by the many lineages of the Maroseraña dynasty along the western coastline. Further, concerning their strange identification as "people of long ears," there is an interesting evidence found on the ancient map of Dupré-Eberard from 1667 (Hébert 1999: 21). The inscription "Land of long ears" appears to designate people around the territory of the western cap of Madagascar, known today as Cap St. André, between Magelagie in the north and the Menabe in the south. Nothing else is known hitherto to these people of long ears and the inscription has never been commented on by any scholar. However, taking together these few indications it should be enough to state that the expression of "Sakalava of long ears" seems to designate in 1680 a population on the west coast, south of Magelagie. As this marks certainly the direction from which Tsimenata and his troops marched, they, we should conclude, were most probably seen as belonging to this particular population. More research has to be done to elucidate this problem, but as far as it is possible at the moment, we can judge that Armstrong was most probably right with his assumptions, even if a Sakalava population, as it is known today, was still nonexisting.

3) One has to acknowledge, following Armstrong (1983–84: 215) that between 1686 and 1694 there is "a dearth, itself suggestive, of specific references to Massailly [i.e., Magelagie] in Dutch and English accounts." This has to be seen as an indirect indicator of a difficult situation, not seducing European traders to stay for a longer visit, confirming indirectly a period of turmoil and new beginnings.

4) From late 1694 onwards documents demonstrate that Tsimenata is regarded as the king of a newly-established polity in the northwest, substituting former structures in the context of Islamic entrepôts as economic centers. The first source available is that of the Dutch Brons and his report dated with 14th January 1695. He writes that he would like to give "some samples of the wonderful and cruel nature of Andiaximanatte [Tsimenata], the present king of Magelage [Magelagie] and Maringande [Maringando]" (Leibbrandt 1896: 28). Later, he adds: "We have never been able fully to understand whence this King Andiaximanatte came …" (29), followed by the first available account of his conquest, including the first characterization of Tsimenata. Both citations suggest that Brons, certainly conscious about what was known by former Dutch traders visiting this region, was well aware of the fact that Tsimenata was representing a new political power. It took the Dutch until 1698, when the ship "Soldaat" was sent with an "epistle to *Sere-*

nissimo ac Potentissimo Domino Andia Simanata" (Armstrong 1983–84: 215), to acknowledge this fact officially. As these documents (and others noted in Armstrong 1983–84 and COACM 1905: 381–383) proof undeniably that Tsimenata was acknowledged as a newly-arrived king of the region near Bay Manangara (Bombetoka), it is safe to interpret the "dearth" of documents of the decade before as an indirect indicator of the campaign of Tsimenata.

5) While the Dutch ships continued to visit Tsimenata on a regular basis (COACM 1905: 381–383) in the following years, the trade with Islamic people was in trouble, for in 1699, "Massailly [Magelagie] … were reported not to have been visited by the *Arabs* for *a year or three* …" (Armstrong 1983–84: 216), an indication perhaps to be seen in the context of the enduring conflicts with the Antalaotra of the defeated Islamic entrepôts, a problem which will be addressed later in greater detail.

To sum up: The European sources between 1682 and 1700 confirm central elements of the history of conquest by Tsimenata, as has been suggested repeatedly by subsequent oral tradition and testimonials. Admittedly, Tsimenata is actually documented expressively as king near Bay Manangara (Bombetoka) for the first time only at the beginning of 1695. But it is safe to relate the sudden appearance of this new personality with clear signs of rupture of the political situation in the northwest since about 1685, including the 1686 document that mentioned attacks on trading towns. It is possible to discern already as ultimate temporal limits of the conquest the period between 1683 (death of King Andriandahiftosy) and 1694 (encounter of the already established King Tsimenata by the Dutch Brons). How, then, can the five main oral traditions confirm or contradict these preliminary insights and add more details?

4.2 Invading the West Coast: Five Versions of the Conquest by Tsimenata

The preliminary examination of all sources available has suggested that it would be worthwhile to restrict a close review of primary sources on those five documents classified as belonging to memory periods one and two. In doing so, it will be important to paraphrase or cite some main parts and structural elements, enabling one to follow the ongoing discussion and the task of continual comparison between all sources.

a) The Account of Jeremias Brons (1695 in Leibbrandt 1896: 29–31)

This document is of particular interest, it has to be underlined again, as it is the first independent confirmation of the campaign by Tsimenata known to exist and it contains already a number of central elements of the story, which appear again and again in later versions of the event under discussion here. The first part of the decisive paragraph is cited as follows (Leibbrandt 1896: 29):

> We have never been able fully to understand whence this King Andiaximanatte [Tsimenata] came, but some, pointing to the south, said that he came thence about 22 or 23 days' journey, and passed through that whole territory armed with spears, guns, and blunderbusses, in order to become the king of St. Augustin and the interior, because the English often go there to trade, and many of the natives speak that language imperfectly.

The text confirms, therefore, that the king arrived from the south and it even specifies the distance by estimating that he came from a territory "about 22 or 23 days' journey" away. Such a scenario of a crossing of several hundreds of kilometers has to be seen as realistic: A look to historic documents such as Drury's account of his many years in the south and west of Madagascar (Drury 1729 in Oliver [ed.] 1969) is persuasive enough in showing how such an exercise was usual and how people all along the coast were well connected. The three weeks period given in the account for crossing the territory between the Menabe and the Boeny regions seems a quite realistic one.[37] His aim was, the document continues rather confusingly, "to become king of St. Augustin and the interior." St. Augustin was the name of an important trade point far to the southwest coast, south of the Lahe Fouti (Menabe) Kingdom, visited regularly by English traders. It seems reasonably enough that Tsimenata at first would have tried his chance there, and only later decided for a campaign in the opposite direction. The document seems to blend here two different stories into one, without allowing a more precise statement possible.

The military success of Tsimenata was made possible in two distinct periods, following the account of Brons: At first he defeated those groups or towns "distant from the sea," not equipped by fire-

37 My own regular experience of long hours of hike in western Madagascar, as part of my ongoing fieldwork just between the Menabe and the Boeny region, strengthens my opinion that the campaign of Tsimenata described should be taken as feasible.

arms and unprepared to an immediate threat, before launching an attack on the main enemies:

Coming into the neighbourhood of Magelage and Maringande he could easily obtain dominion over the unarmed tribes far distant from the sea, and knowing nothing of an enemy; but as he knew that the kings of the two before mentioned territories had been supplied with firearms by the Europeans, he tarried with them under the pretext of being desirous of making friendship with them, (finally) inviting them to visit him. Having no suspicion they went, and were well received, and when quite merry were murdered by him, together with their followers. He thus obtained the mastery of these two kingdoms (Leibbrandt 1896: 29).

This clear account fits well into the picture of historical sources discussed already, allowing to date the events described before and until 1686. An interesting point is the important but hitherto not recognized fact that this account repeats a parallel attack on the towns Magelagie and Maringando, mentioned already in the 1686 Dutch source presented previously, and confirming this aspect of the events. And as Brons (Leibbrandt 1896: 28) describes Tsimenata in 1695 as "present king of Magelage [Magelagie] and Maringande [Maringando]," it is suggested that both towns defeated were still the core of his new kingdom.

As Brons' report is the only eyewitness of Tsimenata available near to the events in question (and, as hinted to already before, one of only three testimonials available), I would like to end the presentation of this document with his characterization of the central person of the story analyzed here (Leibbrandt 1896: 29):

He is a man, clever, strong and robust, with a little less blackness than Monsieur du Boys, pastry-cook at Batavia, and though sometimes he has a pleasant mood, he is very strict and very much feared by his courtiers and subjects, in whose eyes and in his own he is a second Alexander, often being very tyrannous and cruel, according to the testimony of two of his chief governors Andiamatonga and Andiasanguits especially when drunk, which often happens, from his own drink made of honey, and since our presence, from brandy and arrack, which he drank like water. He taught his courtiers to do the same, throwing the liquor like a stream down their throats until they were nearly choked.

The document goes on by explaining the sometimes rude way of negotiating slaves by the king, in blackmailing a rate esteemed as far too high by the Dutch traders at one occasion, and it is closed by the story of the initial proposition of the king, narrated by one of the slaves, that "before having had communication with us …", he wished "to break all our necks" (Leibbrandt 1896: 30), and only the advice of his counselors made him change this idea. No wonder then that Brons ends his reports with a sentence of relief: "By God's grace we got away from the place with a whole skin, and we think it would be very dangerous to send a ship thither as long as that brute and tyrant rules there" (Leibbrandt 1896: 31).

b) The Account of Captain Cornelius ca. 1708 (Edited by Johnson 1728: 259–267)

This quite famous piece relates a rather spectacular collaboration of slavers and Tsimenata, leading finally to the successful conquest. It starts with the most detailed recognition of the difficulties preceding the decision for conquest by Tsimenata:

At the Death of *Andian Lyfouchy* [Andriandahefotsy], *Chimenatto* [Tsimenata], assisted by a younger Brother, and a great Number of the People, endeavour'd to wrest the Kingdom from his elder Brother *Timanangarivo*; but he was defeated, and with his Party obliged to retire, however, he still made War upon his Brother, till he was, by repeated Losses, very much weaken'd, and apprehensive of being attack'd by him; he retir'd farther Northward …" (Johnson 1728: 263).

In the northwest, the conquerors were confronted at first with a difficult situation:

… he [Tsimenata] made War on *Andian Methelage* [King of Magelagie], but without great success so that he settled on a Point of Land by the Sea-Coast, where the *Tyloutes* [Antalaotra], that is, Inhabitants of the Sea, who are descended from the *Arabs*, and the *Vaujimbos* [Vazimbas], who are esteem'd the meanest Cast on the whole Island, were very vexatious and troublesome to him, and kept him in continual Alarms (Johnson 1728: 263 f.).

The solution was found as Tsimenata was able to negotiate the assistance of a slaver that arrived just in time:

In the mean while a couple of Ships arrived at *Yungowl* [the main port of the Lahe Fouti (Menabe) kingdom] … belonging to *Frederick Phillips*, of *New York*, to slave; …; they would not stay here, but went farther on the Coast to look for Trade.

Andian Chimenatto [king Tsimenata] spying them, caused a Smoak to be made, which brought one of their Boats on Shoar; *Chimenatto* [Tsimenata] received the Crew very civilly, and invited the Ships in, promising Trade.

… This was agreed to, and *Chimenatto* [Tsimenata] furnished them with as much fresh Provision as they could dispose of; twenty Whites went with him to War, and they took a Town and a great Number of Slaves, out

of whom he ordered the Captain to pick and cull what they pleas'd; … (Johnson 1728: 264).

They went on a second Expedition, took several Towns, and brought down some thousand Slaves, beside great Droves of Cattle …

The King told them, if they would leave those Men and come again, he would again slave them for nothing; the Men being willing to stay, the Ships sail'd, came again the next Season, were slaved according to Promise, and relieved those Whites, such of them as would return, and left others, who were willing, in their Steads. With this Assistance *Chimenatto* [Tsimenata] soon conquered the *Antylouts* [Antalaotra] and *Vaujimbos* [Vazimba], and afterwards made himself Master of the whole Country of *Methelage* [Magelagie],… (Johnson 1728: 265).

This account is in principle well in accordance with what Brons had to say, as it confirms the battles at first against a number of towns or groups in the hinterland of Bay Bombetoka before finally the Antalaotra of the Islamic entrepôt had to render to Tsimenata. But, on the other hand, the success of Tsimenata appears in a totally new light, as it seems to depend heavily on the help of European slavers. As well the information concerning the resistance of local Vazimba groups gives for the first time a hint on the reaction of the local population other than the Antalaotra. It is difficult to understand, however, why the informant of Brons should have omitted the long assistance of the European slavers given to Tsimenata during at least three years, and we may as well question why, inversely, the account of Johnson does not contain any remarks on the perfidious invitation of Tsimenata found in the account of Brons. Is it perhaps because this account seems to rely on information given directly by the decisive actors and, therefore, they may have silenced these not very honorably events? Unfortunately, no compulsory conclusion is available for this aspect of Brons' story.

Nonetheless, it is possible to find at least traces of the events reported by Johnson. One of Frederick Phillip's ships known to have navigated to Madagascar was called "Margret" (Defoe 1999: 690). On Armstrong's (1983–84: 219) listing of English vessels in western Malagasy ports appears for 1684–85 and 1686–87 ships called "Margriet" respective "Margarieta," unfortunately without specifying any additional information. It seems reasonable to see these details not just as a mere coincidence with the report of the pirate Cornelius. Rather it is plausible to associate the historical arrangement between Tsimenata and the slavers owned by Phillip, and told by Cornelius with the presence of ship Margret. The 1684–85 visit would then correspond best with the first attack on the hinterlands and the 1686–87 stay to the period shortly after the attack on Magelagie and Maringando.

By weighting up on what is known about Johnson's document and situating it within the other texts on the campaign already presented, one certainly has to attribute to it a comparatively high degree of historic truth: the general structure of the campaign is consistent, and the intervention of slave traders appears as a plausible option.

c) The Account of Drury (1729)

The third account belonging to the first period of memory has been published under the name of the shipwrecked boy Drury. Drury starts his story as well with a short remark confirming the controversy between the sons of Andriandahefotsy on the succession. He summarizes the following conquest as follows:

The other [son, i.e., Tsimenata], with about eight hundred men, passed through the fine country where the cattle are kept, and where the Virzimbers [Vazimba] then dwelt, going on still further to the northward, and settled on that river now called by the Europeans Masseelege [Magelagie] (Drury 1729 in Oliver [ed.] 1969: 274).

This author notes further that the Vazimba group finally agreed to live under Tsimenata's rule and that Tsimenata "founded a kingdom almost as large and potent as his brothers" (Oliver [ed.] 1969: 274). In comparison with the two other traditions already summarized it is a very brief note, adding as new information only the presence of the azimba[38] group in the whole territory between Lahe Fouti (Menabe) and the Magelagie region. In the light of the two remaining accounts, however, one further point has to be made: Drury follows Brons and Cornelius in seeing that Tsimenata focused just on the conquest of the Magelagie region, and did not aim to subdue the whole northwestern part of Madagascar.

At this part of the discussion, having evaluated all documents contemporary to the events and of the first period of memory, it is worthwhile to make a point about what has been reached so far. Besides important lacunas and details difficult to verify, a common structure and some first clues about the dating of the campaign can be identified: Tsimenata left his father's kingdom around 1683 and focused

38 Drury (in Oliver [ed.] 1969: 279 ff.) describes how he lived among the Vazimba group for several months and perhaps for this reason specifies only their involvement in the conquest of Tsimenata.

his efforts on conquering a territory of his own in the region near the towns Magelagie and Maringando, both near Manangara (Bombetoka) Bay. After preliminary attacks before 1686 on less well-equipped groups, he subdued finally the most important trading centers around 1686. When coming in the following paragraphs to two more and quite different accounts of the campaign, this story has to be recalled. Is it possible to confirm what appears at the moment as the main track of the conquest, or are there changes necessary, or will there result even a completely different understanding of the historic development?

d) The Account of Noël (1843a: 290 f.)

Drury was the last to have received information from persons who may have witnessed themselves the arrival of Tsimenata or had been in contact with eye-witnesses. For more than 120 years no oral tradition was written down. No wonder, that some important changes are observed, when Noël published his "Recherches sur les Sakkalava" in 1843. What did Noël have to say concerning the conquest of Tsimenata? Very little in the end, when only the event in itself is regarded: First he reports that after the death of King Andriandahefotsy the conquest of the territory north of the Lahe Fouti (Menabe) Kingdom was started by his successor and oldest son, called by him as "Andrian-mandressou-arrivou" (still not Tsimenata, after Noël). Only when this king died, there did break out a conflict for succession and the second of his sons, named "Andrian-mandissou-arrivou" (now Tsimenata), conquered the northwest region:

> Le second [son, i.e., Tsimenata] traverse le fleuve Bali [southwest of Bay Manangara], à la tête d'une armée sakkalava, inonde comme un torrent le pays des Sanangatsou [old name of a clan in the west of Bay Manangara], ne s'arrête dans sa marche envahissant qu'auprès du Mandzâra [a river near Bay Bombetoka] … et s'établit dans un lieu qu'il appellee Tangaï (j'ai attaint mon but). Andrian-mandissou-arrivou [Tsimenata] est le fondateur du royaume de Bombétok ou des Sakkalava du Nord (Noël 1843a: 291).

The conquest of the northwest was later completed by a son and, later, by several grandsons of Tsimenata, as Noël informs in his account. And only at this point is a severe conflict between the dynasty and Islamic people, as they fought against the "Hounzati [certainly Hassani[39]], tribu musulmane de Bouéni" and against the "Mozanghi, people commerçant qui donna son nom à la ville de Mozangaï [Mahajanga[40]]" (Noël 1843a: 291).

The story continues following the chronology of kings until the times contemporary to the author (Noël 1843b: 62 f.). The account, therefore, develops a great picture of the Sakalava history, which at first appears as a result of a successful conquest and proliferation, followed by times of decline and difficulties, as the dynasty was later confronted with the Merina people of the interior, trying to conquer the regions of major economic importance to the west of Madagascar.

By regarding now critically this account, the following remarks are necessary. First, there is an obvious fault in this story: No additional king reigned during the time between Andriandahefotsy and the eventual split of the dynasty leading to the conquest of Boeny. All other historical records and oral traditions are very clear about this. The confusion concerning the chronology of succession is obviously connected to the two similar names Andrian-mandressou-arrivou/Andrian-mandissou-arrivou, most probably variants of the posthumous name of Tsimenata in different regions (Rusillon 1922–23: 173). It suggests that Noël's informant did not have a particularly well-based knowledge about the early dynastical history preceding the arrival of Tsimenata in the northwest. More importantly, no clashes between Tsimenata and the Islamic entrepôts are mentioned and these conflicts are relegated to later times. The small account concerning expressively Tsimenata is rather "empty" of details, like that of Drury, just announcing a powerful conquest of the territory near the Bay Manangara. But in clear contrast to the remarks of Drury and all other documents preceding, focused just on the conquest of the region near Magelagie, the report given by Noël is embedded in a vast panorama of Sakalava history. With the account of Noël, the theme of the conquest of the northwestern parts of Madagascar appears, embedded in the chronology of the succession of kings.

To understand this structure one has to acknowledge, among others, the authorship of an educated European author whose definite aim was to produce a history and not just to note a singular event, as were the aims of the authors treated so far. But the

39 Guillain (1845: 357–359) has documented an Antalaotra version concerning their history. He was informed that a certain Hassany from Basra and his family were at the origin of the Antalaotra settlement of Old Magelagie, Magelagie, and two other Islamic entrepôts (Vérin 1975 and 1986 has reviewed this assumptions at length).

40 Today this is the main port in the northwest, founded most probably following the defeat of the Antalaotra against Tsimenata.

new way of telling the conquest of Tsimenata should be seen as well as an expression of a new structured memory: 170 years after the founding of Boeny kingdom, it was possible to look back on an impressive past, leading to the dominance of the dynasty succeeding Tsimenata over all the northwestern territory of Madagascar. And further, at the time the account was written down, the kingdom of Boeny and its dependent small kinglets were well under attack by the Merina people, threatening all that had been accomplished in the past. It seems reasonable to suggest that such a context must have contributed to produce that story of a conquest in somewhat heroic times by those furnishing informations to Noël and supporting his ideas of Sakalava history.

These reflections would help us to make the fact understandable that the clashes between Tsimenata and the Islamic entrepôts – so decisive for the success of conquest according to early documents – are passed over in this account and are inserted during the time of the reign of a later king. In retrospect, these conflicts were of minor importance in comparison to the "big" picture of conquest. To add another important argument, one has to acknowledge the subsequent amalgamation of royal and Antalaotra lineages starting at the beginning of the 18th century. This development certainly did not strengthen the willingness to remember harsh conflicts in the past among the mixed descendants of the Antalaotra and the ruling dynasty, including perhaps the "Sakalava" informant of Noël.

All these reflections allow one to judge this document as less rich than the others presented when it comes to heuristic knowledge of the campaign. In other words: The memory transmitted by Noël, even if it seems to tell at first a different or contradictory story, does not offer a real challenge to what is known already. This version by hand is the result of a new, arranged memory, not of a memory particularly close to what had "really" happened at the end of the 17th century.

e) The Account of Guillain (1845: 14, 18–21, 357–360)

Curiously enough, the rather late account by Guillain on the conquest of Tsimenata is the largest version of all accounts available. And it appears at the same time as the most comprehensive and lively account, seducing the reader to adopt the many details presented. Guillain (1845: 14 f.) introduces Tsimenata in the context of the dynastic conflict after the death of his father Andriandahefotsy. The parting of Tsimenata is presented here for the first time as the result of a consensual discussion. Following the advice of their mother, the two quarreling brothers find a sound compromise: The older one has to reign but he furnishes Tsimenata with troops to support his aims of conquest. The campaign starts:

> Lorsque ce prince [Tsimenata] partit du Ménabé à la tête des hordes sakalaves, il traversa le pays limitrophe, alors habité par des groups de Vazim'bahs [Vazimba], qui s'enfuirent effrayés à son approche, puis le pays presque inhabité qui forme aujourd'hui les provinces de Mavouhazou et de Vouaï. Ce pays était sous l'autorité d'un chef vazim'bah, nommé Boulacily, qui se soumit sans combattre, et se joignit avec une partie de son monde à l'armée du conquérant.
>
> Andriamandissou-Arivou [Tsimenata or Andriamandisoarivo] envahit ensuite le pays des Tsiahondikis[41] et des Djéribohitsis … (Guillain 1845: 18).

In addition to the three sociopolitical units already mentioned, the troops had to pass the territory of another group, called "Sandangouatsis" by Guillain, before they arrived finally at the important river of Manangara (Betsiboka). Here the Manangadabos are beaten. The account states, without any indication to the Islamic entrepôts, that the invasion continued immediately toward the north: "Poursuivant le cours de ses conquêtes, Andriamandissou [Tsimenata or Andriamandisoarivo] soumit ensuite les Ant'ambohilavas …" (Guillain 1845: 19). Finally, at the northern part of Madagascar, as the last political unit, the Antandrounahs including their subgroups Antan'zouns and the Ant'ankarans were subdued. Having conquered all territories until the northern extremes of Madagascar, Tsimenata decided to settle down:

> Andriamandissou [Tsimenata], n'ayant plus devant lui d'adversaires à combattre, s'en retourna vers le Sud, et, s'arrêtant à peu près au centre des contrées envahies par lui, il fixa sa residence sur le bord de la rivière Mandzaraï … Il appela Tongaï (de tonga, arriver, parvenir) l'etablissement qu'il y fonda, et ce fut, durant tout son règne, la capital de ses Etats (Guillain 1845: 19 f.).

Only when the story of conquest is finished formally by the construction of the royal residence does the story of Guillain come to the Islamic entrepôts and their conflict with the aggressors from the south.

> Non loin, et à l'ouest de Tongaï, au fond de la baie de Bouéni [Boeny], était situé un village de ce dernier nom,

41 These hardly known groups were perhaps of early Afro-Malayan (Vazimba), early Malagasy (Tsiahondiki), and Bantu-Swahili (Djeribohitsy, Sandangoatsy) descendants (Kneitz 2008: 40 ff.).

bâti, ainsi que plusieurs autres au Nord et au Sud, par une colonie d'Arabes. L'un de ces villages, Langani [Old Magelagie], élevé dans la baie de Matzamba [Mahajamba], était déjà tombé au pouvoir d'Andriamandissou [Tsimenata] lors de l'excursion de ce conquérant vers le Nord, et, la lutte une fois engagé, les colons semblaient ne pouvoir échapper à une destruction totale que par l'exil ou la soumission (Guillain 1845: 20).

In a historical survey on the Islamic entrepôts given supplementary in a long footnote by Guillain (1845: 359 ff.), he states about the fall of Old Magelagie or Langany: "Ils [the inhabitants] furent battus, et leur chef, Amadi, ayant été tué, ils s'embarquèrent avec leurs familles, et se réfugièrent à Bouéni." The previsible destiny of Magelagie came a number of years later, says the Antalaotra informant of Guillain (Guillain 1845: 20):

… ils purent encore, à la faveur de sa situation insulaire, repousser pendant plusieurs années les pretentions de sourveraineté du prince sakalave; mais, l'île ayant été enlevée par surprise, ils furent forces de se soumettre.

In his footnote, Guillain (1845: 360) explains further how the Antalaotra succeeded in resisting Tsimenata for many years as they would have continued to trade with places outside the control of Tsimenata and the impossibility for the troops of Tsimenata to cross the bay with "weak" boats *frêles pirouge*; Guillain 1845: 360). And finally, the late fall of Magelagie is explained by a surprise attack. The account of Guillain (1845: 20–22) continues by describing the difficult beginnings of the cohabitation: Tsimenata tried to use their knowledge of trade and allowed the Antalaotra to regain Boeny. But later, a mutiny broke out and Tsimenata invited the chief of Antalaotra to his residence and murdered him. Finally, he married one of his granddaughters to the new chief of Antalaotra as strategy to better control the Antalaotra group. This was, in short, a summary of the rather epic story told by Guillain.

As it has been stated, the account of Guillain gives the impression of being comprehensive and appears as rather attractive for the reader, going into much vivid detail. However, it is evident that the text of Guillain resembles in a number of important aspects that of Noël. Prepared by the insights gained in the last paragraph, a critical perspective can be established rather easily.

First, Tsimenata is described as the great conqueror of all territories north of his father's kingdom. The naming of many groups and territories including details about resistance and the names of kings makes this story seem credible at first. But does it represent the true historic development? Important reservations are to be made. A long campaign, such as it is described with Tsimenata hastening from victory to victory across many hundreds of kilometers without much resistance, seems not to provide a realistic image, even if the possession of firearms would have given to him an important strategic advantage. Most importantly, there is not any other proof of such a sudden turning point in northwestern Madagascar politics, neither in contemporary sources nor in any other oral tradition written down later. Instead, the story told by Guillain can be explained following the model already worked out above, as another contemporary version of a heroic memory of the Sakalava. The main difference of his story to that of Noël lies in the fact that the narrator attributes the conquest of the northwest to King Tsimenata alone. He is built up as the "second Alexander," a tendency Brons in 1695 already had observed as an image cherished by the king and his followers. Such a version seems as well consistent in the light of the Sakalava historic consciousness with its tendency to attribute important developments in an anachronistic way to the founding king. I would conclude, therefore, that it would be unwise to follow Guillain literally and to dismiss what has been reconstructed so far. Rather, it is far safer to take the enumeration of the fighting and defeated groups as a reflection of a long process, perhaps encapsulating the memory of several decades, but based on the decisive first steps of Tsimenata.

The second important difference concerns the fighting against the Islamic entrepôts and other trading towns. Already the composition of the narration is somehow strange; once the kingdom of Boeny has been founded, the problematic situation between the conquerors and the Antalaotra is described at length, like in the history given by Noël. Guillain is the first author to mention the fall of Old Magelagie, whereas the defeat of Magelagie is relegated for later times. At the same time he did not mention the town Maringando in his text, even when it is possible to assume that this town was under the control of the group Guillain calls Manangadabos, who were defeated by Tsimenata when he reached Manangara (Bombetoka) Bay.

These particularities can be explained partly by the fact that Guillain was dependent on information emanating from a person clearly belonging to the Antalaotra lineage, as it has already been noted. It is certainly plausible to assume that such an informant was not too enthusiastic about a story that reveals the difficult beginnings of his ancestors. This background would allow one to understand, for example, the composition of the text with the important clashes between Tsimenata and the Islamic entrepôts described only after the story of conquest is completed

in a rather smooth way. Also, it is quite obvious that the informant tries to explain rather desperately the subsequent fall of Magelagie by arguments which are difficult to accept. It is not very comprehensive, to say the least, that Tsimenata would not be able to cross a shallow bay for a couple of years because of his "weak" ships. Already Vérin (1975: 274) has observed with certain doubt: "L'intention du récit est de fournir une excuse valable aux descendants des vaincus pour expliquer leur défaite".

The fall of Old Magelagie, described as being part of the immediate conquest of Tsimenata, seems at first an interesting detail, credible as well in the light of what the other accounts have presented as a conquest of the hinterland. Such an interpretation may be possible. But as is already noted above, it is rather questionable if Old Magelagie would have existed as a functioning Islamic entrepôt at the time of the conquest, as no contemporary sources of European ships confirm its existence. Perhaps just a secondary trading town was still there, if at all. The defeat described could have been as well a remote memory of the violent clashes already mentioned between the Antalaotra and another Malagasy king from the beginning of 17th century (Vérin 1975: 530), leading to a migration to Magelagie, but now attributed in an anachronistic way to Tsimenata. Is the story told by Guillain a vague memory of all these conflicts?

To sum up: The impressive story given by Guillain of an irresistible and quite heroic conquest of the northwestern coast, followed by a number of scholars, should be rejected as representing a more reliable historical view than the other sources. The apparent contradictions with the versions of oral history already discussed do not express shortcomings of these older sources. Rather, the narration by Guillain tries to make sense of Sakalava history within the specific context a long time after Tsimenata has arrived, taking into consideration in particular the alliance of the Antalaotra and royal lineages and a long history of Sakalava domination in the northwest.

> We have never been able fully to understand whence this King Andiaximanatte [Tsimenata] came (Brons 14 January 1695, in Leibbrandt 1896: 29).

4.3 A Reconstitution of the Conquest by Tsimenata (1683–1695)

Following this long assessment of sources, it is now possible to reconstruct the conquest by Tsimenata. To prepare this version, the main points of the analysis of tradition may be now summarized:

- The discussion of the primary sources available has allowed ordering them reasonably in four periods, each subdued under particular conditions in the making of history.
- The sources contemporary to the events have proved to be irreplaceable for confirming "in vito" the events treated in later accounts as well as to provide safe points for dating.
- It is recommended further that the sources which are part of the first period of memory[42] are regarded as offering particularly valuable versions of the events in question. Indications for such a positive assessment are found in the fact that a number of details reported correspond well with contemporary sources and that contradictory oral traditions of later periods are judged as clearly arranged.
- The second period of memory (Noël 1843a; Guillain 1845) shows a much more elaborate and arranged vision of the Sakalava past, therefore, offering contradictory versions of the past. These versions are to be characterized at the same time by a European spirit of history as well as by an effort to construct a chain of past kings and a somehow heroic or glorious past. The discussion has revealed that they have to be handled with greatest care as they regularly do only contain vague souvenirs of the conquest.

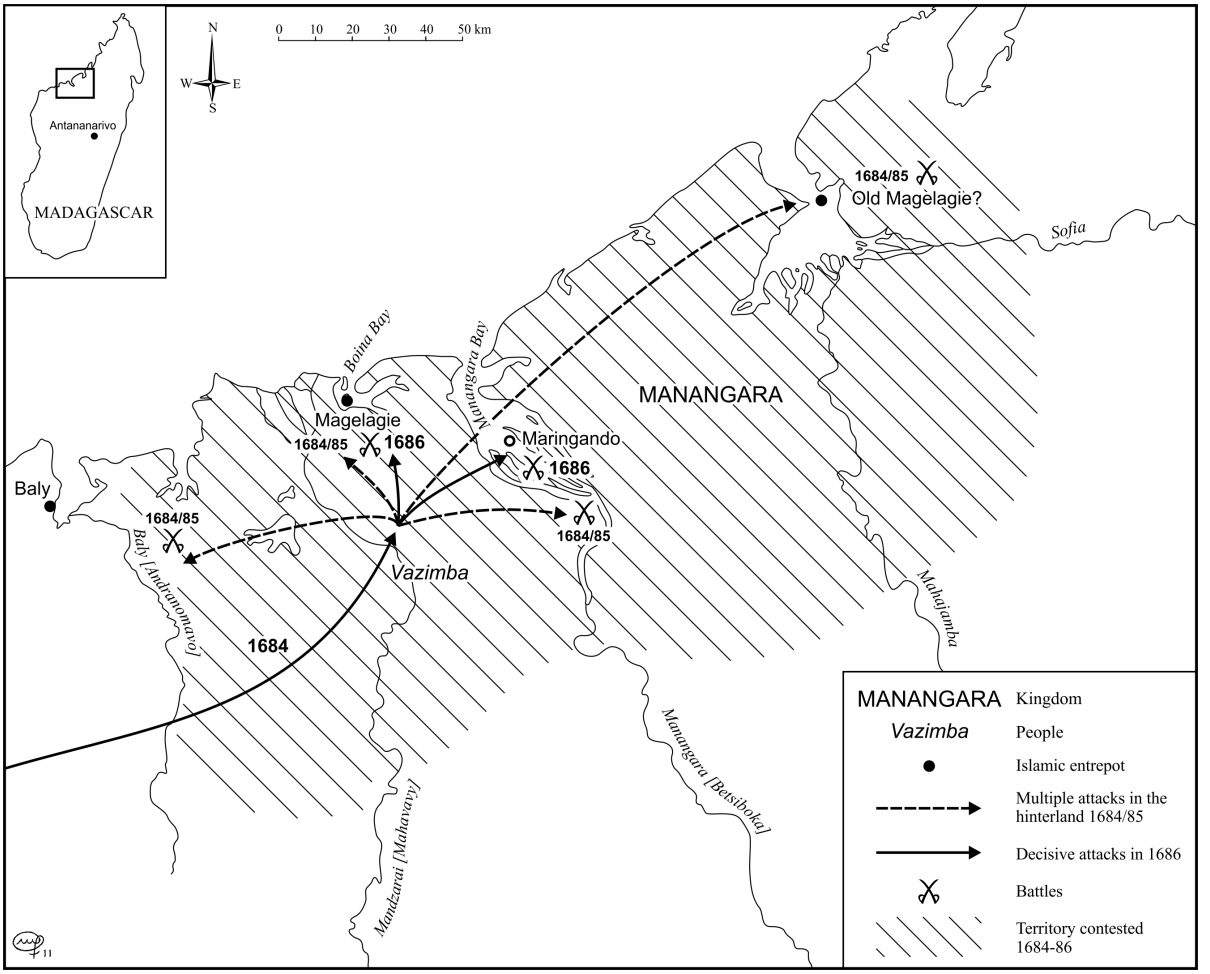
The synthetic version of the events including an approximate dating, which follow and lead to the constitution of what was known later as kingdom of Boeny, evidently, do not claim to represent the famous historical truth. Rather it presents a conclusion about what has to be taken as most serious knowledge on the conquest founded on all the documents discussed in detail.

a) Taking the Leave (ca. 1683)

There can be no doubt that after the death of King Andriandahefotsy in 1683 the question of succession led to intensive conflicts among several of his sons, including Tsimenata. He was finally forced to leave his father's country around 1683 (the maximal range possible is between end of 1682 and end of 1684), followed by several hundred of loyalists. Tsimenata must have had – perhaps after some former

42 Brons in Leibbrandt (1896); Johnson (1728) Drury (1729 in Oliver [ed.] 1969).

Map 2: Conquest of the Manangara (Bombetoka) region by Tsimenata 1684–1686.



attempts more to the south (St. Augustin) – a clear target in mind: To dominate the northwest region around Magelagie and Bay Manangara, as it was an important center of trade and wealth. He and his band and families, already equipped with firearms, crossed on foot about four hundred kilometers in the northern direction. It seems reasonable to accept the encounter with the clans living there, in particular the Vazimba groups, as some sort of clashes. But the story of an immediate and "irresistible" conquest transmitted by Noel and Guillain, though, appears unrealistic and has to be rejected. Taking into account the dating of main attacks in 1686 and the severe difficulties in moving forward during the rainy season (November–March), it seems most plausible to propose an arrival near Magelagie in late 1684 (the maximum range would be between mid 1683 and mid 1685).

b) The Conquest of the Hinterland (1684–1685)

Once he arrived in the northwest, Tsimenata and his loyalists focused their efforts on securing a sound base for their future kingdom. The serious difficulties they encountered first, as it was mentioned by Cornelius (in Johnson), seem to be realistic, in particular when we include the hint by Brons that the people of Magelagie and Maringando were well-equipped with firearms. After some initial fruitless clashes against the Antalaotra, which perhaps were supported by local Vazimba groups, Tsimenata opted for a better strategy. He tried to attack first those towns or groups in the hinterland deprived of firearms and not well aware of a new enemy, apparently assisted by European slavers (Brons 1695 in Leibbrandt 1896; Johnson 1728; see Map 2). Unfortunately, there is no possibility yet to confirm or reject the story of the adventurous integration of European or American slavers into the early phase of conquest

as noted by Johnson, even when it seems quite plausible. As the fall of Magelagie and Maringando has been dated in 1686, the early conquest of the hinterland may have started during 1685. It remains quite dubious that the perhaps already destroyed Islamic entrepôt Old Magelagie was attacked during this period, as Guillain announces 170 years later. His proposition of an immediate conquest of all the territory north of Manangara (Bombetoka) Bay by Tsimenata, however, cannot be followed at all.

c) The Decisive Attack: The Fall of Magelagie and Maringando (1686)

The defeat of several secondary towns and the polities in the hinterland and the bartering of the slaves gained would have meant a continual strengthening of Tsimenata's forces. In 1686 at the latest and about two years after his arrival, the time had come to attack the two most important towns Maringando and Magelagie – a fact and dating which clearly should be accepted by now (Map 3). The reports of a treacherous strategy used by Tsimenata against the elite of Magelagie and Maringando (Brons 1695 in Leibbrandt 1896) cannot be confirmed. But as in Guillain a similar example of Tsimenata's behavior is presented, describing how an Antalaotra mutiny was suppressed, such narration seems to contain a plausible souvenir. However, the lengthy description of a long resistance of the Antalaotra against Tsimenata in Guillain can clearly be designated as a later occurrence.

d) The Founding of the Kingdom (1686–1695)

After about two years of continual struggle, Tsimenata had succeeded with his fundamental aims: He became master of the region around Manangara and Boeny Bay, a territory much more restricted than what has been described in Guillain (Map 3). The formal indication of victory and founding of a new kingdom was the construction of a royal residence with the symbolic name Tongaï ("arrived"), somewhat after 1686 (Map 3). This region would form the heartland of the new polity for which only a long time afterwards its present denomination Boeny became usual, a reminiscent of the defeated Islamic entrepôt in Bay Boeny.[43] The years following these events until 1695, represented by a significant "dearth" of documents, should be seen as a time of a still difficult situation and a gradual transition leading to the firm establishment of the new government. In about 1695, when Tsimenata was acknowledged for the first time as "the present king of Magelage and Maringande" (Brons [1695] in Leibbrandt 1896: 28) by Dutch traders, this process was well under way.

The case of the Antalaotra was unique in Madagascar, as perhaps for the first time an Islamic entrepôt lost its political and economic independence and became part of a truly Malagasy Kingdom. The process of integrating the Antalaotra elite starting with the fall of Magelagie was particularly difficult. The account by Guillain, reporting that the Antalaotra were allowed at first to return to Magelagie in the bay of Boeny, later decided for a mutiny and were subsequently forced to leave this town for ever. This could be seen here as a realistic scenario and maybe has to be situated most plausibly around or just before 1696 as well.

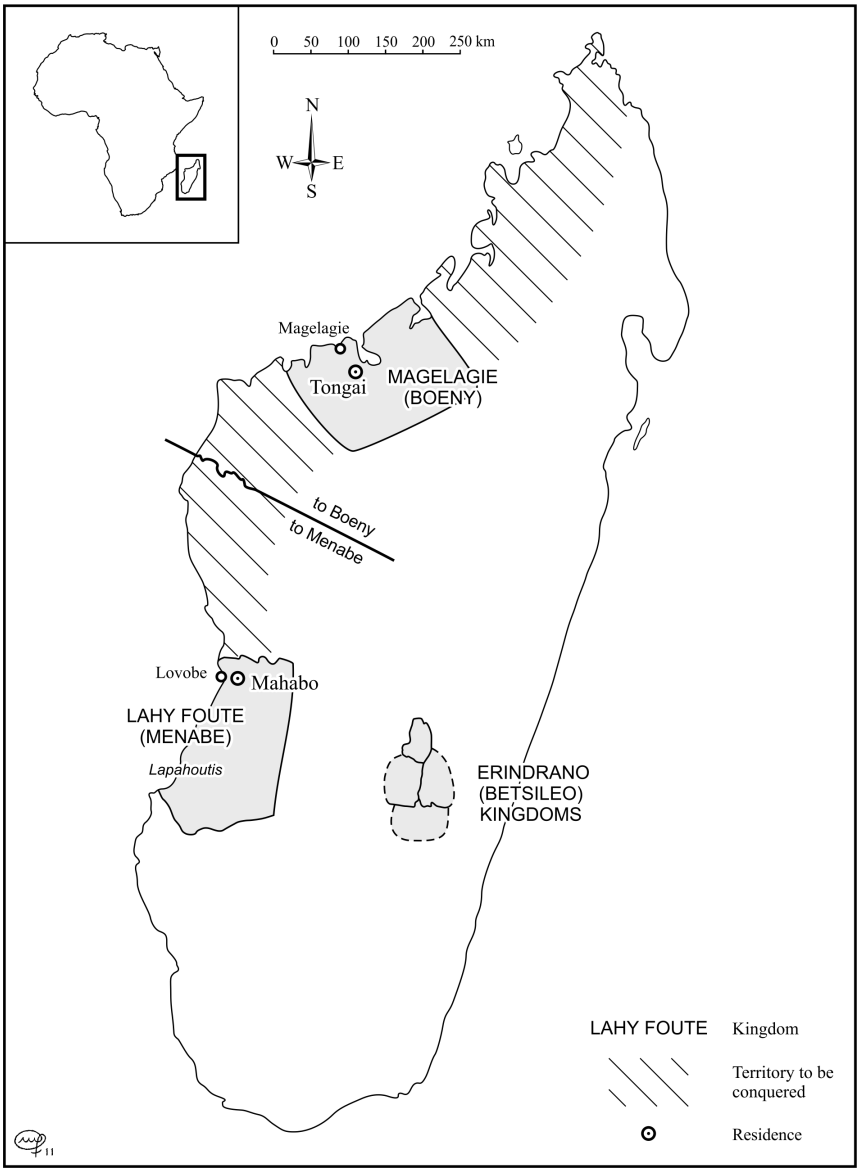
Tsimenata, finally, could start to organize his new trading kingdom without any further enemies by hand. It seems that the king did not bother to enlarge his dominion further, a task undertaken by his descendants. When he died a few years later, probably just about 50 years old, an important legacy was left: A kingdom well-founded on a monopoly of international trade in the northwest, enabling acquisition of wealth, power, and territory – and more succession difficulties to come.

5 The Conquest by Tsimenata: Results of an Exercise in Historical Reconstruction

This article was an exercise in historical reconstruction. A critical review and confrontation of all sources available has allowed one to distinguish between different categories of testimonials and memories and to focus on what seems most credible about the events leading to the victory of Tsimenata. The lessons learned concern our knowledge of the campaign and the primary sources reviewed, the latter including some important insights on historical methodology of Malagasy sources.

Concerning the campaign and its historical truth, the analyses has confirmed that Tsimenata was well focused on conquering the economically most interesting region around Manangara Bay and the striving Islamic entrepôt of Magelagie. The conquest was a rapid story: Arrived around 1684 in the region nearby Magelagie (but not Old Magelagie), Tsimenata and his "long-eared Sakalava" first defeated the hinterland, and finally succeeded to destroy the main trading towns Maringando and Magelagie

43 The name appears for the first time 1774 in a manuscript of the French traveller Mayeur (1912: 59).



Map 3: Madagascar around 1700: Political situation after the campaign of Tsimenata.

in 1686. The integration of the Antalaotra group in the new kingdom, however, proved to be a difficult task and perhaps was not secured until around 1695 or even later.

Concerning the primary sources it has become clear that a classification of sources and oral memory available into several categories has been proved as a useful method, allowing clear differentiation of several layers of the fabrication of memory. In general, those sources closer to the events discussed have proved to be much more reliable concerning the historical process of the conquest than those arranged much later, even if on first regard they seemed particularly comprehensive. The case of Guillain (1845) is particularly pertinent in this respect. Therefore, an important general observation lies at hand, confirming what a number of scholars have already worked out (e.g., Vansina 1985): It is a very risky methodology to use sources of different times simultaneously, encapsulating a memory arranged under various conditions or to select sources without a careful confrontation of all documents available. The result of such procedure – as the discussion of the foundation of the Boeny Kingdom until today reveals – is an imprecise picture, full of confusing contradictions. It allows the possibility of integrating anachronism of all sorts, leading to a deformed picture of the past. Rather it is desirable to inspect carefully the primary sources and their backgrounds, to confront them, and to divide those which present a high probability of historic reality from those constructed under deviant condi-

tions. Such a methodology would allow to establish different periods in the making of memory and history, important for the understanding of the respective sources.

To make a final note: The exercise presented here is in my view exemplary for the work which waits to be undertaken for much of precolonial Madagascar. The critical examination of the sources presented suggests a highly rewarding research enterprise, leading us to improve our heuristic knowledge and the understanding of the primary texts. As per my observation, much of the knowledge of the ancient Malagasy's west coast history could be a worthwhile subject of such careful re-evaluation. On the one hand, a surprisingly rich documentation of primary sources and a record of outstanding historical and anthropological publications are available. On the other hand, these insights and documents with their many obvious contradictions – providing a rich scientific treasure – are rather rarely revised in a concise, critical, and focused way. A detailed analysis, such as presented here, urges for a critical and, therefore, deeper understanding of Malagasy primary sources. And it urges one to uncover those many anachronistic interferences, which are a major impediment for the understanding for the particular logic of ancient societies or early states in Madagascar.

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