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# the process of state formation in Madagascar

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Most anthropologists agree that the state, as an ideal type, differs significantly from more "primitive" forms of sociopolitical organization. Fried (1960:728), for example, views the state as an emergent form of sociopolitical organization whose primary functions are to maintain general order and to support socioeconomic stratification through special subsystems which fulfill a variety of secondary functions: population control, the disposal of trouble cases, the protection of sovereignty through military and/or police forces, and fiscal support. Carneiro (1970:733) defines a state as "an autonomous political unit encompassing many communities within its territory, having a centralized government with the power to collect taxes, draft men for work or war, and decree and enforce laws." For Wright and Johnson (1975) a state is a society with specialized administrative organization and a decision-making hierarchy of three or more levels. Wright and Johnson suggest two lines of archeological evidence for the existence of state organization: a four-level settlement hierarchy and administrative artifacts.

While perfectly acceptable for identifying the state as an ideal type, these, or any other, criteria are not useful for determining *when* a state actually emerges in a specific historical sequence. Wright and Johnson maintain that administrative artifacts, including counting devices, seals for stamping goods, and stampings themselves, typically occur both in the upper and lower levels of a settlement hierarchy, indicating a corresponding administrative hierarchy. Yet it is surely true that as the state matures such artifacts increase in type, number, and distribution. Settlement size and hierarchy-related functional differentiation also increase as the state matures. The attributes included within Carneiro's definition also vary quantitatively with the growth of centralized government: more and larger communities are included within the state's territory; the fiscal support of the state increases; labor and military conscription powers also grow; legal codes and associated personnel evolve, exhibiting progressive segregation and centralization.

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*This paper suggests that, rather than investigating "the origin of the state" within familiar sociopolitical typologies based on general evolution, anthropologists (1) study specific processes of state formation and (2) view sociopolitical transformations as a dynamic, continuous, processual evolution rather than as a succession of types. Data from several populations of Madagascar are used to illustrate material correlates of sociopolitical organization and the synergistic interaction of variables in specific sequences leading to state organization. Questioning the significance of distinguishing between pristine and secondary states, the article asserts that both local and regional factors must be analyzed as determinant inputs in processes of state formation.*

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While anthropologists have devoted much attention to "the origin of the state," they have been less concerned with illustrating processes involved in state formation. Much of the disagreement about the rise of the state may be attributed to definitional problems. Often the origin of the state has been considered within the context of a typology of levels of sociocultural integration or varieties of sociopolitical organization. Thus, for Fried (1960) the state is one of four sociocultural levels, the others being "egalitarian," "ranked," and "stratified" societies. In a modified version of his well-known evolutionary typology of bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states (Service 1971), Service has more recently distinguished "modern primitive states" from "archaic civilizations" (1975:303-305).

A major problem in studying the process of state formation is precisely the typological approach. While differences surely exist between classic bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states, most empirical societies exhibit features which draw them away from ideal types. I argue that a more processual, realistic, and useful comparative and evolutionary view of sociopolitical organization places empirical societies along a continuum rather than in generalized categories. Recognizing this, other anthropologists have constructed such continua in terms of a variety of traits. Carneiro, for example, employs scale analysis and other techniques to demonstrate general evolutionary correlations (Carneiro 1962, 1967; Carneiro and Tobias 1963). Ronald Cohen and Alice Schlegel (1968) use a similar approach in investigating the relationship between tribe and chiefdom.

Flannery (1972) applies a dynamic, cybernetic model to the study of the evolution of states. Rejecting single-cause, prime-mover approaches, he recognizes that several kinds of socioenvironmental stress may influence state organization, which he sees as the interaction between segregation (increasing internal differentiation and specialization of subsystems) and centralization (tighter linkage between the subsystems and the highest control systems in the society). In addition to variable conditions of socioenvironmental stress and the processes of segregation and centralization, Flannery posits for his model two evolutionary mechanisms, promotion (ascent of an institution within the control hierarchy) and linearization (complete or permanent bypassing of lower-ranking controls by higher controls, usually after the former have proved ineffective).

Flannery's approach to state formation is clearly ordinal and dynamic rather than typological, unicausal, and static. Complexity may be measured in terms of increasing segregation and centralization. Quantitative aspects of these processes are the generation of more institutions that store, analyze, and process information and the evolution of institutions that perform more regulatory functions than in less complex societies. For Flannery the distinction between states and chiefdoms is quantitative: in states the managerial superstructure is more elaborate, multi-level, and more centralized. Presumably archeological, historical, ethnohistorical, and ethnographic data can be gathered to assess these trends.

Whatever criteria are employed for such a classification, clusters along the continuum will roughly correspond to types labeled "band," "tribe," "chiefdom," and "state" or "egalitarian," "ranked," "stratified," and "state." Many societies, however, will be intermediate. Furthermore, could the scheme be given a diachronic, rather than merely a comparative synchronic dimension, through time societies would shift their positions on the continuum.

What anthropologists often ignore in studying sociopolitical organization and the origin of the state is that specific historical sequence is commonly not an unopposed, unidirectional, "onward and upward" phenomenon. Apparent strides in the direction of centralization and organizational complexity in one generation may be offset or reversed later. Early in the process, an emerging state confronts the inertia of prior structures and

may fail. Often, however, such failures are only temporary; given appropriate material conditions, conflicts may finally be resolved, and the state may emerge stronger than ever.

This paper on Madagascar societies is both comparative and diachronic. I have argued elsewhere (Kottak 1971, 1972) that Madagascar is an ideal laboratory for studying problems of traditional interest to anthropologists. The human populations, societies, or ethnic units of contemporary Madagascar exemplify a sociocultural adaptive radiation, analogous to adaptive radiation in biological evolution. The manner and precise time of settlement of Madagascar and the early movements of its human colonizers remain matters for speculation based on linguistic and other indirect lines of evidence. Present evidence, however, leads me to accept Deschamps' (1965) hypothesis that Madagascar's first human settlers (the Proto-Malagasy) were members of a genetically, phenotypically, and culturally composite population formed on the East African coast through intermarriage between African coastal populations and Indonesian traders.<sup>1</sup>

From meager evidence (Vérin, Kottak, and Gorlin 1970), I have inferred that the initial settlement of Madagascar by the Proto-Malagasy was small, may have proceeded from the Comoro islands, and probably involved the northern coastal region. Pioneers gradually spread down the east and west coasts, giving rise to two major linguistic subgroups: the eastern-central (Merina, Betsileo, Tanala, Sihanaka, Betsimisaraka, and southeast coast populations including Taimoro), and the western-southern (Sakalava, Bara, Mahafaly, Tandroy).<sup>2</sup> An economic dichotomy roughly follows this linguistic division. Populations of the eastern-central subgroup emphasize plant, specifically rice, cultivation, while raising zebu cattle is considerably more prominent among westerners and southerners. The first settlers of the central highlands, an agricultural region where the Merina and Betsileo reside today, most likely belonged to the western-southern subgroup. Members of the eastern-central subgroup, originally confined to the east coast, began to penetrate the interior, perhaps as recently as the past 500 years, and gradually displaced or absorbed the more pastorally oriented highlanders. The original highlanders are recalled in Merina and Betsileo oral tradition as Vazimba, to whom I shall return below.

The initial settlement of Madagascar probably took place 1,500 to 2,000 years ago. Over centuries the descendants of the Proto-Malagasy have proliferated and have occupied a variety of ecological niches on the island, including the rainy lowlands of the east coast, the tropical forest of the eastern escarpment, the valleys and plains of the central highlands, and more arid environments in the south and west. During this population explosion and adaptive radiation, the numerous Malagasy environments have influenced both the retention of the sociocultural legacy of the Proto-Malagasy and the subsequent invention, borrowing, or diffusion of sociocultural contributions. Elsewhere (Kottak 1971, 1972) I have discussed variations in kinship and descent and, in greater detail than here, differences in political organization associated with major contrasts in local and regional ecosystems. (See also Bloch [n.d.] .)

A model of adaptive radiation is one way of explaining the diversity among Malagasy populations. In Lévi-Strauss's terms, the variant sociocultural manifestations of Malagasy populations can be viewed as an ordered series of transformations on common themes (Lévi-Strauss 1967:22). The changes in Malagasy societies and the orderly nature of the process of transformation are intimately related to material phenomena. What makes Madagascar particularly appropriate as a laboratory for comparing cultures is that sociocultural heritage can be held relatively constant. The problem of whether variation

among sampled populations is to be attributed to differences in cultural heritage or to material variation is therefore reduced, if not altogether avoided.

**a synchronic transformational series: Bara, Taimoro, and Merina**

In terms of attributes traditionally used to assess sociopolitical complexity, Malagasy societies vary widely. The Bara, the Taimoro, and the Merina (Figure 1) fit on a scale which shows increasing centralization and organizational complexity.

Linguistically the Bara are members of the western-southern subgroup. In 1900 their population numbered 140,000; by 1964 it was 228,000, giving a density of between two and five people per square kilometer over their territory, which lies south and west of the Betsileo. Like other Malagasy governments, Bara included the status of *mpanjaka*, which I roughly translate as head of a territorial unit whose population may include non-

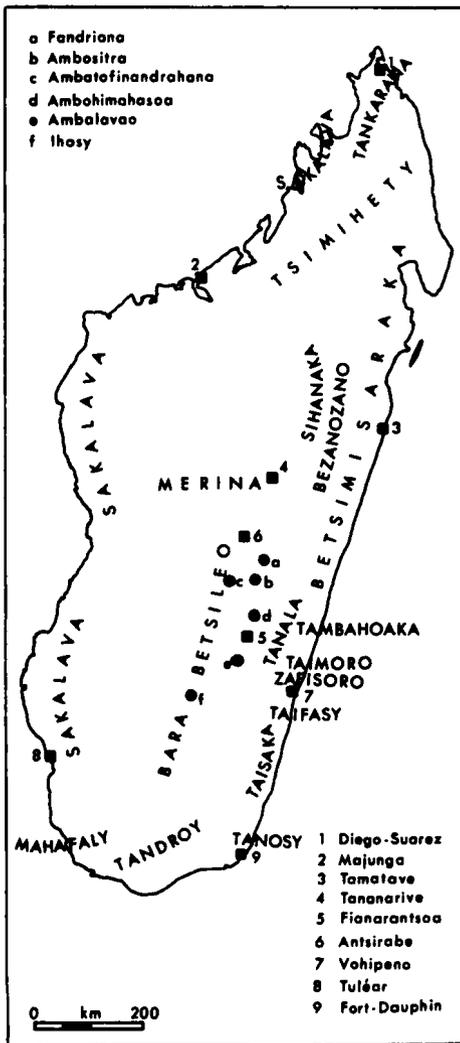


Figure 1. Location of Malagasy ethnic units.

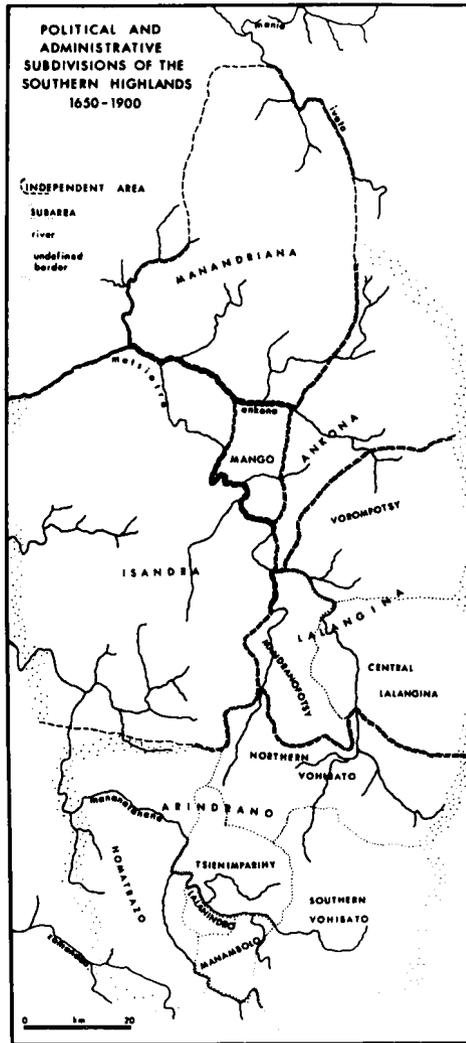


Figure 2. Political divisions of the southern high lands ca. 1650-1900.

kinspeople as well as kinfolk. In the late seventeenth century parties of Sakalava raiders from the west coast sought cattle and war prisoners to trade as slaves to Europeans. After 1700 the Bara were incorporated into a regional exchange network which by 1800 linked all interior Malagasy with both coasts. In return for cattle and slaves the Bara gained access to imported rifles, bullets, and gunpowder.

Because of this regional ecosystemic change, the status of *mpanjaka* in Bara society was modified. Whereas formerly the title had been bestowed on descent group heads, it now designated charismatic "big men" who led raiding parties, distributed booty, and protected their clients and retainers. A traveler in Bara land in the late nineteenth century (Nielsen-Lund 1888) counted more than forty such *mpanjaka* in a population which numbered no more than 150,000.

The status of *mpanjaka* in Bara society is more aptly translated as 'brigand chief' than 'king.' When ethnographer Jacques Faublée interviewed them in the mid-twentieth century, Bara informants recalled that in precolonial days a descent group called Zafimanely had been more noble than the others. According to Faublée (1954), the Zafimanely based their claim to nobility on a traditional association between their descent group and certain life spirits of the land. This claim, backed by the *mpanjaka*'s charisma and power in a general climate of danger, allowed individual *mpanjaka* to claim eminent domain over the land they controlled. However, the position of *mpanjaka* in Bara society was far from absolute. Oral traditions recall that ousters of unpopular *mpanjaka* were common, as were desertions by clients and supporters to other brigand chiefs. In contrast to Merina, Betsileo, and other areas of Madagascar where central administration was more developed, the Bara offered sacrificial meat and first fruits to the elders of their own descent groups rather than to the *mpanjaka*.

Somewhat farther along the sociopolitical continuum, nearer the chiefdom cluster, were the Taimoro of the southeast coast. *Mpanjaka* in Taimoro society can perhaps be translated as 'chief.' Before Merina conquered Taimoro in 1824, the Anteoni and the Antalaotra lineages supplied the single Taimoro *mpanjaka*, who served as administrative figure in the tiny coastal polity with a population of 44,000 in 1900 and 211,000 in 1964. A member of the eastern-central linguistic subgroup, Taimoro enjoyed a more diversified economy than Bara. The Taimoro, like other populations of the southeast coast, cultivated rice and a variety of other crops. Abundant annual rainfall rendered irrigation unnecessary, though their hydraulic program of drainage and terracing supported dense populations in alluvial river valleys. One of the two noble lineages, the Antalaotra, specialized in regional trade, peddling services rather than products. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, the Antalaotra travelled widely throughout Madagascar, offering ritual skills as astrologers, diviners, curers, and consultants at a variety of courts.

The Taimoro status of *mpanjaka* seems to have been limited to ritual and judicial functions. In contrast to the Bara, the Taimoro royal descent group made no claim of even theoretical eminent domain; attempts by *mpanjaka* or nobles to infringe on ancestral lands of commoners have not, to my knowledge, been reported. To the Anteoni was reserved the privilege of slaughtering cattle, for a fee, at any ceremony. The *mpanjaka* and other Taimoro nobles convoked and sponsored public events, including judicial proclamations, ceremonials, and public works projects. A high degree of leveling was associated with *mpanjaka* and nobility in Taimoro society. Peddling their ritual skills outside of Taimoro country, the Antalaotra were paid in cattle. On their return, they were expected to sponsor a homecoming thanksgiving ceremonial in which most of these cattle were slaughtered and distributed among the people. Similarly, *mpanjaka* and other

nobles had to supply rice, rum, fowls, and sacrificial meat for any public convocation. According to a Taimoro folk saying, "In other parts of Madagascar, the king eats the people, while among the Taimoro it is the people who eat the king."

Confirming that leveling was associated with the Taimoro nobility were a series of commoner rebellions that followed their conquest by the Merina. As throughout their empire, the Merina granted the Taimoro *mpanjaka* the right to retain half of the taxes and tribute collected on behalf of the Merina state. The Taimoro, however, were clearly unaccustomed to a *mpanjaka* who lived like a king, and beginning in 1850 they responded with a series of rebellions which their Merina overlords finally quelled in 1892. Thereafter, the Anteoni and Antalaotra lost their traditional noble status, and the privilege of being a noble or "great lord" was extended to commoners, as an elective office held for five to ten years. To this day it operates as a leveling mechanism (Deschamps and Vianès 1959).

Indisputedly qualifying as a state were the Merina, who during the early nineteenth century extended their empire over more than two-thirds of the land and a larger share of the population of Madagascar. While the process of Merina state formation is imperfectly understood,<sup>3</sup> written and oral history confirm that the Merina *mpanjaka*, King Andrianampoinimerina, headed a program of administrative, economic, and military reorganization which solidified in Imerina all the attributes of state organization as an ideal type and culminated in the formation and extension of the Merina empire. The accomplishments of Andrianampoinimerina and his son Radama are discussed in great detail in Condominas (1960), and I have detailed some of the administrative and economic changes elsewhere (Kottak 1972).

The nineteenth-century Merina state administered a hydraulic economy whose massive irrigation and drainage works were maintained by *corvée* and slave labor, and it developed a commercial network with regular markets, a specialized trading group, manufacturing, and interregional trade. The Merina, with a population of 847,000 in 1900 and almost two million today, remain Madagascar's most populous and most densely populated ethnic unit. A complex and differentiated hierarchy managed the affairs of the large and ecologically diversified Merina empire. Eminent domain was enforced; the royal domain grew systematically at the expense of both commoners and distant nobles. Within an intricate system of socioeconomic stratification, maintained by endogamy (Bloch n.d., 1971, 1975) and legal sanctions, domestic slaves formed a significant proportion of the population of Imerina.

### **diachronic transformation: the process of state formation among the Betsileo**

A study of precolonial Bara, Taimoro, and Merina illustrates three variants of Malagasy sociopolitical organization, each reflecting different associations between material factors and sociopolitical forms, and it illuminates sociocultural mechanisms for maintaining these forms. However, the comparison is synchronic and static and tells little about the specific processes whereby one form develops into another. Taimoro and Merina illustrate one aspect of the transition from chiefdom to state, as the *mpanjaka's* role in ceremonial generosity is gradually converted (in Flannery's words "perverted") into one of expropriation. An institution which promoted economic leveling becomes a means to maintain and increase differential access to strategic resources. Sociopolitical organizations based on kinship and descent are gradually and systematically transformed into hierarchical territorial administrations.

Events in the southern-central highlands of Madagascar between 1650 and 1815, when the Betsileo were brought under Merina rule, illustrate these and other processes of state formation.<sup>4</sup> After the Merina and the Betsimisaraka of the east coast, the Betsileo constitute Madagascar's third most populous ethnic unit today.<sup>5</sup> Betsileo ethnic identity is probably a by-product of Merina conquest, which brought together members of several autonomous and competing chiefdoms and statelets. Figure 2 shows the Betsileo heartland between 1650 and 1900. Bounded roughly on the north by the Ankona River and its confluence with the Matsiatra, and on the east by the escarpment and tropical forest homeland of the Tanala, the Betsileo heartland was less clearly circumscribed in the west and south. The largest of the autonomous southern highland polities were Lalangina in the east and Isandra in the west. Northeast of Lalangina, in the valley of the Ankona River, lay the independent polity of Ankona. Just west of it, between Lalangina and Isandra, was an autonomous area called Mango. South of Isandra and Lalangina lay the six formerly independent polities which the Merina overlords eventually designated, collectively, as Arindrano. In eastern Arindrano, the northern and southern areas of Vohibato split during the eighteenth century and were mutually independent until Merina conquest. Always autonomous were Tsienimparihy, Manambolo, Lalanindro, and Homatrazo.

One may observe a distinction, which is gradual and ecoclimatic rather than absolute, between polities of the agricultural east, consisting of Lalangina, northern Vohibato, Ankona, and perhaps Mango, and those of the arid and more pastoral west and south, including Isandra, southern Vohibato, Tsienimparihy, Manambolo, Lalanindro, and Homatrazo. Lalangina and Isandra will be used to illustrate the sociopolitical implications of this contrast.

The earliest history of the southern highlands, written by Etienne de Flacourt (1661), governor of the early French post at Fort Dauphin on the southeast coast, repeats observations by a trading party of Frenchmen and coastal Malagasy who apparently reached the southern highlands in 1648. Flacourt's account names Vohitromby (a populous rice-cultivating region) and Arindrano (an area of fewer people and more cattle) as two interior populations. Scholars have argued about whether Vohitromby is Lalangina or Imerina, and whether Arindrano, therefore, refers to the southern and western Betsileo or to the entire Betsileo heartland.<sup>6</sup> The party left Fort Dauphin for the interior seeking zebu cattle for eventual export. Flacourt reports that the French members of the trading party, who bore firearms, helped Arindrano in a skirmish with Vohitromby. Although the slave-firearms trade, which appears to have modified profoundly the scale of Malagasy warfare, did not come to the west coast until about 1660, Flacourt asserts that his traders observed merely the latest skirmish expressing what he calls a "sworn enmity" between Arindrano and Vohitromby.<sup>7</sup>

Written documentation of events in the southern highlands during the two centuries after Flacourt's work (precisely the period of state formation) is completely absent. Only archeological research can substantiate the following reconstruction based largely on oral historical materials. Because the ethnic unity of the Betsileo was a product of Merina expansion, no consistent oral history of the southern highlands exists. Different polities, and even individual areas and descent groups, give varying narratives of events and the relationships among pre-Merina states and chiefdoms. (Dubois [1938] collected two contradictory accounts for the origins of Lalangina nobility from the same informant!) These contradictory statements are worth examining for their sociological, as well as historical, value.

Accounts of the early, pre-state highlands are as much origin myths as quasi-historical

documents. Contemporary Betsileo elders generally agree that when their ancestors first settled in the highlands, usually as migrants from the southeast coast, they encountered a population called Vazimba.<sup>8</sup> Often the Vazimba are described as savages who kept zebu cattle and other livestock, cultivated taro and other roots and tubers, and collected a variety of wild plants. Some Betsileo argue that other populations—pygmies, dwarfs, and similarly unusual creatures—antedated the Vazimba in their homeland. Betsileo oral historians consider the Vazimba more bellicose than the Merina.<sup>9</sup> After a period of war, the proto-Betsileo are said to have driven the Vazimba to the south and west, where they presumably merged with the ancestors of the Bara, Sakalava, and others who, like them, were members of the western-southern linguistic subgroup.

In contrast to most students of Madagascar, who have usually identified the Vazimba as ethnically distinct from the easterners who replaced them, Malzac (1930) argued that the Merina recollection of the Vazimba may reflect an acephalous past and that the transition from Vazimba to Merina involved a change in mode of adaptation and in level of sociopolitical integration rather than an ethnic change. Similarly for the Betsileo, it may be that the conquest of the Vazimba is a mythical resolution of the contradiction contained in the rather abrupt transition to a more settled and centralized way of life.

Oral history of the period following the conquest of the Vazimba is murky. In what was to become Lalangina, the ancestors of many contemporary descent groups formed a population known as Iarivo. The era of the Iarivo began as a time of peace, a golden age of abundance of land for grazing and cultivation. This golden age came to an end as other easterners arrived, raiders at first seeking cattle, subsequently slaves. Oral traditions aside, we know that such a change in the relationship between highlands and coasts must have taken place during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as coastal Malagasy began to receive European firearms in exchange for slaves, cattle, and rice.

A quasi-historical and evolutionary oral tradition of the agricultural east (Dubois 1938:114) posits a plausible origin for nobilities and ultimately an initial impetus in the direction of state formation. With attacks by easterners seeking cattle and slaves, according to legend, southern highlanders were forced to reside in fortified hilltop settlements. Heads of the most populous and influential descent groups in such settlements provided defense chiefs and their major advisors. Eventually, some such settlements prevailed over others, and organizations created for defense assumed offensive functions.

To test this explication of the origin of nobilities in the southern highlands, I distributed about 5,000 printed questionnaires through the administrative hierarchy of the Malagasy republic in 1967.<sup>10</sup> Initially presented to the seven subprefects with substantial Betsileo populations, the questionnaires found their way to canton chiefs and subsequently to village elders. About 1,500 questionnaires, accidentally sampling about half the population of the Betsileo territory, were returned. About 1,300 of these contained useful information concerning names of descent groups, their region of origin according to genealogical histories, and their preceding residence. About 1,000 different descent group names were mentioned in responses representing about 1,300 Betsileo villages. An estimate of total population of each named descent group was obtained, and the geographical range of each group was extrapolated from the number of villages in which it appeared. About half of the 998 descent groups named existed in only one village; another 154 spanned only two villages, while 244 bridged three to nine villages. Only eighty-three descent groups, less than 10 percent of the total, appeared in ten or more villages. Sixteen groups spanned fifty or more of the villages in the sample, with the largest and most geographically dispersed located in 183 villages.

I assumed that contemporary ranges of named descent groups reflected differential population growth and dispersal, and my questionnaire data support the above oral tradition about the origin of Betsileo nobilities. The groups with the largest population and range are precisely those which supplied the nobles and influential (senior) commoners of pre-Merina polities in the southern highlands. Since, however, I suspected that people, for prestige, might claim spurious affiliation with elite descent groups, I examined in greater detail a subsample of the responses in the Vohibato region, where most of my fieldwork was concentrated. By questioning genealogists representing noble and senior commoner descent groups, I found that those more junior groups that claimed affiliation were indeed recognized as related.

I thus believe that the evolutionary oral tradition for the origin of southern highlands nobilities cited above is largely correct. Those descent groups, which had been important by virtue of their numbers and range at a time of tribal sociopolitical organization, were rearranged in a more formal hierarchy to confront a threat from outside the heartland; they ultimately provided the leadership of Betsileo polities during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Adaptation to changed circumstances proceeds on the basis of, and often involves restructuring of, material at hand when the change begins. In this case, basic structural units of a population organized by kinship and descent were rearranged hierarchically in response to a perturbation from outside the system.<sup>11</sup>

This explanation of the genesis of Betsileo nobilities opposes both other Betsileo myths and a prevalent bias in speculations by scholars investigating the aristocracies of Betsileo and other Malagasy. A diffusionist or creationist approach to the origin of the state is exemplified by Raymond Kent's (1970) attempt to demonstrate a connection between the emergence of the Sakalava state of the Malagasy west coast and the nobles' flight from a disintegrating Zimbabwe. Deschamps (1965) attributes to Arabs, or at least to Islamized East African coastal populations, the introduction, through the southeast coast of Madagascar, of ideas of complex political organization which culminated in a variety of Malagasy states.

Some Betsileo espouse similar creationist traditions. In the extreme south of the Betsileo heartland, in the statelet of Tsienimparihy, it is claimed that the first Betsileo noble was a princess, Ravelonandro, who migrated to the southern highlands from the southeast coast during the sixteenth or seventeenth century and whose seven children founded the dynasties of most Betsileo polities and of the Bara (the Zafimanelo descent group). The oral history of Isandra's noble descent group, the Zafimaharivo, makes it an offshoot of the larivo of the early agricultural east. The founder of the Zafimaharivo, Ralambo ("The Wild Boar"), crossed the Isandra River from Ankona at the turn of the eighteenth century.

Ironically, a legend of Lalangina (Dubois 1938:1971-1972), the major state of the agricultural east, derives its first noble not from the southeast coast or the southern highlands but from early Imerina. His departure or, in some versions, expulsion took place during a post-Vazimba period called the epoch of *maroandriana* ('many nobles'). During this time of feuding, numerous territorial descent groups claimed the status of *andriana*, 'noble,' and no one descent group dominated. After a stopover by the Mania River, which today roughly corresponds to the boundary between Merina and Betsileo, Lalangina's first "noble" moved south into the Betsileo heartland, where he met and married a mermaid, Rantara. She has given her name to the noble descent group of Vohibato, the Zanakatara, literally 'children of' or 'descendants of' Rantara. In this tradition the noble descent groups of the agricultural east share a common origin, as the

Zafifianarana of Lalangina are descendants of the mermaid's son and the Zanakatara of Vohibato are heirs of her daughter.

Understandable confusion clouds the genealogical relationship between the mermaid and the first *mpanjaka* of Lalangina, some versions making him her son, others her grandson. Similar ambiguity applies to the ties between the first two *mpanjaka* of Lalangina, whom Dubois (1938:170) dates to the second half of the seventeenth century. In one version the first is the father of his successor, in the other his half-brother. The first *mpanjaka*, about whom little else of significance is remembered, is supposed to have established a capital at Mitongoa, which remained capital until Lalangina's fragmentation early in the nineteenth century. Beginning with his successor, Andriampianarana, whose administration Dubois places between 1680 and 1700, oral history is more detailed, plausible, and uniformly recounted (at least in Dubois' monumental collection of ethnohistory) throughout Lalangina.

Detailed consideration of the oral history of Lalangina (based largely on my analysis of traditions in Dubois 1938:174-200) beginning with its second *mpanjaka* illustrates problems in distinguishing between chiefdom and state in a specific sequence because of the gradual nature of, and structural impediments to, the process of state formation. Oral traditions do not specify the nature of Lalangina's economy under its second *mpanjaka*, although stockbreeding and the cultivation of rice, relying mainly on rainfall in small valleys, were probably important.<sup>12</sup> The population was probably organizing for defense in response to a growing coastal threat but was not yet involved in the slave-firearms trade.

Lalangina's second *mpanjaka* formulated the first code of crimes and sanctions in the southern highlands (Dubois 1938:174-175). The articles of the code, however, suggest a weak *mpanjaka* relative to heads of the major commoner descent groups. While some concern with safeguarding property is indicated, the code expressed by and large principles intrinsic to a sociopolitical organization founded on kinship and descent. Many of the stipulations were general. The living were cautioned not to speak ill of the dead, especially their own ancestors; a sacrifice of cattle was specified as the penalty. Filial disrespect brought public humiliation. For stealing moveable property a thief must return to the owner four times its value. An indemnity in kind was expected for damages to crops. A man whose wife was discovered in adultery was entitled to kill the adulterer and claim his personal possessions. Suspected sorcerers were tried by ordeal, but no punishment is recalled. For none of these offenses is it specified how the penalties were to be established and enforced. Only three of the articles related to socioeconomic stratification and the rights of the *mpanjaka vis-à-vis* other Betsileo. Although nobles were enjoined to marry other nobles, subsequent Lalanginan reigns demonstrate that women of inferior strata became wives and mothers of prominent *mpanjaka*. Those offending members of the *mpanjaka's* descent group were to be stoned, but the wealthy were known to escape this penalty with strategic bribes. Nowhere is the ritual nature of the *mpanjaka's* authority more clearly seen than in the final article, which required anyone entering the palace to be touched by the *mpanjaka's* baton.

While tribute was offered to the *mpanjaka* in first fruits and livestock, no records indicate the volume of these prestations or the extent of the probable redistribution. Also associated in public memory with this second reign are a corps of *mpanjaka's* spearmen, hunting and fishing parties, public reunions, song fests, and gift-giving ceremonials convoked by the *mpanjaka*. At the end of the seventeenth century the Lalanginan *mpanjaka* seems to have been a ritual figure whose duties centered on redistribution and whose authority, rights, and obligations recall the previously discussed Taimoro *mpanjaka*

at the time of Merina conquest in the early nineteenth century. To this era of Lalanginan history, one might attribute at most a chiefdom level of sociopolitical organization.

The third and fourth *mpanjaka* (1700-1715 [Dubois 1938:170]) were a woman and her son. Their reigns saw the formation and growth in authority of a group of advisers known as *mahamasinandriana*, literally 'those who make the noble (*andriana*) sacred' (Bloch n.d.). The *mahamasinandriana* can be interpreted as a formalization of the privileged position of heads of major commoner descent groups in a polity undergoing segregation, differentiation, and centralization. Senior commoner descent groups provided advisers and judges at the *mpanjaka*'s court. Like the previous elevation of Betsileo nobilities from the fund of unranked descent groups, the establishment of senior commoners as agents of state organization may represent Flannery's (1972) *promotion*, the ascent of an institution from its previous place in the control hierarchy. Several roles now began to converge on senior commoner status. The *mahamasinandriana* served as administrative officers of territorial subdivisions, advisers to the *mpanjaka*, judicial officials, and generalized information processors, while retaining functions associated with their ancestral territories, which incorporated junior descent branches, new immigrants and a variety of commercial clients seeking protection in a more and more dangerous environment.

Rewards distributed by the *mpanjaka* continued to be confirmed by his senior commoner advisers. The elevation of new groups to senior commoner status in return for loyal service to the *mpanjaka* was permitted. While the fourth king is recalled as an adulterer and debaucher who was ultimately killed in a skirmish with Isandra, he reorganized the government into four districts, one of them administering, very tenuously and ephemerally, part of the eastern forest homeland of the Tanala. By the fourth reign, the administration was beginning to intervene in hitherto private delicts. For example, no longer was a husband entitled to kill and seize the possessions of his adulterous wife's partner; adultery was punishable by a fine paid to the *fanjakana* ('government,' same root as *mpanjaka*).

Oral traditions of this period make only passing reference to the economy. To determine the amount of corvee labor due the *fanjakana*, rice fields were divided into units of standard productivity. This suggests that rice cultivation had been important previously, along with cultivation of taro and other crops and stockbreeding. Some information processing and supervision of measurements, at least territorial allotments, is clearly present during this reign, as are other types of hierarchically organized regulation, management, and law enforcement.

During the reign of Lalangina's fifth *mpanjaka* (Dubois 1938:182-184), Raonimalina I, between 1715 and 1740, the process of sociopolitical transformation, which had been initiated by the need for defense and possible changes in rice cultivation, was hastened by Lalangina's definite incorporation into an interregional trade network. In contrast to preceding reigns, Raonimalina's involved progressive growth in the power of the *mpanjaka* at the expense of senior commoners. The first rifles were imported to the Betsileo heartland. Oral traditions tell that the firearms-slave exchange began when a Lalanginan trading party went to Sakalava to negotiate an exchange of cattle for firearms. The trading party returned, however, with the information that the Sakalava required slaves rather than cattle for firearms. Foreigners, either Europeans or Arabs, returned with the trading party, residing for a time in Lalangina and serving as intermediaries in the trade with the Sakalava. Oral tradition recalls a subsequent exchange of 3,000 slaves for 3,000 rifles but does not indicate the origin of the slaves involved in such a major transaction.

The demand for slaves led to increased government intervention in Lalanginan life. The military formed a standing army, added riflemen to the spear corps, and offered land grants to the best soldiers. The growing authority of the *mpanjaka* was maintained by such devices as a group known as *fiaino*, 'the eyes of the king,' roving agents who traveled throughout Lalangina overseeing senior commoner officers. Here one sees a notable increase in information gathering, storage, and processing by the *mpanjaka*. Modification in codes of crimes and punishments included reduction to slave status for a variety of hitherto private crimes and the definition of new crimes and penalties which met emerging governmental needs. Humans to serve as items in exchanges with the Sakalava included prisoners of war as well as indigents and debtors reduced to slave status.

A far-reaching modification in ceremonial suggests that Raonimanalina's reign marks a transition between chieftdom and state. Formerly the right to slaughter cattle consecrated to the ancestors had been restricted to nobles and senior commoners; during this reign the privilege of cattle sacrifice was extended down the hierarchy. As long as the sponsorship of ceremonies had devolved on the wealthiest Betsileo, as among the contemporary Taimoro, ceremonials functioned as leveling mechanisms. As the privilege of such sponsorship was extended, it could be regulated and manipulated to increase, rather than to minimize, differential access to strategic resources, as it continues to do among contemporary Betsileo (Kottak n.d.).

State formation, however, is not an inevitable "onward and upward" process, but it is subject to occasional or more definitive setbacks. The process of sociopolitical transformation in Isandra, to the west of Lalangina, illustrates some of the more permanent impediments, while the reign of Lalangina's sixth king illustrates temporary setbacks to progressive centralization in the form of royal authority. Oral tradition reports that an unpopular sixth *mpanjaka* was banished by the *mahamasinandriana* and eventually strangled specifically because he openly threatened the perquisites of senior commoner status. This Lalangina king proposed that *mahamasinandriana* successors would no longer be appointed by the senior commoners themselves but by the *mpanjaka* from the descent group of the previous official. This *mpanjaka*'s privilege, which was allowed to stand in subsequent reigns, would have allowed royal manipulation of the relative positions of descent group branches already ranked on the basis of seniority of descent.

Between 1745 and 1794 the seventh *mpanjaka* of Lalangina, Andrianonindranarivo, ruled a territory and a sociopolitical organization to which few would deny the status of state. Oral tradition (Dubois 1938:188-195) associates with the reign of the seventh king a major administrative restructuring, state intervention in the agricultural economy, and progressive growth in military apparatus. Descent groups provided intervillage links. The capital, Mitongoa, presided over three districts, each with four major towns; the districts and towns were headed by senior commoner governors; and the governors' assistants, similar to contemporary village chiefs, were the state's representatives in villages. Oral tradition suggests, therefore, a settlement hierarchy of at most five, at least three, and most probably, four levels: capital, district town, possibly subdistrict town, village, and possibly hamlet.

During this reign the population increased throughout Lalangina, especially in new fortified hilltop towns. The government extended the area cultivated in rice through a state-administered drainage program and intensification of production in existing rice fields. For the first time, the Lalanginan state, which previously had intervened only to demarcate peasant holdings as a basis for recruitment of corvee labor, was initiating a hydraulic program.<sup>13</sup> Oral tradition mentions the introduction and rapid dissemination

of the *angady*, a long-bladed spade which is today the major agricultural implement of the Betsileo. Formerly rice fields were prepared for transplanting only by the "trampling" system whereby cattle are stimulated into a frenzy and driven around flooded rice fields to render the soil permeable. Andrianonindranarivo exhorted his subjects to labor in their rice fields themselves and fostered the use of cattle dung as fertilizer. Royal slaves dug drainage canals on the eighteenth-century equivalent of experimental farms; having seen the value of the new technique, communities began to dig their own drainage ditches.

A likely precondition for such an agricultural program is a political organization with an effective defensive military subsystem. Informants recall expansion of the army and establishment of posts on the southern and western boundaries of Lalangina to fend off attacks of Bara and other southern highlanders. The eastern frontier was still plagued by Tanala raiders, who attacked and retreated into the forest with their captives. That a military career could still be rewarded with elevation to senior commoner status and land grants by the *mpanjaka* suggests that population pressure was not yet critical. Lalangina's military was not only defending, but also attacking and conquering parts of Vohibato, Isandra, Mango, and Ankona.

Oral tradition also reports the enlargement of the judicial role of administrators. In particular, new inheritance laws increased litigation. The former custom of patrilineal inheritance of land was changed to legally enforced bilateral inheritance. Despite the increased litigation, it is likely that this more flexible inheritance rule enabled descent groups to redistribute, and thus retain, their estates in the absence of patrilineal heirs. The change may be a response to population growth; it certainly indicates the state's concern with its distribution.

It is possible, too, that during this reign a custom which formerly served to limit population became a mechanism for population redistribution and increase. The pastorally oriented Bara, like many contemporary Betsileo, routinely determined the destiny (*vintana*) of newborn children through calculations based on day, time of day, and month of birth. Should the child's destiny be found incompatible with those of its parents, infanticide was a Bara custom. Among the Betsileo, however, diagnosis of incompatible destinies of child and parents leads the diviner to search for a relative with a compatible destiny; usually the relative selected to foster the child has few or no real children.

Increasing differentiation of stratified groups in Lalangina is also associated with this reign. The slave stratum included at least three categories: those to be exchanged for firearms with the Sakalava, slaves of the king, and a group of stigmatized former slaves whose relatives had been allowed to buy back their freedom. Neither market sales of slaves nor widespread slave ownership by senior commoners was characteristic of Lalangina prior to its conquest by the Merina.

Public addresses of Lalangina's seventh king are also part of oral tradition. They demonstrate attempts to make traditional bases of sociopolitical organization compatible with a structure in transformation. The *mpanjaka* could assert both that the state had been confided to him by the ancestors and, claiming divine right, that "the state is ours ('we' exclusive); we have received it from Andriamanitra ('the sweet lord') and not taken it by force."

Lalangina's eighth *mpanjaka* ruled only a year; his ouster through a senior commoner rebellion again illustrates a temporary setback in emerging centralization. He is remembered (Dubois 1938:196-198) as a sorcerer who ignored his advisors and was ultimately forsaken by his corps of riflemen who, with the assistance of the petty state of Ankona, drove him from office.

The final *mpanjaka* of an independent unitary Lalangina, Raindratsara, ruled only a decade, between 1795 and 1805. He encouraged senior commoner officials to supervise the major tasks of rice cultivation, particularly drainage work, tillage, trampling, and harvests (Dubois 1938:198-202). Lalangina's army received training in European battle techniques from a European merchant from Fort Dauphin. Warfare between Lalangina and polities to the south is recalled. Before his death in battle, Raindratsara divided his kingdom into three parts, to be governed by the children of each of his three wives. An attempt by one to reunify the kingdom met only partial success and was ended by an invading Merina army around 1815.

The independent evolution of Lalangina therefore ends early in the nineteenth century. The process of state formation, of increasing segregation, differentiation, and centralization, in Lalangina illustrates not only the gradual nature of the transformation but also the temporary setbacks in such sociopolitical changes.

More definite handicaps characterized a process which can be described as "attempted state copying" in the other major polity of the southern highlands, Isandra, to the west. Descendants of Isandra's nobility conjure up a glorious past and describe their ancestors as the most senior Betsileo nobles. Their claim of seniority, however, reflects the decision by an Isandran *mpanjaka* of the late eighteenth century to seek Merina assistance by declaring himself a vassal of the Merina King Andriampoinimerina. In recognition of this early submission, the Merina King Radama, on occupying the southern highlands, made Isandra the senior of the three Betsileo provinces. Members of its traditional nobility, who retained the title of *mpanjaka* while serving as agents of the Merina state, received prerogatives their ancestors had never enjoyed as rulers of an independent Isandra. The Merina also gave their Isandran agents the means to rule: military fortresses and a more productive economy supporting an increasingly sedentary population which began to irrigate to extend rice fields. During the nineteenth century, one-half the tribute and taxes collected from the Isandran population for the Merina state remained with the Isandran *mpanjaka*.

By 1700, Isandra and Lalangina had been *equally exposed* not only to the same regional ecosystemic changes, but also to "the idea of the state," which diffusion, trade, warfare, and other contacts had made available to all Malagasy populations by at least the mid-seventeenth century. Mere exposure to these elements, however, does not guarantee that the process of state formation will take place. Local ecosystemic variables play a key role in the actual process of state formation. The Lalangina state developed in the agricultural east, an area of greater rainfall where early productive rice cultivation could proceed without irrigation. Isandra, on the other hand, was more pastorally oriented, and hydraulic rice cultivation has become important only during the past 150 years. Before Merina occupation, Isandra's economy depended on the raising of zebu cattle, goats and sheep and the cultivation of manioc, maize, millet, taro, and other crops. A sparser seventeenth and eighteenth century population in Isandra is reflected in contemporary population densities. While a single capital served Lalangina throughout its history, the capital of the mobile Isandrans shifted frequently, as many as four times under a given *mpanjaka*.

Ralambo, the apical ancestor of Isandra's noble descent group, is recalled as having migrated with a band of supporters from the agricultural east around 1700. They entered a sparsely populated area and Ralambo assigned grazing territories and administrative rights over them to at least five of his companions. Ralambo's reign as the first *mpanjaka* of Isandra has been placed by Dubois (1938:229) between 1710 and 1730. Its history is one of perpetual conflict with the east, leading to Ralambo's death in battle. The second

*mpanjaka* of Isandra, however, had fewer problems with the easterners, having married an eastern noble woman. The figure remembered as the most illustrious *mpanjaka* of an independent Isandra is its third *mpanjaka*, Andriamanalimbetany, who ruled jointly with his brother about 1750-1790 (Dubois 1938:229). Legends suggest that Andriamanalimbetany was little more than a highly successful brigand chief similar to *mpanjaka* described among the Bara in the late nineteenth century. While he conquered Tsienimparihy to the south and areas to the north and west, what does conquest mean in an area of sparse population and mobile culture when no permanent occupying force holds the conquered? While Isandra's territory is generally considered larger than Lalangina's, Isandra did not fortify or guard its southern or western frontiers and so continually faced not only desertion by its subjects but also attacks by Bara and Sakalava.

The reign of Andriamanalimbetany coincided with the introduction of firearms, some fifty years later than in Lalangina. As in Lalangina, a few foreigners are recalled as having resided in Isandra, acting as intermediaries in the slave-firearms trade. In contrast to Lalangina, however, Isandra's slaves were exclusively prisoners of war. No legal code functioned to supply slaves as in Lalangina. The Isandran *mpanjaka* administered the distribution of slaves, cattle, and other booty and headed a commercial network which also provided cloth woven from Isandran silk, cotton, and banana fiber. Rice, basic to the diet of Lalangina during the eighteenth century, was cultivated in the river valleys of eastern Isandra principally as an export crop. (Staples of the Isandran diet were reportedly manioc, sweet potatoes, and taro; in fact, the consumption of rice and beef at the same meal was specifically tabooed.)

A group known as the *lahavala*, consisting of heads of the major commoner descent groups, arose as the structural equivalent of Lalangina's *mahamasinandriana* and, like the latter early in the eighteenth century, checked the prerogatives and power of the *mpanjaka*. For example, the senior commoners forced the foreigners to leave Isandra on learning that the *mpanjaka* wished them to instruct Isandrans in the use of firearms. Perhaps they recognized in the *mpanjaka*'s control over riflemen a threat to their own position (Dubois 1938:123-131).

Isandra's most illustrious *mpanjaka*, therefore, presided over a poorly demarcated and defended territory, a sparse mobile population, and a regional exchange network involving local manufactures, prisoners of war, cattle, and rice. Though well exposed both to European economic penetration and to the idea of the state, Isandra maintained for some years the illusion of state organization while teetering on the edge of anarchy.

Comparison of Bara, Isandra, Taimoro, Lalangina, and Merina demonstrates the gradual process of sociopolitical transformation, some of the local ecosystemic requirements of state organization, and some of the factors involved in progressive segregation, differentiation, and centralization. Of the various influences that anthropologists and historians have suggested as prime movers in the origin of the state in other areas, can we identify any as important in the development of the state in Lalangina? The need for defense and its fulfillment through reorganization of existing sociopolitical units has been suggested as an initial impetus in this process in Lalangina.<sup>14</sup> Other variables considered important in state formation also appear in the sequence leading to the Lalanginan state, but none can be identified as a unitary cause or prime mover in the process. Regulation by state officials of a hydraulic network, which Wittfogel viewed as a major variable in the origin of the state, does not characterize Lalangina until the reign of its seventh king. This hydraulic intervention accompanies both increasing population, and therefore labor force, and the development of a military apparatus capable of defending hydraulic works against outsiders.

There is no evidence that regulation of ecological diversity, which Sanders and Price (1968) and others have associated with the genesis of the state, was an important function of the administrative organization in Lalangina, although such regulation may have played a role in sociopolitical transformation in Imerina and in the Tanosy area of southeastern Madagascar. On the other hand, inter-regional trade—participation in the widespread slave-firearms exchange network—provided a major stimulus to centralization under Lalangina's fifth *mpanjaka*, some fifty years before state intervention in hydraulic agriculture. As Isandra teaches us, however, such regional contacts were a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for the evolution of the state.

One of the most intriguing and, I think, most generally valid theories for the origin of the state has been proposed by Robert Carneiro (1970), who suggests that state organization eventually emerges in the context of population increase in a circumscribed environment. Environments may be circumscribed either by physical limitations or by social boundaries, such as neighboring groups. One manifestation of physical circumscription is resource concentration, which Carneiro uses to explain a concentration of chiefdoms in the fertile *varzée* area on the fringes and islands of the Amazon River.

Environmental circumscription of an increasing population may have played a role in Lalangina's development. Sometime during the seventeenth century, southern highlanders were affected by events on the Malagasy coasts and, if oral traditions and descent group genealogies are to be believed, had to absorb an influx of immigrants. In an atmosphere of increasing internecine warfare, migratory possibilities were indeed limited; however, archaeological investigation is needed to confirm and approximate population increase in the southern highlands around 1700. It is also possible that external threats may have forced early Lalanginans to concentrate their attention on a smaller variety of resources and that intensive resource utilization in combination with the necessity for a defensive pose may have been an early input in the process of sociopolitical change. Oral history does not focus on population growth other than through immigration until the reign of Lalangina's seventh king, some one hundred years after the process of transformation had begun. Population pressure on strategic resources may have given rise to several changes, including state efforts to increase rice production and revised inheritance customs. Increasing population could have followed a change in a system of population regulation based on divination.

Population growth, an increasingly sedentary way of life, resource concentration, the need for defense, external trade, and hydraulic agriculture were interrelated aspects of the process of sociopolitical transformation in Lalangina between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Because these variables interacted synergistically, it would be misleading to assign prime mover status to any one of them. The role of such variables in state formation may profitably be compared for different world areas. Different initial kicks may trigger analogous positive feedback relationships. Rather than trying to explain the origin of the state, I suggest that anthropologists concentrate on processes of sociopolitical transformation that can be studied diachronically on the basis of ethnohistorical data, documented or confirmed through archaeological and historical records, or assessed synchronically, as in my comparison of different Malagasy populations. Instead of trying to make arbitrary decisions about when a specific sociopolitical organization becomes a state and what single factor brings it about, I believe that a processual approach will contribute more to understanding sociocultural variation in time and space.

The preceding discussion should also affect our evaluation of the distinction between pristine and secondary states. While neither Lalangina nor Isandra was a pristine state, the

process of state formation, given similar conditions of socioenvironmental stress, took place in the former but not in the latter. The sparser and smaller Isandran population carried into the eighteenth century the same tribal heritage and similar structural units, was exposed equally to the idea of the state, felt similar regional threats and was eventually incorporated into the same interregional exchange network as Lalangina, but because of local ecosystemic impediments it never underwent the process of state formation. A revision in relationships of Malagasy with outsiders, which occurred first on the coasts and subsequently brought interior populations into a trade network, served as an important early stimulus to state formation in the southern highlands. If similar perturbations can be isolated in other sequences, then they are likely to be significant variables in sociopolitical transformation.

But analysis of the process of state formation requires much more. It is relatively meaningless merely to present evidence purporting to link through diffusion the growth of the state in one area to the prior growth of a state in another if contact between the two is not specified. In a recent article Betty Meggers (1975) has pointed to certain similarities in notation, settlement orientation, and art motifs to suggest that Shang dynasty China may have been responsible in some way for the appearance of Olmec civilization in Mesoamerica. If indeed Mesoamerica had participated in a transoceanic trade network with Shang dynasty China, this could have been a significant factor in Mesoamerican state formation. However, even if trans-Pacific contact were confirmed and accepted as a stimulus to the growth of the state in Mesoamerica (which most anthropologists find highly dubious), the process of state formation in Mesoamerica would not have been explained. Rather, the situation would be comparable to that of the several Malagasy populations who contended with major external perturbations beginning in the seventeenth century. The prospects for and directions of sociopolitical transformation would depend in large measure on local ecosystemic options.

Nor can conquest, any more than diffusion, explain sociopolitical transformation. Conquerors must enforce their claims and authority. If anthropologists and historians are unable to demonstrate the means whereby conquerors create and maintain state organization, they have provided little information about process.

While the origins of the first civilizations lie in the remote past and may be susceptible only to archaeological investigation, processes of sociopolitical transformation go on today throughout the world. The Betsileo are similar to many other tribal societies who have undergone, as a result of factors beyond their control, rapid transformation from a society based on kinship and descent to one of territorial, hierarchical, centralized administration. The study of such change is possible through ethnographic, historical, archaeological, and ethnohistorical techniques. Only a processual, materialist approach to state formation can combat assumptions that primitive populations suffer from limited inventiveness and intrinsic backwardness.

## notes

<sup>1</sup>Lexicostatistical study (Vérin, Kottak, and Gorlin 1970) suggests that indigenous Malagasy languages, which are uniformly Malayo-Polynesian, are closely related to speech communities which Hudson (1967) has called the Eastern Barito isolects of southeastern Borneo. There is no way of knowing, however, whether the ancestors of the Malagasy lived in southeastern Borneo, since the common ancestors of the proto-Barito and the proto-Malagasy may have moved to their present areas from other areas entirely.

<sup>2</sup>The Tankarana and Tsimihety languages of northern Madagascar seem to have split from one another and from all other Malagasy languages before the split mentioned above. The placement of the Tanosy of the extreme southeast is in doubt.

<sup>3</sup>Wright and Kus (n.d.) report on results of an archaeological survey undertaken in 1975 in the central area of the Merina homeland as part of a research project entitled "The Origin and Evolution of Sociocultural and Sociopolitical Differentiation" (NSF, GS-42337, awarded to the University of Michigan with Conrad P. Kottak and Henry T. Wright as principal investigators). Wright and Kus's interpretation of survey results, while tentative, suggests the existence prior to the sixteenth century of at least ranked sociopolitical organization supported by irrigated rice cultivation. Data from later phases provide a tentative glimpse of the gradual process of sociopolitical transformation in Central Imerina.

<sup>4</sup>Much of the information analyzed below comes from my own ethnographic and ethnohistorical fieldwork among the Betsileo in 1966 and 1967. My reconstruction of the histories of Lalangina and Isandra is, however, based in large part on oral historical accounts gathered by Father Dubois (1938).

<sup>5</sup>The Betsileo population numbered 408,000 in 1900, 736,000 in 1964. Growing at an annual estimated rate of 3.5 percent (Battistini 1967:160), it approaches one million today.

<sup>6</sup>Flacourt attributes to Vohitromby the ability to raise 100,000 men in warfare, to Arindrano only 30,000. One hundred thousand men suggests too large a population to equate Vohitromby of 1648 with Lalangina. The entire southern highlands population, after all, numbered only 408,000 in 1900. Either the figure is inflated or "Vohitromby" refers to Imerina.

<sup>7</sup>On the basis of their archaeological survey of Central Imerina, Wright and Kus (n.d.) find evidence for an increase in warfare (more heavily fortified sites on more easily defensible hilltops) and population growth in south central Imerina before 1500. These sites represent the Ankatso phase, second oldest in the ceramic sequence for Central Imerina.

<sup>8</sup>Some or much of the convergence of Betsileo and Merina Vazimba myths may reflect reinforcement of these myths among the Betsileo by almost one hundred years of Merina domination.

<sup>9</sup>The Merina *andriana* or nobility used intermarriage between their ancestors and the Vazimba to give the validity of historical depth to their right to rule (Pierre Vérin, personal communication).

<sup>10</sup>I am grateful to the Foreign Area Fellowship Program for financial support of ethnohistorical and ethnographic research among the Betsileo from April 1966 through December 1967. I also thank the Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies of the University of Michigan for financial support, through a faculty research grant and fellowship, for coding and analysis of questionnaire and other data gathered in Madagascar. Betty Kottak and Joseph Rabe helped me collect data, and Catherine Cross helped me code and analyze it.

<sup>11</sup>My argument is that the potentiality of ranking was inherent in the demographics of the prior structure. Given, now, a need for defensive reorganization, the implicit ranking began to be formalized. As Bloch (n.d.) generalizes from Merina to the Malagasy highlands, Malagasy do not recognize sharp boundaries between social strata. Rather, their representation is a continuous, graded ranking based on the possession of a spiritual, mana-like substance, called *hasina*. My analysis of Lalangina gives a diachronic dimension to the growth of the Lalanginan stratification system: nobles emerge, but some become more noble than others; among commoners, some are senior, some junior, but the latter encompass not only junior branches of the major commoner descent groups, but also members of the smaller descent groups. Even gradations in degree of stigmatization among the Lalanginan slaves were recognized by the seventh reign, when state organization is manifest.

<sup>12</sup>It is highly likely that irrigated rice had been cultivated in Central Imerina since the very first phase (Fiekona) of its ceramic sequence, well before 1500 (Wright and Kus n.d.).

<sup>13</sup>Bloch (n.d.) similarly links the transition between two sociopolitical types which he labels "pre-takeoff state" (whose reality as described by Bloch for agricultural areas of the central highlands I doubt) and "takeoff state" to marsh irrigation—administrative intervention to transform marshes, through drainage and earthworks, into rice producing land.

<sup>14</sup>Survey evidence reported by Wright and Kus also suggest that fortifications preceded the advent of state organization in Central Imerina.

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