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WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY IN A PASTORAL SOCIETY:
THE CENTRAL SAKALAVA OF WEST MADAGASCAR

by

WILLIAM J. G. GARDENIER

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

THESIS DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE

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HOUSTON, TEXAS

MAY 1976
PREFACE

I came to study the Sakalava of West Madagascar by an indirect route. In June of 1972 I went to the Malagasy Republic to study technological and social change among the Vezo of the southwest coast of the island. Upon arrival in Tananarive, the capital, I met with Dr. Pierre Vérin, then Director of the Museum of Art and Archeology of the University of Madagascar, who informed me that the southwestern part of the island was an area of political discontent and had recently been the scene of clashes between Government troops and local rebel forces. For this reason Dr. Vérin advised me to abandon my original research plan. Instead, he suggested that I select another location for fieldwork on the west coast, north of my original location. To this end, I spent the next two months of my twenty months in Madagascar traveling the west coast visiting and reconnoitering various alternative locations. My choice finally fell on the Besalampy area (see Figure 1). I returned to Besalampy on October 5, 1972, and stayed there in the field for fourteen months, until December 18, 1973.

Of my total stay in the Besalampy area I spent about two-thirds in Besalampy proper, a town of some 2800 inhabitants and the seat of the Sous-préfecture of the same name. The Sous-préfecture of Besalampy is an administrative unit of the Préfecture of Maintirano in the Province of Majunga.
Figure 1: Map of Madagascar
Besalampy is also the center of the chiefdom of Manongá. Besides Besalampy this chiefdom includes approximately ten villages. In one of these, Ambalatany, which is a village of approximately 500 inhabitants about ten kilometers (two and one-half hours by foot) southeast of Besalampy, I spent the remaining one-third of my stay in the field. This was during the rainy season of 1972-73.

I would like to thank the villagers of Ambalatany for allowing me to live with them. In Besalampy I owe special thanks to the Sous-préfet for his pleasant cooperation, to Father H. Perritaz of the Catholic Mission for his friendly hospitality and other help, to Alexis who taught me Sakalava in the beginning, to Rapidy and Victor who were my assistants towards the end of my fieldwork, and to Tatra, my key informant on divination and on matters concerning Sakalava chiefdoms. Very special thanks are due to Kristine who did my laundry, cooked my meals and helped me solve or overcome a variety of logistic and other problems; above all, however, she was a consistent friend.

In Tananarive I would like to thank the Museum of Art and Archeology of the University of Madagascar for its help, especially the Director of the Museum, Dr. Pierre Vérin and his successor Mr. Rakotoarisoa. Further, also in Tananarive, I thank Dr. Paul Ottino for his kind hospitality and help. In addition I owe thanks to Mr. Grant Baker of the Canadian International Development Agency, and his wife Collette: I
have enjoyed their company and hospitality both in Tananarive and in Montreal, Québec, Canada.

My work in Madagascar was financed in part by the National Science Foundation (grant number GS 31237) and in part by Rice University; I am indebted to both of these institutions. At Rice University I would like to extend special thanks to Drs. Frederick Gamst, Edward Norbeck and Ronald Provencher who guided me through most of my graduate studies there. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Gamst who served as chairman of my dissertation committee until July 1975, at which time he accepted a position at another university, to Dr. Douglas Uzzell who took his place as chairman and to the other members of the committee Drs. Frank Hole and Gaston Rimlinger.

Finally I would like to thank my parents for providing the foundations for my intellectual development; my first teacher of anthropology, Dr. R.A.J. van Lier of Wageningen, Holland, for introducing me to an exciting field; and to Mary Jane Gardenier and Francine Daner who at various times encouraged me to continue and finish the project of which this study is a culmination.
A NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

The official Malagasy language uses the Latin alphabet exclusive of the letters c, q, u, w and x. All consonants are pronounced phonetically, with
\[ j = [\text{dz}]. \]

Vowels and dipthongs are pronounced as follows:
\[ a = [\text{a}] \]
\[ e = [\text{ej}] \]
\[ i = [\text{ij}] \]
\[ o = [\text{u}] \]
\[ y = [\text{ij}] \text{ at the end of a word} \]
\[ ai = [\text{aj}] \]
\[ ao = [\text{aw}] \]
\[ eo = [\text{iu}]. \]

The Sakalava dialect employs sounds not used in official Malagasy. I have marked these with an umlaut sign. Thus,
\[ ñ = [\text{n}] \]
\[ ò = [\text{o}] \]
\[ ë = [\text{e}]. \]

Sakalava includes many words not used in official Malagasy. Words that are used in official Malagasy and in the Sakalava dialect are subject to the following transformations, where applicable:

1. The final syllable of a Malagasy word ending in \text{ka} becomes \text{ky} in Sakalava;
e.g., child, anaka (Malagasy) becomes anaky (Sakalava).

2. The final syllable of a Malagasy word ending in tra becomes tsy in Sakalava;
e.g., difficult, sarotra (Malagasy) becomes (sarôtsy) (Sakalava).

3. The final syllable of a Malagasy word ending in na is dropped in Sakalava;
e.g., town, tanana (Malagasy) becomes tana (Sakalava).

4. The d becomes l in Sakalava;
e.g., taboo, fady (Malagasy) becomes faly (Sakalava).
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Appendix: Sample of divination configurations and list of groupings associated with each configuration.

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Chapter One
INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Recently, John Middleton and E. H. Winter have drawn attention to the coexistence in many societies of beliefs in both witchcraft and sorcery. Witchcraft, as defined by these authors, refers to "a mystical and innate power which can be used by its possessor to harm other people." Sorcery, on the other hand, is "evil magic against others" which, they note, in Africa usually takes the form of "medicines" (Middleton and Winter, 1963:3). Since both of these beliefs can logically function as an explanation of misfortune, either one or the other seems redundant. That these two types of ideas are often found side by side in the same society must therefore mean, according to Middleton and Winter, that they "fit into social systems in different ways" (1963:8).

In a work on witchcraft and sorcery among the Safwa of Tanzania, Alan Harwood presents evidence in support of the hypothesis of Middleton and Winter. Harwood (1970) shows that among the Safwa witchcraft applies to "incorporative" relationships involving relatives and sorcery to "transactional" relationships usually involving non-relatives. In this study I will present data illustrating the opposite case. It concerns the Central Sakalava of West Madagascar among
whom I recently conducted fieldwork. In Sakalava society sorcery applies to relatives and witchcraft to non-relatives. Taken together with Harwood's case, the present study supports the general proposition that beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery may be used to mark off any two contrasted social categories (Harwood, 1970:139).

In Madagascar beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery are by no means restricted to the Sakalava. Maurice Bloch, who worked among the dominant Merina of the interior, emphasizes the importance of a concept which combines the two notions (1971:65-66). Following Middleton and Winter (1963) I use the term "wizardry" as a cover term for both witchcraft and sorcery. Bloch points out that among the Merina accusations of wizardry are typically among unrelated people (1971:67). Another recent ethnographer, R. W. Huntington, reporting on the Bara, a pastoral people in Southern Madagascar, shows the importance of sorcery during certain ceremonies. The ceremonies in question draw numbers of people unusually large in the context of Bara society (1973:71). It seems probable that many of the attendants at these ceremonies are only distantly related if at all. In that case the Bara material suggests a connection between sorcery and non-kinsmen.

In both the Merina and the Bara case, wizardry, or, a particular aspect of wizardry, sorcery, seems to apply specifically to non-kinsmen. Whether complementary beliefs apply to contrasting social categories, such as certain
categories of kinsmen, is not clear from the available literature. Perhaps the Sakalava material will alert future workers in Madagascar to this possibility.

Although the Sakalava practice some horticulture, they are primarily pastoralists. The land belongs to the chief and herders can take their beasts to graze wherever there is grass. Likewise for their horticultural pursuits the Sakalava can put under cultivation any suitable land not otherwise used. This loose association of people with the land facilitates their freedom of movement. Despite their dependence on some horticulture, therefore, the Sakalava are very much like other pastoralists: their primary interest is cattle and, unlike many horticulturalists or agriculturalists, they are not bound to small tracts of land.

These considerations raise an interesting problem. It has been observed that beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery are unimportant among pastoralists. In a review of the East African material, P. T. W. Baxter attributes this to the ease with which pastoralists can move away from each other (1972: 183). More generally, it has been related to the "sparse and diffuse" (Douglas, 1970:xxxv) nature of human relations in such societies, resulting from low population density and the geographic mobility of herders. The Sakalava case is exceptional in that a high degree of geographic dispersal of the
population is combined with strong and pervasive beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery.

The apparent anomaly can be explained by taking the nature of Sakalava divination into account. Sakalava beliefs in wizardry are supported by a randomizing type of divination system (Omar Khayyam Moore, 1965). In such a system the answers to questions posed are largely determined by factors outside of the control of human agents. Sakalava divination is used to diagnose the cause of disease and involves the examination of patterns formed by seeds. These seeds are laid out according to precise rules which admit a large but finite total number of possible patterns. The process of laying down the seeds ensures that the resulting pattern is essentially a random drawing from the total number of possible patterns. Finally, rules for the interpretation of a pattern are also precise and in the majority of cases point to witchcraft or sorcery as the cause of disease. A diagnosis in terms of witchcraft or sorcery is not influenced by the opinions or fears of the diviner, his client or third parties. Sakalava beliefs in wizardry, finding strong support outside the realm of social interaction, can thus exist in conjunction with a high degree of human dispersal.

The Data

My study of Sakalava divination serves as an inroad to the investigation of the place of witchcraft and sorcery in
the social system. A person who is sick or does not feel too well, almost immediately goes to consult a diviner. The diviner, after laying out his seeds, diagnoses the cause of the disease. Frequently the cause is either witchcraft or sorcery; sometimes the evil-doer is found to be a relative, at other times a non-relative.

In working with a diviner-informant I quickly learned the rules by which the seeds are laid out to form a pattern. It can easily be demonstrated that a pattern, laid out according to these rules, is essentially a random drawing from the total number of possible patterns, a number which is large but finite. The interpretation of a pattern yields the cause of a disease. Thus, the interpretation of the total number of possible patterns should produce, if not what Junod, in speaking of Tsonga divination, calls "a résumé of their whole social order" (1927:II:541), then at least an inventory of all culturally recognized causes of disease.

The total number of possible patterns can be calculated to be 65536 (see Chapter Four). With a thorough examination of one pattern requiring about thirty minutes, an exhaustive analysis of all patterns is impossible. However, the total number of culturally recognized causes for disease is obviously far less than the total number of possible patterns and it turns out that many different patterns essentially share the same message. Some groups of patterns sharing the same message are large and represent important causes for
disease, while smaller groups represent less important causes for disease. A random sample of patterns should reflect the relative sizes of these various groups. I designed such a sample with each member pattern constructed according to the rules used by diviners.

The interpretation of each pattern in my random sample of patterns was performed by my diviner-informant. The results enable a statistical description of the entire universe of diseases. In particular, these results enable the calculation of the frequency with which disease is attributed to either witchcraft or sorcery, involving either relatives or non-relatives.

When I found that sorcery applies to relatives and witchcraft to non-relatives it occurred to me that the entire complex, wizardry, may be important in the fissioning of family groups, and may be one of the mechanisms by which the Sakalava achieve geographic dispersal, a common characteristic of pastoralists. When family groups break up, people who previously considered themselves closely related may now regard each other as more distantly related or, in extreme cases, as no longer related at all. In addition, they may move away from each other. I approached this problem by examining family histories. When I started collecting these, however, I had two surprises. In the first place, there was never a word about wizardry in any of the histories I gathered. This does not surprise me any longer. Many of the
histories referred to quarreling and fighting, usually between siblings. And wherever there are quarrels and fights there is fear of wizardry, often substantiated by divination. But fear of wizardry is a common element in all quarrels and need not be expressly commented upon, certainly not after time has stripped the quarrel of much of its emotional content.

The second surprise was that a substantial number of family histories involved the movement of people from one chiefdom to another. These movements were related to conflict with the chief. In order to understand this problem I gathered in-depth information on political organization.

During the collection of these three specific sets of information—on divination, family histories and political organization—I would also often gain much ethnographic knowledge of a general nature. One day, my full-time assistant and I would collect our information with the aid of a tape recorder. Afterwards, and the next day, we would transcribe all material. During these transcription sessions I would insist that I be made to understand all that had been said in all its implications and my assistant became very apt at providing me with a wealth of examples with which to clarify things. Thus the tape recorder came to be used as a "can-opener", a term John Collier employs in describing a similar use of photography in ethnographic work (1967:12).

Meanwhile, during the entire course of my stay in the field, I was, of course, also a participant observer. But
what this meant can perhaps be better appreciated against the background of the total fieldwork situation.

The Fieldwork Background

Sakalava society is characterized by a pervasive atmosphere of mistrust and fear. For an anthropologist it is very difficult to work under such circumstances. If people do not even trust each other, why should they trust a foreigner? In fact, the majority never did.

Nevertheless, during my fourteen months' stay in the area of Besalampy I managed to build up some very close personal relationships. It was only through these relationships that fieldwork became possible at all. I must add, however, that these personal ties were also restrictive in a sense. My close friends were constantly worried about me. They claimed that very few people liked me and that I should, therefore, be extremely careful not to become the victim of some practitioner of wizardry. They thought that I was very reckless going around talking to anybody and begged me, if I could not mend my ways in this respect, to at least never enter people's houses, or accept anything to eat or drink.

It is considered especially dangerous to drink alcoholic beverages. Thus, at ceremonies, my close friends would keep a constant watch over me, making sure that nobody would be looking at me when I did drink alcohol.

In the beginning I often ignored my friends' warnings.
Their counter-offensive was then to lecture me for many tiresome hours on what could happen to me. In addition, they would just simply not tell me about, and thus keep me away from, ceremonies. It did not take me long to realize that I had better take these things seriously. In fact, I finally took them seriously even to the extent of making a special study of wizardry and divination. Towards the end of my fieldwork my friends became very impressed with my knowledge in this area. At this point some were just about to accept me as their private diviner: "Why should we go and see another diviner if we have one in the family?" This was still somewhat of a joke, but I am sure that with a few more months in the field this would have become reality. From their reactions, moreover, it was obvious that they felt that I had become somewhat like them in that I took very seriously something that was very important to them.

The majority of people, however, never quite understood what I was doing. In the beginning the wildest rumors went about. The most persistent of these was that I was a spy. A non-indigenous teacher of primary school in Besalampy told me that he thought I worked for the CIA. People in the bush, on the other hand, thought that I was a spy for the Malagasy Government. Perhaps I was supposed to report unlawful behavior such as the staging of possessions by bush spirits or the drinking of locally brewed alcoholic beverages. Thus, in the beginning people were very secretive about ceremonies
for fear that I would attend. Perhaps, also, I was to report to the government on the real size of people's cattle herds.\footnote{1} As a consequence, it was never possible to ask people direct questions about the size of their herds. When people became more used to me these fears subsided but never totally disappeared, not even when it became generally accepted that I was there to learn their language\footnote{2} and history.

By the time my command of Sakalava had improved enough that I could comfortably converse with people, I soon found out that they were willing to talk at length about anything that did not involve them personally. If I asked them personal questions, such as their names, the names of their spouses and children, number of children, relationship ties with other people, number of times they had been married, reason for divorce, rice yield, size of cattle herd, cause of illness, and so forth, our conversation would soon end and would only with great reluctance be taken up again at some future occasion. Amongst themselves the Sakalava usually try to refrain from asking direct and personal questions. Initially being ignorant of these facts, I tended to force this issue. As a result the people started wondering why I wanted to know all these things and this eroded my hard-won trust. Thus it was quite all right to ask someone general questions such as "do Sakalava men give a woman cattle when they ask her for marriage?" but never "how many head of cattle did you give your wife?"
Considering these difficulties it is fortunate that the data I needed for my study could be obtained without having to ask personal questions. This even holds for the family histories. I often felt that people were willing to talk about their family history because it provided them with an indirect means to bolster their position in the eyes of bystanders, including the ethnographer. The impersonal information from the past is not charged; the actors are no longer alive and constitute considerably less of a threat than living human beings. Current information, on the other hand, often involves others and may give rise to new, or rekindle existing animosities, thereby intensifying the threat of attacks by means of witchcraft or sorcery.

As far as participant observation is concerned it should come as no surprise at this point if I say that my intensive participation was restricted to a small group of very close friends and their immediate families. The less I was trusted by the population at large the more I was accepted by this small group. My acceptance by this group, in fact, was nearly total. Much to my delight, for instance, children would not hesitate to call me baba (father or father's brother) or zama (mother's brother) as they felt the case might be.

Besides these close personal friends two informants can be singled out as being particularly helpful. One, a man about forty years of age and a member of the chiefly family of Besalampy, was introduced to me by the Catholic missionary
there shortly after my arrival in October 1972. At the time I befriended him, this informant was employed as operator of one of the bulldozers of the Sous-préfecture.

After the rainy season, in May 1973, I decided to start collecting family histories. At that time I had trouble finding a field assistant and one day, while discussing my problems with the "prince" he suggested the two of us get together as he had just been fired from his job. I was hesitant at first as I thought that my close association with him might adversely influence my rapport with the common people. At present I am convinced that I greatly benefited from his excellent reputation in the community.

My informant lent credibility to my presence in Besalampy and surroundings. For example, while collecting family histories his favorite way of explaining my "mission" was: "Why is it that everybody knows about the Merina (the dominant tribe), why is it that the history our children learn in school is Merina history? Because so far nobody has written down our history and that is what this 'foreigner' came here for. He wants to know our history, he wants to know the customs of our ancestors, he wants to know everything. He is going to write all of it down in a book so that our children can read about it and learn about it in school. In that way our Sakalava ways will remain strong."

During the collection of family histories my field assistant became aware of the fact that much of the information
gathered only became meaningful to me when set in a definite cultural context. Consequently, the collection of family histories and particularly our subsequent transcription of them developed into exercises in Sakalava ethnography. Thus prepared, he was not surprised when I expressed my desire to learn about an aspect of Sakalava culture which up to that point we had had little opportunity to touch upon: Sakalava divination.

Divination is very important in Sakalava society and diviners, of which there are many, are frequently consulted. When a person needs to consult a diviner he prefers to see one who is a close relative as only close relatives can be trusted to be discreet about whatever unpleasant information might be uncovered. In many respects the chiefly family considers members of the chiefly council as close relatives. Thus it is not surprising that my informant-friend took me to a diviner who happened to be a member of the chiefly council. I had already met this person briefly before, when we interviewed him about his family history. He was approximately 75 years of age and had struck me as an exceedingly intelligent and knowledgeable individual. This time when the "prince" explained what I wanted he consented immediately and, shaking his head in amusement, said: "Oh well..., those foreigners!"

His casual attitude reflects the fact that I could have gone to any number of diviners to learn about divination.
But it turned out to have been a stroke of luck that I got together with him. During our work on divination we established excellent rapport and it was only because of this rapport that I was later able to gather information of a much more sensitive and delicate nature--information concerning the structure and organization of chiefdoms, matters the "prince" knew little about. Being afraid that some of the information was so delicate that broaching the subject would close the door to further cooperation, I saved some of my questions to the very last. In fact, the day before my departure I went to the hut of this informant to say farewell and as an aside, asked him to "correct" some information I had gathered from commoners concerning the funerals of chiefs. That last day I collected a wealth of additional information as he wanted to be absolutely sure that I left with no misinformation about these most important matters.

Outline of Study

In the next chapter I provide background information on the people and their geographical environment. This is followed by a section on demography and economy.

Chapter Three deals with Sakalava supernaturalism and summarizes beliefs in supernatural beings and forces.

Chapter Four starts with an explanation of the mechanics of Sakalava divination. This is followed by a presentation of my sample of divination configurations and their interpre-
tations. These interpretations form the basis for a statistical description of the Sakalava universe of causes of disease in which witchcraft and sorcery will be seen to hold prominent positions. In the final section of this chapter I discuss Sakalava notions about wizardry and the curing of illnesses caused by wizardry.

Chapter Five is devoted to kinship and social organization. Here I argue that belief in, and fear of, wizardry importantly contribute to the constant breaking up of kinship groups, thereby exerting a decisive influence on their ultimate size. In addition I note the importance of the child rather than the ancestor on the one hand and fictive kinship on the other, as integrative mechanisms of Sakalava society.

Chapter Six is on political organization. The material in this chapter represents a negative instance of the otherwise pervasive influence of wizardry on Sakalava culture. It also provides background information needed for interpretation of family histories presented in a later chapter.

In Chapter Seven I trace the influence of wizardry on other aspects of Sakalava life. Here I draw attention to Sakalava secretiveness and to spirit possession as means of coping with the constant threat of wizardry. This is followed by a discussion of an entirely different response—withdrawal from social interaction. This response contributes to the dispersal of the population.
Finally, a summary of the study is presented in Chapter Eight.
Chapter Two
THE SETTING

The People

The Sakalava are an ethnic group with an estimated population of 300,000. Their dialect of Malagasy, a Malayo-
Polynesian language, is intelligible to speakers of most other Malagasy dialects. They are the most negroid of all Malagasy, some of which, such as the Merina of the central High Plateau, are markedly Malayan-Mongoloid in physical appearance.

The Sakalava inhabit almost the entire western region of Madagascar from the Mangoky river in the south to the island Nosy Be in the north, a stretch of some 1100 kilometers. The west of Sakalava country is bordered by the Mozambique Channel. Eastwards and inland it extends to the western fringes of the central High Plateau, on the average, a distance of around 150 kilometers.

The immense stretch of Sakalava country is dotted with numerous chiefdoms, of which two achieved particular prominence in former times: Menabe in the south and Boina in the north. The area between these two large political units is usually called Ambongo (see Figure 2). Besalampy is in the center of Ambongo and is also the capital of the small chiefdom of Manongá, which embraces about ten villages.
Most of my ethnographic information stems from informants of Manongá. My general economic and demographic data apply to the Sous-préfecture of Besalampy, a modern administrative unit the area of which covers about one-third of Ambongo. I have traveled extensively throughout Ambongo and feel that my observations and data are applicable to the entire region. In this impressionistic sense, therefore, one could take this study to be focused on the Sakalava of Ambongo. But strictly speaking it applies to the Sakalava of Besalampy and immediate surroundings, in other words, to the Sakalava of Manongá.

**Historical Perspective**

Little is known about the pre-Sakalava era of the west coast of Madagascar. According to Jacques Lombard in his recent ethno-historical study of the Sakalava, the region was inhabited by endogamous, economically specialized groups. In decreasing order of importance he distinguishes horticulturalists, hunters and gathers, and cattle herders (Lombard, 1973:60). In the area which was to become Memabe these groups were politically autonomous. Further north the country was divided in chiefdoms (Lombard, 1973:62).

The first serious reports about Ambongo attach this area to the region which, according to Lombard, was organized in chiefdoms. These observations stem from Luis Mariano, a Portuguese missionary from Mozambique, who during 1613-14 explored the west coast of Madagascar from the Bay of Boina.
all the way down to the extreme south of the island. Mariano reports on four coastal villages between Cap St. André and Maintirano among which "Xambao Hassane"\(^3\) at the mouth of the Sambao River:

Its population of around 100 consists almost entirely of "Cafres" and the king does not have much authority over them. There are bananas, sheep, nice goats, cattle, manioc, excellent lemons and water from wells. The people sell their commerce at high prices...Embarcations are numerous (Mariano, 1619; In Vérin, 1971:159).\(^4\)

At approximately the time of Mariano's travels, in the first half of the 17th century, Sakalava history commenced with the establishment of the kingdom of Menabe (literally: the Big Red), in the south of Sakalavaland. While one of the sons of the founder of Memabe further developed this kingdom, another one went to the north, where, around 1690, he founded the kingdom of Boina. Meanwhile and subsequently the original chiefdoms of Ambongo, between Memabe and Boina, became Sakalavized and others probably came into being (see Figure 2).

In calling Menabe and Boina "kingdoms" I am following former authors (Kent, 1970; Lombard, 1973; Vérin, 1972). The political units in Ambongo I prefer to call "chiefdoms" in accordance with accepted usage in the anthropological literature (see, for instance, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 1940:10-13) where the term "chief" is usually restricted to the holders of authority at the second level from the top in multi-level authority systems or at the very top in the
Figure 2: Historical Map of Sakalava Country
mono-level authority systems, the latter possibility being relevant to our case.

The Sakalava era saw a transformation of the traditional economy. Little by little cattle herding became more important until it finally outstripped all other economic activities. Cattle, in fact, became the symbol of wealth and power (Lombard, 1973:66).

The establishment of the powerful Sakalava kingdoms of Menabe and Boina also led to the development of a flourishing trade in their coastal ports, where slaves captured in warfare were exchanged for guns. Guns enabled the Sakalava kings to wage more effective warfare, which, in turn, yielded more slaves.

I do not know to what extent this same process also took place in Ambongo. In any case, it must have been different in at least one respect. The kings of Menabe and Boina mainly engaged in expansionist warfare against non-Sakalava neighbors. The Sakalava chiefs in Ambongo, hemmed in as they were, had nowhere to turn but upon themselves. That they often did is attested to by some of my elder informants.

The expansion of the two large Sakalava kingdoms came abruptly to an end when, between 1820 and 1830, the Merina of the central High Plateau conquered first Menabe and then Boina (Vérin, 1971:141). Meanwhile the traders at the ports of Menabe and Boina fled to Ambongo. As a result, this region, which remained independent from the Merina, saw a
significant increase in commercial activity. The fall of the Sakalava kingdoms meant that the export of slaves had come to an end. But because during the Sakalava era the west coast had become a prosperous cattle area, it is not surprising that the export of slaves was followed by the export of cattle. Ironically, the slave trade continued—but from then on slaves were imported. A traveler in 1852 observed that the chief of Nosy Vaolavo,⁶ his brother and others:

...like money to buy slaves from Mozambique which arrive in great numbers in the months of September, October, November and December. These slaves are sold for 10, 15, 20 and 30 piasters, according to their age and constitution (Samat, 1852; in Vérin, 1971:141).⁷

I have been told by several older informants in Besalampy that the import of slaves continued unabated until the turn of the century. Around this time the French established effective control of the coast of Ambongo which at that point ceased to be one of Madagascar's last vestiges of independence.

Hardly anything is known about the history of the Sakalava of Ambongo. At the time of fieldwork the region was dotted with numerous, for the most part small, chiefdoms. The most important of these seemed Milanja which is centered around Cap St. André and extends southwards to the Sambao river north of Besalampy. Unfortunately I was unable to visit the Milanja court.

The chiefdom of Manongá is immediately south of Milanja.
Although the chiefly family of Manonga is related to that of Milanja, contacts between the two courts are rather sporadic. An important and otherwise knowledgeable court functionary of Manonga was only vaguely aware of the fact that the chiefs of Milanja might be related to Boina royalty and, through the latter, to the kings of Menabe. He obviously preferred his view, which he in fact stated, that Milanja was the center of the world.

The Natural Setting

The west coast plains of Madagascar very gradually slope down from the fringes of the central High Plateau to the Mozambique Channel. The terrain, which is gently rolling with numerous valleys and lakes of all sizes, is traversed by many rivers generally flowing in an east-west direction. During the rainy season rivers swell to gigantic proportions, often exceeding their banks, especially in the delta regions near the coast. Elsewhere many of the valleys also become flooded during this time, while the lakes expand in size. Most periodically flooded areas are used for rice cultivation.

Average annual rainfall in Sakalava country varies from 500 mm in the extreme south to 2000 mm in the northern regions. For Besalampy the average is 1274 mm/year. Table 1 shows the monthly distribution of this rainfall together with data on average minimum and maximum temperatures.

The first column of Table 1 clearly indicates the sharp
Table 1: Weather data for Besalampy (16°45' S, 44°29' E)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>T&lt;sub&gt;min&lt;/sub&gt;</th>
<th>T&lt;sub&gt;max&lt;/sub&gt;</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>31.1</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total    | 1274 | 1632 |

P: Precipitation, mm

T<sub>min</sub>: Monthly average of daily minimum temperatures, °C

T<sub>max</sub>: Monthly average of daily maximum temperatures, °C

division between the wet and the dry season. During the wet season, which lasts four months, from December through March, total rainfall, is 1132 mm. This represents nearly 90% of
the yearly total. The dry season lasts eight months, from April through November, and receives only slightly more than 10% of the total yearly rainfall.

The Australian summer coincides with the wet season. The tendency for temperatures to be higher during this time is tempered by the cooling effect of rainfall. This is the reason for the small variation in daytime temperatures between the wet and the dry season. Thus, in 1972, the difference in average maximum temperature between the hottest and the coldest month was only 3.5°C. On the other hand, the tendency for temperatures to be lower during the Australian winter is at night somewhat intensified by radiation from the earth unhampered by cloudy skies. As a result, in 1972, the difference in average minimum temperature between the hottest and the coldest month was 7.4°C. Although annual variations in temperature are thus relatively modest, the high relative humidity during the rainy season makes this time of the year decidedly less comfortable than the dry season.

In the scheme of W. Köppen (1936:C41-C43), which uses weather criteria to define vegetational climate types, the Besalampy area is classified as "periodically dry savanna." The vegetational cover of Ambongo is characterized, in decreasing order of importance, by the grasses Hyparrhenia rufa (Jaragua grass), Hyparrhenia dissoluta and Chrysopogon montanus. Palms are also found: Hyphaene schatan on sandy
soils, and *Medemia nobilis, Ziziphus* sp. and *Sclerocarya caffra* on heavier soils. Shrubs such as *Cryptostegia Madagascariensis* and *Acridocarpus excelsus* tend to encroach on the grassland (Rattray, 1960:95).

*Hyparrhenia* grasses characterize the grass cover of a large portion of Africa, particularly where annual rainfall is between 750 and 1500 mm. The species *Hyparrhenia dissoluta* is very common at the lower rainfall limit; *Hyparrhenia rufus* is often dominant at the higher limit. These grasses may reach a height of three meters, forming dense thickets. At places where there is a marked dry season, such as in Ambongo, a *Hyparrhenia* grass cover provides a large amount of inflammable material towards the end of the dry season. Thus, fierce fires are common. This tends to keep the woody elements in check and maintains the vegetation in an open savanna condition (Rattray, 1960:34-35).

Not all of Ambongo is open savanna. The Sous-préfecture of Besalampy reports that an area representing 21.3% of its total area is covered by forests of the type that Rattray calls "dense deciduous woodlands." The most characteristic genera of these woodlands are *Acacia, Dalbergia, Tamarindus* and *Albizia*. Grasses are absent. At present, Ambongo's forests are found mainly in a strip along the coast. In the past they probably covered most of the region (Rattary, 1960: 95, 124).
Demography and Economy

The population density in the Sous-préfecture of Besalampy is 2.8 souls per square kilometer. According to official 1972 records the Sakalava, with 69.2% of the total population, comprise by far the largest group in the Sous-préfecture. The second largest group is the Antaisaka (10.3%) whose immigration into the area from the southeast coast of Madagascar started in the 1930's. The Antaisaka together with other immigrants from the southeast coast such as the Antaimoro, Antanosy, Antaifasy, Zafisoro and Antambahoaka, are locally called Betirebaky. The Betirebaky, who comprise nearly 12% of the population are excellent rice cultivators. But like nearly anybody else in Ambongo they also hold cattle. The third largest group, the Tsimihety (7.4%) come from the northern regions of the island. Physically and culturally they are most akin to the Sakalava.

The great divide in Madagascar is between the coastal people, such as the Sakalava, the Betirebaky and the Tsimihety, and the lighter-skinned people from the High Plateau of which the Merina and the Betsileo are the most important.

The Betsileo, with 5.2%, comprise the fourth largest group in the Sous-préfecture of Besalampy. The Betsileo are renowned in Madagascar as rice cultivators. In Ambongo, in addition, many Betsileo are cattle buyers. When a cattle
buyer has amassed a large herd he will generally take his cattle "on the hoof" over distances of some 500 kilometers to the High Plateau. There, great profits can be made. It is not unusual to see such Betsileo cattle merchants return from the High Plateau by plane, a costly affair.

Besalampy with a population of around 2800 souls is the seat of the Sous-préfecture and its largest town. The air strip of Besalampy was asphalted in 1972 so that air service need not be interrupted in the rainy season. Regular air service connects the town with the outside world. Twice a week a small aircraft capable of carrying approximately fifteen passengers lands to load and unload mail and an occasional passenger such as a merchant or a Government employee or one of his dependents.

There are 122 people in Besalampy on the Government payrolls, mostly from the High Plateau. Besides being a center of Government Besalampy is also a religious center. There is a Catholic mission manned by two Swiss missionaries and a protestant mission with a Merina pastor. Both missions have very little success among the Sakalava and other coastal peoples. They almost entirely serve the community made up of Government personnel and other immigrants from the High Plateau. Besalampy also has two mosques. One mosque serves the Comorian population (1.3%) and the other the Indian population (0.1%).

In addition to Government offices and the various
Christian and Islamic centers of worship, Besalampy counts approximately seven general stores, all of which are owned by Indians. Here people can buy their household needs such as matches, oil, coffee, tea, sugar, salt, etc., and articles of clothing. One establishment in addition, offers a variety of alcoholic beverages such as beer, wine, and rum. This particular store also serves as the town's pharmacy.

Besides retailing, the Indian merchants in Besalampy also buy up agricultural produce which they export. The most important of these are raphia and rice. Raphia from the area of Besalampy is considered as some of the best in the world. As far as rice is concerned, it appears that production far exceeds regional needs.

Other agricultural products are mainly for domestic consumption. The most important of these are manioc, corn, sweet potatoes, and taro. Manioc cultivation is not only important from a carbohydrate point of view, but also manioc leaves, prepared with coco, is just about the only vegetable a true Sakalava will occasionally eat with his rice. The preferred diet is rice with either meat or fish and usually without any condiments.

In Besalampy proper, meat is often available at the public market. Sea fish is sometimes brought in from the coastal village of Marofototsy, about eight kilometers due west of Besalampy. Outside of Besalampy, meat is not commercially available. There, meat can only be obtained
at ceremonial occasions. In this respect "second funerals" which usually take place during the dry season are especially important.

For the people in the bush, away from the coast, fresh water fish provides a steady supplementary source of protein. Two kinds of fish are especially important: catfish (Gogo) and, since its introduction by the French in the mid-fifties, Tilapia (Kalapia). These fish are caught throughout the year. Toward the middle of the rainy season they become especially abundant. At this time they also attain their maximum size of around 20-25 centimeters. Fresh water fishing is sometimes done by men, especially when traps are used, but most fish is brought in by women using lines with bait.

While the Sakalava engage in agriculture and do some fishing, in their hearts they are pastoralists. The savanna of Amhongo are economically exploited as grazing land for cattle. Sakalava cattle are Zebu (Bos Indicus) and are kept primarily for meat production. The relationship of the total number of cattle reported in the Sous-préfecture of Besalampy to the area of non-forested land is 10.0 head per square kilometer of suitable grazing land.\(^9\) I have good reasons to believe, however, that the actual density is two to three times higher.\(^10\) In all likelihood, therefore, cattle density is somewhere between 20.0 and 30.0 head per square kilometer.

A cattle density between 20.0 and 30.0 head per square kilometer corresponds to the availability of between 5.0 and
3.3 hectares per beast. This probably closely approximates the area required to maintain an individual cow—the carrying capacity of the land.\textsuperscript{11} If the actual cattle density closely corresponds to the carrying capacity of the land, it is important that the cattle in a given region exploit all the grazing land of the entire region, and not just a part of it. In an area like Ambongo, where drinking water is never a problem,\textsuperscript{12} this can most economically be accomplished by an even distribution of cattle over the region.

One way to distribute cattle evenly over a region is to disperse their owners; this is what happens among the Sakalava of Ambongo. Sakalava, in fact, do not like to live in large communities. Their permanent villages are usually quite small and far apart.

Only about 22\% of the total population of the Sous-préfecture of Besalampy lives in villages of more than 500 inhabitants. Nearly half of this percentage derives from the town of Besalampy with its population of 2800 people. There are seven other villages with more than 500 residents. The largest of these counts 700 inhabitants.

The few large villages with populations close to or in excess of 500, are situated near large areas particularly suitable for rice cultivation and have a substantial core of non-indigenous people. Thus, for instance, Ambalatany has 500 inhabitants of which approximately half are non-Sakalava, primarily Antaisaka from the southeast coast of the island.
The majority of permanent villages tend to be much smaller and have only Sakalava inhabitants. Typically a village consists of from five to twenty houses, each occupied by a man, his wife and their young children. Such a village is only inhabited during the rainy season. At the beginning of the dry season people fan out, establishing temporary shelters near their cultivation plots or in the bush with their cattle. They remain away from the permanent village for seven to eight months until the beginning of the rainy season.

This transhumance is not only a response to economic conditions, it also reflects the centrifugal tendency in Sakalava society which results from a need for elbow room and a dislike for living under "crowded" conditions. Thus, for instance, people who build temporary shelters close to their cultivation plots usually remain there long after the harvest. When the rains start, however, life in a temporary shelter soon becomes unbearable. The roof starts leaking and in low areas flooding takes place. Only at this point do people return to their permanent villages.
Chapter Three
SUPERNATURAL BEINGS AND FORCES

The supernatural world of the Sakalava is occupied by beings and forces. Supernatural beings include god, the ancestors of chiefs, the ancestors of commoners and bush spirits. Supernatural forces include those associated with the earth, with divination, with the calendar and with a wide variety of tabooed objects and actions.

Supernatural Begins

GOD. The name of god, Ndrenanañahary, contains the verb stem -hary of to rear or to raise, and the prefix Ndre which is also used as a prefix for the posthumous names of chiefs. God is only very remotely concerned with everyday life. He is often called "the one who makes hands and feet," yet once he has made hands and feet he loses interest in the well being of his creation.

People never pray to him but occasionally suspect that others call in his help to increase the effectiveness of their evil sorcery concoctions. This belief connects the personified realm of supernaturalism with the realm of non-personified supernatural forces. While god does not create supernatural forces, he is capable of influencing their effects.

That god may come to the aid of evil-doers shows that
his actions are not necessarily considered positive and on the side of morality. Just as a malicious sorcerer strikes a victim for no apparent reason, so it is with god. Potentially, god influences a person's life capriciously for better or for worse, but he is too far removed to be much of a consideration in day-to-day life.

CHIEFLY ANCESTORS. The posthumous names of chiefs carry the prefix Ndre which linguistically aligns the chiefs with god. This identification also emerges from the origin myth of chiefs: god sent the first chief down to earth to be its caretaker (see Chapter Six). Dead chiefs rejoin the supernatural realm, establishing a link between god and their own descendants. Theoretically such links legitimize the position of reigning chiefs, but in practice the power of a reigning chief is believed to derive directly from his ancestors, rather than from god. Communication between commoners and the ancestors of the chief takes place either through the living chief and his entourage of ceremonial assistants (see Chapter Six) or, directly, by means of spirit possession.

ANCESTORS OF COMMONERS. The ancestors of commoners generally do not possess their descendants or other human beings. Instead, people pray directly to their ancestors, asking help in curing disease or protection from evil. The ancestors are very intimately concerned with the daily affairs of their descendants and are thought of as the wardens of custom. In general, prescriptions of custom are phrased negatively in
terms of taboos. Typically, children inherit the taboos from their parents (for examples, see below).

In the beginning of this chapter I indicated that taboos involve supernatural forces. Here we see that taboos are often inherited from a person's ancestors. When breaking such a taboo, a person unleashes dangerous supernatural forces. At the same time he shows neglect and disrespect of his ancestor and invites the latter's wrath. For these reasons ancestral taboos are taken very seriously and infringements rarely take place. Sickness, therefore, is not often associated with the violation of taboos and the wrath of ancestors.

BUSH SPIRITS. Bush spirits are called biby, a word which also signifies ordinary animals. Some bush spirits have descriptive names such as Bemihisatsy (the big one who, in a sitting position, moves about by using his hand and feet and dragging his behind on the ground), Menavolo (red-hair), Tokamaso (one-eye) and Tokanono (one-breast). Others are known as Anakia, Fanonko, Kalanoro and Ndrebavirano (female of the water; I do not know the significance of the Ndre prefix here).

Bush spirits are thought of as rare animals which most people never see. Occasionally a lone individual encounters one of them in the bush. This is considered very dangerous and may cause the death of the person involved. Kalanoro and Ndrebavirano are most frequently seen; Bemihisatsy is
less frequently seen and Ankia is never sighted. All of them can manifest themselves by possessing human media.

Bush spirits are often associated with particular locations. In Ambalatany, for instance, Anakia and Menavolo are the "proprietors of the earth" (tompon'tany). In other places where other bush spirits are the proprietors of the earth, Anakia and Menavolo may just be ordinary spirit inhabitants.

The bush spirits associated with a particular location are usually considered fairly benevolent by their human co-residents. If these spirits were not favorably inclined toward humans, people would not stay. Instead they would leave in search for a more hospitable place to live.

In Ambalatany the local bush spirits live in a sacred grove called Ankilimahavelo (at the Tamarind tree which supports life). Here individuals or small groups of people often go to pray for their well-being and protection from evil or for a speedy recovery from disease.

Supernatural Forces

EARTH. The place of the inanimate part of nature in Sakalava cosmology is ambiguous. The Sakalava talk about bush (ala), streams, marshes, mountains and gullies, on the one hand as inanimate geographical features and, on the other, as living creatures. But even as geographical features they tend to be awe inspiring. This is due in part to
inherent forces associated with them and, also, because they
are thought of as the dwelling places of bush spirits.

The one inanimate feature of nature which summarizes
these ideas well is earth (tany). This word signifies at the
same time soil, a plot of ground, the place which supports
bush and carries streams, marshes, mountains and gullies, a
place which supports plants and carries animals, spirits and
human beings, an inanimate substance imbued with force and a
living creature.

I mentioned before that people never pray to god. Neither
do they pray to the geographical features of nature whether
such features are considered as inanimate or as living enti-
ties. Only defunct chiefs, ancestors, and bush spirits are
directly addressed in prayers. Nevertheless, every prayer,
to whomever it is specifically addressed, starts by invoking
god and earth:

"Informing god,
Informing the earth,
We have come here to . . . ."

The association of god with earth is also apparent in the
association of gypsum (tany malandy; literally: silky earth)
with defunct chiefs. Regular media of chiefly ancestors, for
instance, while awaiting the arrival of their spirits, some-
times apply wet gypsum to parts of their heads and necks.
Only regular media of chiefly ancestors generally have a
supply of gypsum on hand. Apart from possessions these
people may also smear wet gypsum on parts of the body where pains occur or they may drink water, in which some gypsum has been stirred, to help alleviate internal disorders. It is clear, however, that the gypsum is only considered effective by virtue of its association with defunct chiefs in general, and by virtue of the association of a specific chiefly ancestor with its medium in particular.

That gypsum should symbolize earth in its godly or chiefly aspect is understandable in view of the fact that earth (soil) also stands for dirt. It is difficult to exaggerate Sakalava abhorrence of dirt. Dirt is associated with urine and feces, with the area of the human body related to urinal and fecal functions, with legs to some extent, and with feet because bare feet are always in contact with the ground, and, finally, with soil. Soil is dirty because it is a receptacle of dirty matter such as feces and urine of animals, especially dogs, and humans. White gypsum is one of the few forms of earth that is obviously not contaminated by dirty matter. As such it can serve as a symbol for the supernatural and unadulterated qualities of earth.

DIVINATION. Divination is treated in detail in Chapter Four. Here I will limit the discussion to what seems especially salient in an overall assessment of Sakalava supernaturalism.

Sakalava divination is a means of ascertaining the cause of misfortune. To this end the diviner lays out a number
of seeds and produces a configuration according to established rules. This configuration is the basis of a consultation. A given consultation essentially concerns a configuration drawn at random from the total number of possible configurations, a number which is large but finite.

Before laying out the seeds the diviner tells the divination system (sikily) to "go get the word from you". While saying this he moves his hand in a circular motion over the seeds in their totality. Once this is done the diviner lays out the seeds and produces a configuration. From this time on no more reference is made to the divination system as a separate entity. At the end of the consultation the seeds are unceremoniously gathered and put away.

Each configuration is made up of patterns and sub-patterns the interpretation of which yields the desired result. Usually the interpretation takes the form of: "A person belonging to a certain category of people (for instance the category of all relatives who live to the South) has applied wizardry to make the interrogator ill," or else, "A supernatural being wants something from the interrogator."

At times, however, patterns occur that are bad in and of themselves, independent of the action of another being. Competent diviners know how to eliminate the ill effects of such patterns. Essentially it involves putting a special type of sand (very light colored and very fine grained; probably a wind deposit) on the seeds of the pattern, collecting
sand and throwing it away in a direction appropriate for the pattern in question, together with parts of certain plants, animals (for instance a dead insect of some kind) or other objects, again depending on the particular pattern.

Thus, when a bad pattern occurs in a consultation the evil forces associated with it can be trapped and thrown away. Similarly, a bad pattern can also be laid out apart from a consultation for the express purpose of tapping evil forces with which to harm people. To do this the diviner need not use the established rules and construct configuration after configuration until, by chance, a configuration occurs which contains the desired pattern. Instead, he can lay down the pattern in question directly form memory. It is very difficult to get Sakalava to talk about this in specific terms: it is feared that admitting detailed knowledge about the mechanics of sorcery will cause one to be considered an evil-doer.

While some patterns are considered to be bad, others are felt to be especially good. When good patterns occur in an actual consultation they are usually ignored. Apart from consultations, however, they can be laid out and tapped as before with diviner's sand to be used in anti-sorcery medicine. Such medicines also always involve parts of numerous plants.

DAY AND DESTINY. The subject of Day (andro) and Destiny (vinta) involves the determination of "bad days" for child-
birth or good days for ceremonies and the removal of the
destiny from infants born on bad days or from people who
are severely ill. Whereas many Sakalava know divination,
only a very few are experts in Day and Destiny. In divi-
 nation a little knowledge is often sufficient for daily use,
and errors are of little enduring consequence. In the case
of Day and Destiny, on the other hand, a small error could
have disastrous effects. For instance, if a sorcerer in
his attempt to remove the bad destiny of a child born on a
bad day, makes a mistake, the entire procedure could back-
fire and kill the expert and others involved. For another
example, in the planning of chiefly ceremonies at Manonga
no one expert takes responsibility for determining a good
day; instead, three local experts usually put their heads
together to decide on a desirable date for the event.

One of the persons at Manonga who is considered an expert
was my divination informant. When this informant taught
me divination he was very casual. When I told him I also
wanted to learn about Day and Destiny he hesitated for a
long time but finally consented. Many of my Sakalava
friends and acquaintances were surprised that I had found
someone who was willing to teach me this subject. In general,
experts in Day and Destiny are reluctant to teach their
knowledge. They know that calamities resulting from in-
correct use of the information will be laid at the feet of
the instructor, whom people will suspect of having tricked
his student. I am sure one of the reasons my informant agreed to instruct me was that he understood that my interest was purely academic.

Nevertheless, there a strange quality about our sessions quite different from what I had experienced with this same informant on other occasions. He insisted that I listen very carefully and in particular he insisted that I copy the various spells for removing bad destinies exactly the way he told me. I am not aware of any other spheres of Sakalava magic in which spells are so important. Most Sakalava magic corresponds to the African material in Evans-Pritchard's comparison of Zande and Trobriand magic. Day and Destiny is the only exception I know of which fits the Melanesian model (Evans-Pritchard, 1929).

Just as the seven days of the week alternate in seven day cycles, the twelve destinies which together span a period of twenty-eight days (some last two days, others three), alternate in twenty-eight day cycles (Figure 3-a). A bad day (andro raty) is caused by the coincidence of a particular destiny with a particular day of the week. There are a total of ten potential bad coincidences, one for each of four days of the week and two for each of the other three days (Figure 3-b). When I was studying the subject, four bad coincidences occurred during a twenty-eight day cycle (Figure 3-a).

Since twenty-eight is a multiple of seven, all other
things being equal, the destinies would align themselves with the same days from one four week cycle to the next. In general this holds true for a number of cycles in a row. However, when the moon "dies" during a destiny which lasts three days and also reappears during one which lasts three days, the start of the destiny cycle is moved one day back.

Six of the twelve destinies are called by terms also used for elementary divination patterns (compare Figure 3-a with Figure 5). Just as elementary divination patterns can be arranged in groups corresponding to the cardinal points of the compass (see Figure 5), the same can be done with the destinies. In fact, there is a tendency for the progression of the various destinies in the destiny cycle to correspond to a clockwise sweep of 360° through the compass. My informant was somewhat confused on this point. Evidently, exact knowledge of this correspondence is not of crucial importance for an expert in Day and Destiny.

A child born on a bad day is called a "strong day child" (zaza mahery andro). Such a child will cause the death of his parents unless the bad destiny is removed.

We saw that certain undesirable divination patterns can strike a person either directly or indirectly through the action of an evil-doer. The same holds for destiny. A bad destiny can directly descend on a person at birth, but can also be tapped by an evil-doer for the purpose of harming someone. A person who is sick as a result of such black
magic will surely die unless the ill effects are removed.

The removal of the bad destiny of a strong day child is nearly identical to the procedure used for a person who is severely ill and whose illness has been divined to be the result of sorcery involving destiny (see Chapter Four). The exorcism takes place at the bank of a stream. The parents sit with their feet in the water, while one of them holds the strong day child in his lap. Similarly, in the case of a sorcery victim, it is the patient who sits with his feet in the water.

The exorcist now recites a list of questions he addresses to the various bad destinies together with their replies. In particular, taking each of the ten bad destinies in a row, he asks whether it is the one responsible. Each one in its turn answers, through the exorcist, "Do you think I am responsible? I can be removed." When the exorcist asks "With what?" the bad destiny explains, again through the exorcist, what is involved in its removal. Generally, for rich people a zebu with a certain coloration pattern is required, and for poor people some cups and/or cloth with similar coloration patterns. After the exorcist has gone through all the bad destinies, the parents with their child, or the patient, walk into the water and submerge themselves for a considerable period of time.

Upon emerging from the water the participants go to the house of the exorcist to continue the procedure, which now
becomes more specifically directed at the bad destiny in question. The exorcism ends with all involved pressing a plant associated with the bad destiny under the soles of their feet, saying: "I chew this strong destiny so that it does not chew me." After this everybody goes home. The cattle or cups and cloth that were brought by the clients become the property of the exorcist.

While discussing divination we mentioned that sorcery concoctions and anti-sorcery medicines always involve certain plants. Here we notice that bad destinies are also associated with particular plants. Divination, sorcery and Day and Destiny are all manifestations of non-personified supernaturalism. Thus, we see some of the flora align themselves with the non-personified variety of supernaturalism. Interestingly, with bush spirits we saw a similar phenomenon. There, some of the fauna were found to merge into personified supernaturalism.

TABOOS. Most foreigners in Madagascar are impressed by the ubiquity of taboos (see, for instance, Ruud, 1960). This also happened to me. During my first few months in the area of Besalampy I constantly ran up against taboos. People would admonish me, for instance, not to whistle during thunder, not to pat a puppy (it would be difficult to get close to an adult dog), not to touch someone with my feet, and so on. Soon observing these taboos almost became second nature to me and I ceased to recognize them explicitly.
Apart from such general taboos there are also taboos which only apply to a family, to a few individuals or to only one person. One type of taboo originates when a spirit tells its regular medium about its taboos, expecting him to follow these. In an effort to be as meticulous as possible, people usually extend such taboos from the medium to include those who live in close proximity to him or her, especially his or her spouse and children. By sheer inertia the children, in turn, often continue to follow the taboos of their parents, even after the parents have died. With time many of these taboos are probably forgotten.

Taboos that derive from spirit possession are of many kinds. They may involve a prohibition against eating meat of certain types of animals or fish, eating certain types of relishes or fruits, drinking milk, coffee or tea or certain types of alcoholic beverages, fetching water at certain times of the day, receiving presents on certain days, and so on.

Another type of taboo which only applies to a certain group of people is the ancestral taboo. Ancestral taboos usually involve prohibitions against the rearing and/or eating of zebus with certain types of coloration patterns (see Chapter Five).
Chapter Four

DIVINATION AND WIZARDRY

The Mechanics of Divination

When someone is sick he, or one of his close and trusted relatives, goes to see a diviner (mpisikily). Preferably the diviner is himself a close and trusted relative. If no close kinsman is available an outside expert with a good reputation is consulted.

When the patient or the person acting on his behalf arrives at the house of the diviner he states the reason for his visit without going into much detail. It suffices to say, "I have not been feeling well lately and do not know why...please consult my divination system," or "My wife is sick." or "My son is sick." and so forth. The diviner is usually cooperative and does not charge for his time. The client hands the diviner some money and a gift is rarely in excess of 100 francs.

The stock-in-trade is a quantity of approximately 150 seeds from a tree called Fany (the word fany also means dizzy). These seeds are circular, approximately one centimeter in diameter and one to two millimeters thick. Neither of the two sides of a seed is in any way distinctive. From the edge towards the center the thickness of a seed
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The stock-in-trade of a diviner is a quantity of approximately 150 seeds from a tree called Fany (the word fany also means dizzy). These seeds are circular, approximately one centimeter in diameter and one to two millimeters thick. Neither of the two sides of a seed is in any way distinctive. From the edge towards the center the thickness of a seed
decreases so that a seed has the appearance of a miniature saucer.

In preparation for a consultation the diviner sits down on the floor and, facing eastwards, puts his seeds in a heap before him. Then, moving his hand in a circular motion through the seeds as if wanting to mix them, he asks the divination system to disclose the reason for the sickness of the client or the latter's relative (see also Decary, 1970 and Hebert, 1961).

After the invocation the diviner divides the seeds into four piles of approximately equal size. Starting with one of these small piles he removes seeds two by two until either one or two seeds are left. These one or two seeds he puts in the upper right hand position of an imaginary four-by-four matrix. Repeating the process with the second pile again yields one or two seeds which are entered in the position under the first one. After all four piles have thus been treated the right hand column of the imaginary four-by-four matrix is filled. Now all remaining seeds are amassed in one big heap and again divided into four little piles. These are treated as before and yield the second column of the matrix. After this entire process is repeated four times the matrix is complete. The resulting arrangement of seeds I call a Key. The total number of keys that can be constructed this way equals $65536 \left(2^{16}\right)$. An example of a key is shown in Figure 4-a.
Figure 4: Example of a Key and its Derivative Configuration.

a Key.

\begin{verbatim}
4 3 2 1
\hline
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
\end{verbatim}

b The entire configuration resulting from key "a".

\begin{verbatim}
8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
\hline
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16
\hline
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
4 3 2 1
\hline
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16
\hline
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
\end{verbatim}

The numbers correspond to the first twenty-four houses listed in Table 3. Each number appears closest to the first position in a house. Thus, for example:

- house number 1 is read from top to bottom,
- house number 5 is read from right to left,
- house number 17 is read from right to left,
- house number 21 is read from left to right.
Given a key, the rest of the configuration is laid out using precise rules which do not involve any chance factors. The rules are listed in Table 2. Figure 4-b shows the complete configuration resulting from the key of Figure 4-a. Competent diviners do notnormally lay out columns five through eight. The usual form of a configuration is as shown in Figure 4-c.

The twelve columns of Figure 4-c are all named. The same holds for rows five through eight and rows seventeen through twenty-four. Additions of certain rows and/or columns are also named. A named column, row or addition of rows and/or columns I will refer to as a house. A complete listing of houses is given in Table 3.

Basically, as we will see shortly, divination is a method of dividing up the list of Table 3 and arranging the houses in a number of clusters. Each cluster tells a story depending on the houses it contains and the meaning associated with each house. Most of these meanings are straightforward but a few I found somewhat ambiguous. The sixth house, for example, stands for dirt or sadness bordering on anger. Which meaning is appropriate depends on the context. In the context of food, dirt is appropriate, in conjunction with a third party it is usually anger. The twelfth house stands for god, bush, a feature of nature, spirit possession, and surprise. If there is any reason to let this house stand for spirit possession the other possibilities are ignored.
Table 2: Rules for the Construction of an Entire Configuration Starting from a Key

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>column number</th>
<th>key</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>first row of the key read from right to left</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>second row of the key read from right to left</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>third row of the key read from right to left</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>fourth row of the key read from right to left</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>columns 7 + 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>columns 10 + 14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>columns 10 + 15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>columns 1 + 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>columns 1 + 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>columns 1 + 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>columns 9 + 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>columns 9 + 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example of addition of columns:

\[ 7 + 8 = 9 \]

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
\circ & \circ & \circ & \circ & \circ & \circ \\
\circ & \circ & \circ & \circ & \circ & \circ \\
\circ & \circ & \circ & \circ & \circ & \circ \\
\circ & \circ & \circ & \circ & \circ & \circ \\
\circ & \circ & \circ & \circ & \circ & \circ \\
\end{array}
\]

The sum of the first entries of columns 7 and 8 is uneven and is represented by one seed in the first position of column 9. Similarly, the sum of the second entries of columns 7 and 8 is even and is represented by two seeds in the second position of column 9, and so forth.

Table 3: List of Houses

The first twenty-four houses can be read directly from a configuration (cf. Figure 4c).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tale</td>
<td>male interrogator or husband of female interrogator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Maly</td>
<td>cattle, wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fahatelo</td>
<td>a third person (usually assumed to be male)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 - Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Belady</td>
<td>earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fianaha</td>
<td>child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Abily</td>
<td>dirt, sadness bordering on anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Alisay</td>
<td>female interrogator or wife of male interrogator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fahavalo</td>
<td>disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Fahasivy</td>
<td>medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Moasy</td>
<td>medicine man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Haja</td>
<td>food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Haky</td>
<td>god, bush, feature of nature, spirit possession, surprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sorotá</td>
<td>cemetary, ancestral spirit, old person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Saily</td>
<td>relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Lala</td>
<td>road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Akiba</td>
<td>house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Vy</td>
<td>steel, iron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Olo raty</td>
<td>untrustworthy person (usually assumed to be male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Zavavy am traño hafa</td>
<td>woman in a different house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Sasapōna</td>
<td>ineffective action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Vola</td>
<td>talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Voriky</td>
<td>sorcery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Alisay am traño hafa</td>
<td>woman in a different house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Hafalia</td>
<td>to be happy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remaining houses involve additions of other houses as indicated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Tolaky</td>
<td>10 + 3 witchcraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Tōky</td>
<td>11 + 8 alcoholic beverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Maty aho</td>
<td>12 + 4 I will die</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Sorotá maty</td>
<td>13 + 4 cemetary, ancestral spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Sorotá velo</td>
<td>13 + 5 old person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Alokiny olo maty</td>
<td>13 + 3 open-air morgue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Maty tampoky</td>
<td>14 + 3 sudden death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Miopaky</td>
<td>16 + 1 weak as the result of illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Neñiny</td>
<td>12 + 15 regret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Miveriny</td>
<td>11 + 15 return, lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Menga</td>
<td>9 + 16 leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Saokiarety</td>
<td>9 + 8 disease which has taken hold of someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Ha veloma</td>
<td>11 + 4 the person will live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Larobia</td>
<td>9 + 10 Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Kamisy</td>
<td>10 + 11 Thursday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Zoma</td>
<td>11 + 12 Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Sabotsy</td>
<td>12 + 13 Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Alahady</td>
<td>13 + 14 Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Tinainy</td>
<td>14 + 15 Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Fandrava</td>
<td>15 + 16 Tuesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Fanjava</td>
<td>12 + 2 money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For instance, if the interrogator is the regular medium of a spirit, then the joint occurrence in one cluster of house numbers one (assuming the interrogator is male) and twelve is interpreted as possession of the interrogator by his spirit. The other meanings associated with house number twelve are considered too vague to be of immediate consequence. The thirteenth house stands for cemetery, an ancestral spirit or an old person. By considering houses twenty-eight (cemetery, ancestral spirit) and twenty-nine (old person) it becomes often clear whether the thirteenth house refers to the dead or the living. Houses nineteen and twenty-three have slightly different names. The difference relates to the first word which stands for woman, female, girl, and so forth. In actual consultations I was unable to detect any difference between the meanings attached to these two houses. The thirty-fourth house carries two divergent meanings. The name of the house sounds related to the Merina verb *mivirina* which means "to return". But the sound also suggests the word *very* which means "lost".

Two houses in the list refer to wizardry of which the Sakalava distinguish two types. The first type, termed *vorikey*, involves substances imbued with evil forces and is represented by house twenty-two. They type of wizardry corresponds to what Middleton and Winter define as sorcery--"evil magic against others"--which, they note, in Africa usually takes the form of "medicines" (1963:3). The second,
tolaky, represented by house twenty-five, fits Middleton and Winter's definition of witchcraft--"a mystical and innate power which can be used by its possessor to harm other people" (1963:3).

The first sixteen houses occupy a special position. These are the only ones involved in the additions which lead to houses twenty-five through forty-five. Whereas all other houses are designated by common terms with standard meanings, most of the first sixteen houses are not. The only exceptions to this are the third (Fahatelo, literally "the third"), the tenth (Moasy: "medicineman") and the fifteenth house (Lala: "road"). A few of the first sixteen houses are denoted by terms which, when used in everyday speech, obviously refer back to divination. The eighth and the ninth house are interesting examples of this. The literal translation of the name of the eighth house is "the eighth." This house stands for disease. Instead of saying "Why are you sick?" people sometimes ask "What is causing you to be eighth?" (ino raha mampahavalo anao?). The ninth house is literally called "the ninth," which word is used interchangeably with the word òly for medicine. These two examples indicate the importance of divination in day-to-day life.

To see how the list of houses of Table 3 is divided up in clusters note that in an actual consultation the various houses of the configuration are occupied by elementary
divination patterns. For instance, house number three of Figure 4 is occupied by the elementary divination pattern two-one-one-one. There are a total of sixteen elementary divination patterns. These patterns are arranged in five groups, three of which corresponding to three of the cardinal points of the compass and two "located" in the west. The elementary divination patterns and their groupings are shown in Figure 5.

Once a configuration has been laid out, divination proceeds as follows. The diviner notes the house associated with the divinatory problem and the group of the elementary divination pattern occupying this house. For example, if the client is a male who came to ask about his own health, divination will be centered on the first house. This house is occupied by an elementary divination pattern belonging to a certain group. In the example of Figure 4 this is group West". The diviner then scans the rest of the configuration and notes other houses associated with house number one. Thus results a list: the list under West" in Table 4 refers to the example of Figure 4.

Such a list of houses forms the basis of interpretation. In general, the diviner starts by only scanning the first twenty-four houses of his configuration. These are the houses that are immediately visible and do not have to be calculated. This leads to a partial list: in the example of Table 4 the partial list of group West" includes all houses
Figure 5: Elementary Divination Patterns

East

- alohomora
- alitsimay
- adabara

West

- aloka la
- alikisy
- alakarabo

West'

North

- adalo
- alimiza
- alibeavo
- karija

South

- alahasady
- asombola
- mahia
- betsivongo

West''
Table 4: Groupings of Houses Belonging to the Configuration of Figure 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>West</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>male interrogator or husband of female interrogator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>a third person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>cemetary, ancestral spirit, old person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>steel, iron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>witchcraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>cemetary, ancestral spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>old person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>sudden death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>regret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Monday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

South

| 2    | cattle, wealth |
| 4    | earth |
| 5    | child |
| 12   | god, bush, feature of nature, spirit possession, surprise |
| 18   | untrustworthy person |
| 20   | ineffective action |
| 21   | talk |
| 23   | woman in a different house |
| 26   | alcoholic beverage |
| 27   | I will die |
| 30   | open-air morgue |
| 32   | weak as the result of illness |
| 34   | return, lost |
| 35   | leave |
| 44   | Tuesday |
| 45   | money |

North

| 6    | dirt, sadness bordering on anger |
| 7    | female interrogator or wife of male interrogator |
| 8    | disease |
| 9    | medicine |
| 10   | medicine man |
| 11   | food |
| 14   | relative |
| 36   | disease which has taken hold of someone |
| 37   | the person will live |
beginning from the top and down to, and including, house number seventeen. If a partial list provides sufficient information to answer the question of the interrogator no more houses are examined. Otherwise other evidence is admitted. In particular, the first additional house to be examined is house number twenty-five which stands for witchcraft.

The partial list in group West' of Table 4 does not include information related to disease. It is only when additional houses are examined that this problem is solved. The conclusion is that the interrogator (1) is the victim of witchcraft (25). Searching for the evil-doer we notice that the list includes a third person (3), and an old person (13, 29). These two denotations are merged and interpreted to mean that the culprit is an old person. The list of houses originates in the west further narrowing down the category to which the witchcraft practitioner belongs--he
lives west of the victim. The act of witchcraft took place either on a Saturday (41), Sunday (42) or Monday (43). The victim will die a sudden death (31) if nothing is done to remedy the situation.

The rest of the information is somewhat ambiguous. Cemetery (28) may be taken to mean the place where the victim ends up if nothing is done. Its inclusion may also be interpreted to mean that the act of witchcraft took place during a funeral or a second funeral (see Chapter Five) or that the witchcraft practitioner came from a funeral or second funeral and while passing (15) the house (16) of the victim committed his evil act. Steel (17) is most likely connected to the machete of the evil-doer (virtually all Sakalava males carry machetes at all times; women often carry pocket knives). Regret (33) obviously refers to the feelings of the victim.

Suppose the client comes to ask about his child (5). In that case the diviner observes that house number five is occupied by an elementary divination pattern belonging to the southern group (see Figure 4). The entire list of houses occupied by members of this group is shown in Table 4. The houses which are immediately visible do not involve sickness. It is only when house number thirty-two is examined that disease becomes relevant to the group. The interpretation is that on a Tuesday (44) an untrustworthy person (18) and a woman (23)—presumably husband and wife—
who live to the south of the child prayed (21) to god (12) and earth (4), probably to make the child sick. Their action was not as effective (20) as they had hoped. The weak condition (32) of the child comes (34) and goes (35). The child is afraid it may die (27). This would give rise to the slaughtering of cattle (2) and the consumption of alcoholic beverages (26) at an open-air morgue (30). Money (45) would be given to the bereaved relatives. An alternative interpretation is that the prayer (4, 12 and 21) took place at an open-air morgue (30) where the evil-doers (18 and 23) were gathered at the occasion of another person's death.

If the consultation concerns a female client the diviner refers to the northern group (see Figure 4 and Table 4). The woman (7) is sick (8) because a relative (14) who lives to the north of the victim has added something dirty (6) to her food (11). With the aid of medicine (9) from a medicine man (1) she will recover (37). Additional information underscores the disease (36) of the victim. The evil act took place on a Wednesday (38), Thursday (39) or Friday (40). An alternative interpretation is that when she went to a medicineman (10)--a relative (14) living north of her--for a medicine (9), the medicine man added something dirty (6) to make her sick (8 and 36).

Sometimes, after examining the entire list of houses associated with house number one (assuming a male patient) it is found that disease is not relevant to the group. Yet, the
interrogator may be severely ill. This discrepancy is explained by saying that divination does not always focus on the present. Sometimes it focuses on events of the past, at other times it predicts the future. In fact, configurations which seem irrelevant to the problem at hand can often be related to past events. Similarly, a person may find himself in a present situation which matches a past consultation. Such incidences help support the credibility of divination.

When a group is not represented among the first sixteen houses it is said that the ancestors are lost (raza very). In the example of Table 4 this condition applies to groups East and West'. One would expect this to be interpreted to mean that the ancestors are truly lost. But in practice, whether one or more groups are absent from the first sixteen houses is often not even noticed or, if noticed, largely ignored.

When a group is represented by only one of the first sixteen houses special significance is attached to this fact. This is the only situation in which the elementary divination pattern itself is deemed important. For example, if Alohomora occupies the eighth house and no other houses among the first sixteen are occupied by members of the eastern group this is interpreted favorably. The forces associated with this pattern could be tapped with diviner's sand and used to combat sorcery. In an actual consultation this is never done.
Instead, the pattern, after being noted, is simply ignored. If a diviner needs to tap such forces he lays out a key which he remembers gives rise to the pattern desired.

If, for another example, the eleventh house is held by Alohomora and no more representatives of the eastern group are among the first sixteen houses of a configuration, a negative interpretation follows. This particular case is called "bitter food, bitter water." The negative forces associated with this pattern have to be tapped with diviner's sand and thrown away in water in an eastern direction lest they harm the interrogator.

Sample of Divination Configurations

Above I have explained the mechanics of divination and treated one example in detail. In this section I present ten configurations which I have drawn at random from the universe of all possible configurations and discussed with my divination informant. I will concentrate on houses one (male), five (child) and seven (female) and in each case try to determine the cause of disease and the identity of the evil-doer (for example: relative/non-relative, male/female). The various configurations and the list of groupings associated with each one are presented in the Appendix.

CASE I. Houses number one, five and seven all appear in group West". When these houses appear together in the same group it is usually assumed that houses one and seven
represent husband and wife and that five stands for their child. Neither of these three people would cause any of the other two harm. When focusing on the husband (1) it is found that he is the victim of sorcery (22) by a relative (14) of unspecified sex. Exactly the same conclusion is reached in the case of the child (5) and that of the wife (7).

CASE II. Here we find the male interrogator (1) in the northern group. The man thinks that he will die (27) but none of the other members of the northern group make reference to his disease. Consequently the consultation is irrelevant to his present concern.

The child (5) is in group West' together with dirt or sadness bordering on anger (6). This is another example of a consultation which is irrelevant to disease. According to my informant this particular case probably refers to the sadness of a child who does not have brothers and sisters. In an actual consultation any reason for sadness could have been offered but no matter how well a reason fits a particular child the consultation remains irrelevant to the disease from which the child suffers.

The woman (7) appears in group West' and is sick as the result of sorcery (22). The sorcerers are a man (18) and a woman (23)--probably husband and wife--who are relatives (14) of the victim.

CASE III. Father (1) and child (5) are both members of the eastern group. The group as a whole does not provide
information relevant to the disease of either one of them. The female interrogator (7) is represented in group West'. She is sick (36) as a result of sorcery (22) committed by a male (3) and a female (23)---probably husband and wife---who are relatives (14) of the victim.

CASE IV. Father (1) and child (5) are again clustered in the same group---the southern group this time. When the father prayed (21) to god (12) and earth (4) for offspring (5) he promised (21) them something if they would grant his wish. But when he was given offspring he did not fulfill (20) his promise. Now god and earth are angry with him. They made him sick (32) and are telling him to leave (35) his present residence and find a place to live in the south. If we ask why the child (5) is sick the same reasons apply. God and earth made him sick because of the unfulfilled promise of his father.

The woman (7) appears in the eastern group. She is sick (36) because she ate food (11) with sorcery (22). The evildoers are female (19 and 23) relatives (14) of her.

CASE V. The northern group contains the male interrogator (1) but the group does not focus in on the issue of disease. In the southern group we find the child (5) to be the victim of an act of witchcraft (25) committed by an untrustworthy male (18) who is not a relative. House number twelve (god, bush, feature of nature, spirit possession, surprise) here stands for the surprise of the child
that he has fallen the victim of witchcraft while in the possession of an anti-witchcraft medicine (9).

The woman (7) in group West' is sick (36) but the reasons are unclear. She has promised (21) the medicine man (10) something and he is happy (24). It could be that the medicine man is happy because she has promised him something if he cures her of her disease. It is also possible that she made him a promise in the past which she did not honor so that the medicine man is happy that she has fallen ill again. Whichever possibility applies, the consultation remains inconclusive as to the reasons of her affliction. It is certainly not the result of any action on the part of the medicine man.

CASE VI. The male interrogator (1) appears in group West'. He is sick (8, 32) because of a promise (21) made to his regular spirit (12), a promise he did not keep. What if the victim is not a regular medium of a spirit? My informant insisted that that could not be as the consultation obviously refers to someone who is a medium.

Mother (7) and child (5) are members of the eastern group. It is not clear why either one of them is sick. If house number eleven (food) had been included in this group it would have been concluded that the victims had eaten food to which female (19, 23) relatives (14) had added dirt (6).

CASE VII. The man (1), a member of group West', is sick (8, 32) as the result of lightning (12) which he
encountered on the road (15). The child (5), who is present in the southern group, became sick after eating food (1) to which female (19, 23) relatives (14) had added sorcery substances (22). The eastern group contains the woman (7). She is sick (36) but there is no clue as to the cause of her disease.

CASE VIII. Both father (1) and child (5) belong to group West". The consultation is in no way related to disease. The woman (7) appears in the northern group. She is sick (36) as the result of witchcraft (25) committed by an unrelated male (18) while she was eating (11).

CASE IX. The man (1) appears in the eastern group. The other members of this group do not make reference to his disease. The child (5) in group West" is ill (8). An untrustworthy male (18) is involved but it is not clear in what capacity. He is not the evil-doer as none of the houses in the group refer to evil action. Only in the presence of houses twenty-two (sorcery) or twenty-five (witchcraft) or the combined presence of houses six (dirt, sadness bordering on anger) and eleven (food) could the untrustworthy male be blamed.

The woman (7) in the northern group is surprised (12) to have fallen sick (32, 36). While eating (11) she became the victim of witchcraft (25). There is no clue to the identity of the evil-doer.

CASE X. The northern group, which contains father (1)
and child (5) makes no reference to disease. In the presence of either of houses eight (disease), thirty-two (weak as the result of illness) or thirty-six (disease has taken hold of someone) it would have been concluded that the disease was caused by the ancestors (13, 28) who were hungry and wanted to be fed (11). While discussing this with my informant I mentioned that apart from the ancestors (28) an old person (29) was involved as well so that the significance of house thirteen (cemetery, ancestral spirit, old person) remained in doubt. He countered that since house thirteen occurs in conjunction with house four (earth) it obviously stands for cemetery and the ancestral spirits who live there.

The woman (7), who is a member of group West', is sick (36) as the result of sorcery (22). The evil-doer is a male (18) relative (14). My informant added that the relative is probably jealous of her wealth (2) and wants to drive her away (35).

Interpretation of Sample Results

Table 5 shows a summary of the results of the previous section. Each case gave rise to three consultations, one each for the man, the child and the woman, so that the ten cases represent a total of thirty consultations. Half of these are of undetermined cause. Of the other fifteen only four involve supernatural agents while the rest show human
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agents at work.

The relative unimportance of supernatural agents in effecting disease also follows from the vague descriptions of houses twelve (god, bush, feature of nature, spirit possession, surprise) and thirteen (cemetery, ancestral spirit, old person) in Table 3. If these houses played more important roles in divining the cause of disease one would expect much sharper definitions.

The eleven consultations which point to human agents as causing disease involve eight instances of sorcery, three of witchcraft and none of purposeful contamination of food with dirt. As before, the unimportance of purposeful contamination of food with dirt as a cause of disease seems related to the ambiguity in the description of house six (dirt, sadness bordering on anger). No such ambiguity is present in the definition of house twenty-two (sorcery) or twenty-five (witchcraft).

Witchcraft is relatively less important than sorcery. In part this may be due to the fact that witchcraft occurs less frequently than sorcery in groupings associated with houses number one (male), five (child) or seven (woman). But even if it is assumed that witchcraft and sorcery occur with equal frequency in conjunction with houses one, five or seven, the mechanics of divination still favors sorcery. The elementary divination pattern occupying the house which stands for sorcery is immediately visible in a configuration.
On the other hand, the elementary divination pattern occupying the house which represents witchcraft has to be found by the addition of patterns occupying two other houses. For this reason witchcraft sometimes goes unnoticed. In particular, if sorcery and witchcraft appear in the same grouping, the diviner after noticing that sorcery is involved will not check on witchcraft.

Turning to the identity of the human agent we find him to be a relative in eight out of eleven incidences. Only two evil-doers were identified as non-relatives and in one case the relationship remained unknown. All eight cases with relatives involved sorcery. The three cases with human agents not identified as relatives all involved witchcraft.

The association of sorcery with relatives and of witchcraft with non-relatives agrees with Sakalava notions about wizardry (see below). An additional observation along the same lines follows from the definition of house twenty-five (see Table 3). This house, which stands for witchcraft, is obtained by the addition of houses three (a third person) and ten (a medicine man). Thus, witchcraft is associated with the magical knowledge of outsiders.

As for the sex of the human agent we notice that three times the agents were males, twice they were females while in six instances both males and females were involved. Thus it seems that men and women are represented with equal frequency. This also agrees with the opinion of my divination
informant.

Causes and Cures

In the previous section we saw that sorcery is often associated with relatives, while witchcraft usually involves non-relatives. In popular beliefs about witchcraft and sorcery these same associations are also made, but here again the distinction is not absolute as the same individual may engage in either.

Sakalava ideas about sorcery are quite explicit. It is thought, for example, that an evil-doer puts dangerous substances into someone's food or leaves such substances in the latter's house. At the same time beneficent magical substances can be used to counter the ill effects of sorcery or for future protection.

Sakalava concepts about witchcraft are less clear. Witchcraft involves mystical and innate powers but the emphasis is not as much on these as it is on the distance of operation. Sorcery presupposes proximity--the sorcerer has to be able to put something in one's food or in one's drink, or to leave something in one's house. All the witchcraft practitioner has to do is look especially when his victim is eating or, worse yet, drinking an alcoholic beverage. At the moment the food or drink is passing through a person's throat a witchcraft practitioner, simply by looking, can transform it into a very dangerous, even lethal, substance.
This difference in distance of operation reflects the closeness of relationship between evil-doer and victim. In sorcery the two parties involved are either related, or if not related, then at least on close enough terms that they occasionally meet and talk to each other. The two parties in witchcraft, on the other hand, may be complete strangers to one another and usually are. All that is required is that the evil-doer steal a glance in the direction of his victim while the latter is swallowing food or liquids.

It is significant that alcoholic beverages are considered especially dangerous as raw material for witchcraft practitioners. Alcohol consumption is associated with ceremonies. Many ceremonies are public occasions drawing many people not all of whom are related. At such ceremonies people who are complete strangers to each other often find themselves drinking in each other's company. This is the standard situation which is thought to give rise to witchcraft. I have seen people actually put pieces of cloth over their heads while taking a drink at such occasions.

The conceptual difference between sorcery and witchcraft is constantly reinforced by divination. This reinforcement does not involve the opinions of the participants. However, once the blame of misfortune has been pinned on either witchcraft or sorcery and the direction of origin has been ascertained, personal opinions are allowed to play a role in the actual identification of the culprit.
Take sorcery as an example. When the diviner proclaims that the evil-doer is a male who lives to the south of the victim, the latter will not blame just anybody who belongs to this category. Instead, the victim will fix the blame on someone whom he believes to harbor ill feelings toward him. Such ill feelings are usually traced back to past arguments and fights. Such arguments and fights are often about issues which cannot be resolved by resorting to clear and unambiguous cultural rules. One such issue is inheritance (see Chapter Five).

The suspicions of an individual never remain focused on one or only a few persons. If the individual consults a diviner several times in a row he will probably find that, from one consultation to the next, the person who is causing him harm lives in a different quadrant of the compass. Even if by chance one cardinal direction were to come up more often than the others, the additional information, such as the sex of the evil-doer or the day the evil act took place and so forth, is likely to introduce enough variability so that the blame will not repeatedly be fixed on the same individual. In the long run, this serves to randomize the choices an individual makes from the total field of possible suspects. Divination thus gives rise to and supports the pervasive atmosphere of apprehension and mistrust so characteristic of Sakalava society.

Accusations are never made openly. Because of the
randomizing effect of the divination process many members of a community at one time or other have been under suspicion by other members. But with divination being so common, new apprehensions are constantly introduced so that alliances based on old suspicions are not likely to crystallize. In discussing the lack of accusations of wizardry among the Pedi of South Africa, Basil Sansom, identifying a situation similar to that among the Sakalava, explains: "The accuser will not address himself to an audience already divided into familiar factions or parties. He can have no surety of support and, without support, his accusations become but a personal declaration of belief in another's enmity towards him" (1972:221). At the same time an accusation of sorcery is a grave insult. Already being convinced of the other person's ill feelings, the accuser would not want to add oil to the fire, as this would surely cause the culprit to step up his evil practices.

Much of what has been said about sorcery also holds for witchcraft, the major difference being the question of motivation. Unlike sorcery, witchcraft is usually associated with non-relatives and strangers. The motivations of strangers are unknowable and one does not know how to avoid inciting their wrath. This makes strangers particularly dangerous.

When through divination a patient has learned that he is the victim of sorcery or witchcraft he will ask the diviner
to give him medicine to counter the ill effects. Most competent diviners know how to make anti-wizardry medicine. Essentially it involves the trapping of the beneficent forces associated with favorable divination patterns, using diviner's sand (see Chapter Three). The patient is given the sand charged with the beneficent forces in question together with twigs, leaves and pieces of bark of certain plants and trees. Upon reaching home the patient adds these substances to water and, bringing the water to a boil, prepares a brew. Depending on the instructions of the diviner (I do not know the basis of his recommendations) the brew is either taken internally or used to wet those parts of the body closest to the afflicted area.

To prescribe curative medicine a diviner need not know the identity of the evil-doer. Diviners may have their own suspicions about people in the community but their personal opinions are rarely asked. Consequently a diviner is unlikely to become a spokesman who once and for all identifies the evil for the community or a segment of it. Thus, not only from the point of view of individuals but also from that of entire groups the dangers remain elusive.

In the administration of curative medicine it is likewise unnecessary to know the identity of the culprit. The patient could simply use the medicines as directed and consider the case closed. But the question "Who has done it and exactly by what means?" looms importantly in a patient's
mind. It is felt, of course, that the answers to these questions allow one to better protect oneself on future occasions.

Sakalava opinion to the contrary, it is my impression that direct involvement in aggressive acts of wizardry is extremely rare. Strong beliefs in wizardry, finding sufficient support through divination, do not need additional support by means of verification in actual fact. Under these conditions it is even conceivable that acts of witchcraft or sorcery never take place. I consider this a distinct possibility. Yet the fact that Sakalava imagine differently has profound consequences for their society and culture--this theme is explored in the remainder of this study.
Chapter Five

KINSHIP AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

This chapter commences with a discussion of marriage and the various kinship groupings, such as the lineage segment, the lineage and the clan, and continues with a presentation of kinship terminology. In the section Ancestors and Children I argue that Sakalava society is child-oriented rather than ancestor focused. This is seen as an important consequence of the pervasive fear of sorcery. Under Fictive Kinship I discuss attempts to compensate for the constant abrasion of kinship relations by the establishment of fictive ones.

Courtship, Marriage and Divorce

Upon reaching puberty Sakalava children no longer sleep in the same room as their parents, or boys in the same quarters as their sisters. Instead, at night small groups of boys band together and find themselves a place to sleep in an empty hut. A teenage girl often sleeps in the kitchen or in a new hut especially built for her and close to that of her parents. Restrictions on sharing sleeping quarters are expressions of the incest taboo. This taboo applies to people of opposite sex who are closely related and who belong to the same or adjacent generations, such as brothers and sisters, father and daughter or mother and son.
In a typical Sakalava village boys and girls are all closely related and sexual relations between them are forbidden. When an unrelated man from another village comes to visit and plans to stay overnight he may arrange to sleep with an unmarried girl. Instead of asking the girl directly the man usually approaches a relative of hers whose relation with the girl is not governed by the incest taboo. Thus he may ask the girl's sister, mother or one of her grandparents to plead his cause. If he pleads his own he never does so directly but always in a roundabout and joking way. The girl, in turn, also responds obliquely. Nevertheless, very soon both parties know exactly where they stand. For example, if the girl decides to turn her suitor down she simply refuses to joke along with him. While this communicates her decision, the entire proceedings can still be regarded as only a joke so that in the end nobody's pride need be hurt (see also Hébert, 1964).

The girl's decision depends in large measure on the amount of money the suitor promises her. This gift is not considered as payment for services rendered. When a man tells a woman that he loves her she takes his words for what they are—mere words and not necessarily reflections of his thoughts. But when the man is willing to part with something more tangible than words, when he is willing to part with wealth, the woman is more inclined to trust the underlying message. Thus a gift from a man to a lover is a tangible token of appreciation in an atmosphere of distrust in which words are automatically sus-
pect.
If a couple has serious intentions a short period of courtship ensues, lasting from a few weeks to a few months. During this time the woman expects many gifts of money with which she buys herself clothes, shoes, jewelry, and so forth. These things are meant to show to the world that her lover thinks highly of her. At the occasion of marriage the man presents his wife with a larger sum of money than usual, say 5000 FMG (U.S. $20) and a few cattle. As with the money, the cattle also become the property of the woman. Usually she leaves the cattle with her father or a brother to take care of.

On the day of the wedding the man goes to fetch his wife at her house and brings her and some of her belongings by ox-cart back to his village. Close to his village the party is met by his relatives, one of whom, a woman, carries the bride on her back to the house of the groom's parents. There the bride is given a meal of rice with duck: Ducks have no ears with which to hear unpleasant things and, slow as they are, do not make hasty decisions.

During the first few days in the village of her husband the wife attaches herself as a worker to the household of her parents-in-law. During this time the newlyweds live in a hut close to his parents. Soon afterwards they move to a hut further removed, where they set up an independent household.

About one month after the wedding the couple visits her parents carrying small gifts, for example 1000 FMG (U.S. $4) and/or a few liters of wine. They stay in the village of the
bride for a few days or even a few weeks, during which time the bride's father expects his son-in-law to complete a specific task he assigns him, such as repairing the cattle kraal or building a new one, repairing the roof of a hut, and so forth.

When the couple returns to the village of the groom they carry all the belongings of the bride back with them. This completes the round of activities surrounding marriage. The two are now considered husband and wife rather than visitors in each other's respective villages.

Even while married the woman periodically expects gifts from her husband. If he does not give her enough for new clothes at least once a year, she suspects that he does not love her any longer. At the same time she fears that other people say: "Look, she has been wearing the same clothes for a long time now--her husband must not care about her." Feeling unloved and ashamed she may pack her belongings and return to her parental village.

Often, the woman, in leaving her husband, simply tries to force an issue. If the husband does nothing to counter her actions, divorce is automatic. On the other hand if he regrets losing his wife, he will go to her parental village and try to persuade her to come home with him. Her consent is likely to depend on the presents he gives her--in fact, she may insist that in addition to money, he also give her cattle.

For a woman courtship and marriage are means of acquiring wealth. Conversely, a man has to have some wealth in order to
be able to support a wife, and only if he is wealthy will he be able to support more than one.

Marriages involving one husband with two or more wives are quite common but are not always long-lived. I estimate that at any given time ten percent of all marriages are polygynous unions. The majority of such marriages involve two women to one man.

Men often use the institution of polygyny in preparation for divorce. A typical scenario runs as follows. The man meets another woman whom he wants to marry. Instead of telling his wife that he wants a divorce he tells her that he has found her a sister, friend and helper to keep her company and to share the burdens of house work. The wife, consenting to the new arrangement, receives a substantial gift, including some cattle. Soon after the second wife arrives, troubles start: The Sakalava term denoting polygyny literally means "to cause rivalry" (mampirafy). Tension builds. The first wife accuses her husband of favoring the newcomer and suspects that the latter is using sorcery to steal his affections. In this atmosphere little is needed to make the first wife decide to pack her bags and leave.

The Sakalava say that a polygynous marriage can only succeed if the two women are sisters. Only then will there be sufficient trust between them. I have never encountered a case of polygyny involving sisters and argue that the majority of polygynous marriages are not intended to last but are simply
halfway houses from one monogamous union to the next.

Although divorce is very frequent, occasionally one finds old couples who have been together ever since they were first married. When these people become so old that they no longer enjoy sexual relations they too separate. In that case the woman does not return to her original village but simply moves to another hut in the village of her husband—the village where she reared her children and where her sons live.

**The Lineage Segment**

A newlywed couple constitutes an economic unit in the sphere of daily subsistence but not, or only nominally, in cattle herding. Each household grows its own rice, manioc, sweet potatoes or corn, raises its own chicken and ducks and occasionally hunts and gathers forest products. In the realm of cattle herding, on the other hand, the individual household is to a large extent subordinate to a larger unit: the lineage segment. The lineage segment typically comprises an old man, his children and the children of his sons and grandsons. These are the people who live together in a village. While most adults in the village own a few cattle, the old man has a large herd which his sons and grandsons take care of.

Sakalava culture denies the importance of death. Action anticipating someone's death or one's own is believed to encourage destructive forces to take their course. Consequently, even if a person is very old and/or sick he, as well as his relatives act as if death is the remotest of possibilities. To do otherwise
not only invites disaster but also communicates that one desires death to take its toll. For someone to admit that he desires the death of a relative is tantamount to committing social suicide. For these reasons the possibility of death is not often considered or talked about. These attitudes surrounding death complicate the problem of inheritance: In fact, provisions do not usually exist, either as anticipatory inheritance or in the form of wills.

Ideally speaking, upon death of the head of a lineage segment, his children divide his cattle equally among themselves. This ideal situation is often difficult to realize. Certain coloration patterns on the cattle are considered particularly valuable. Also, some animals are strong and healthy and still others are expected to bear many calves. In addition, one of the claimants may feel entitled to a larger than equal share because he has spent more time with the herd than others. These factors tend to lead to much infighting and the issue is rarely ever settled to everyone's satisfaction. The wounds created on such occasions usually leave deep scars which in time lead to break up of the group and the formation of new lineage segments at a number of separate locations.

**The Lineage**

A lineage (tareky) consists of all lineage segments using the same cemetery (lolo). In the world of the living the lineage is important in the regulation of marriage and the apportioning of children.
Marriage is forbidden between siblings and between all persons who stand in a sibling relationship to one another. This includes paternal and maternal cousins as far as kinship relations are known. In practice this means that the boundary of the category of people with whom one cannot marry is vague and ill-defined. Within this category a sharply defined subcategory is recognized, consisting of all people who at death will share the same cemetery. Marriage between any two members of this subcategory is strictly and unambiguously forbidden.

After the birth of their first child a couple goes to visit the relatives of the child's mother. There, the father of the child presents its maternal grandparents with a zebu. While people are awaiting the offering of the zebu to the ancestors of the child's mother, the latter's brothers often attempt to cut the beast loose and chase it away. In the end, the zebu is offered to the ancestors, after which the meat is distributed to those present. The paternal relatives of the child only get the feet of the animal (one of the least desirable parts) which they carry home together with the child.

To hold this ceremony is called manao kitrola or, descriptively, mivily zaza which literally means "to buy (a) child(ren)." The ceremony is considered as a transaction between the maternal and paternal ancestors, eventually allowing the child to be interred at the cemetery of its father. If the child dies before the ceremony is held (and after the
appearance of its first teeth; see Chapter Seven) it is interred at the cemetery of its mother. The ceremony, which is only conducted for the first child, automatically applies to subsequent children by the same parents.

I have phrased these rules regarding marriage and the apportioning of children in terms of cemeteries. This is the way the Sakalava discuss these matters. In anthropological parlance these two topics correspond to lineage exogamy on the one hand, and the assignment of lineage membership on the other. When using the word "lineage" one should keep in mind that the strong patrilineal bias in the demarcation of groups only applies to the world of the ancestors. In day-to-day life a child is considered just as much a part of the kingroup of his mother as of that of his father. Thus, for example, when his parents separate, the child may live alternately in the village of his father and of his mother. Terminologically, he does not distinguish between the cousins in either of these two villages. The earmark of his cattle is associated with the lineage and clan of his father but his herd is also likely to include cattle whose earmarks belong to his mother's lineage and clan (see below). The Sakalava recognize all this and say that to which lineage a child belongs (or, conversely, who "owns" the child) is totally irrelevant during its lifetime and only becomes important at its death.

Most Sakalava lineages stand in a joking relationship (ziva) with one or a few other lineages. When people from two such
lineages meet they exchange comments like: "You and your relatives eat dog meat" or "they are waiting for you at the cemetery of your lineage because your father has died," and so forth. Such comments are taken very good-naturedly and are usually accompanied by much laughter. If said to a person who is not a joking partner, however, they constitute grave insults (see also Hébert, 1958).

Joking partners are present at ceremonies which intimately and often dangerously involve both the living and their ancestors. Thus, at a funeral, the task of digging the grave and handling the corpse falls to them. People sometimes give the name of an ancestor recently deceased to a child, who from then on is treated with reverence (manesy anara; see below). The Sakalava do not like to use personal names and in the case of the deceased such names even become taboo. In prayers ancestors are addressed by relationship terms. In the case of a ceremony to transfer the name of an ancestor to a child, the name in question has to be used and this problem can be handled successfully only by joking partners.

The Clan

A clan (fahitsy, karaza) is a named cattle earmark (sofin'omy) and comprises a number of lineages. Often two lineages with the same earmarks for their cattle cannot trace any relationship in which case intra-clan marriage is allowed. If two lineages with the same earmarks remember their
relationship, the split between their respective cemeteries is likely to be fairly recent so that much of the hostility which accompanied the split still prevails. Under those circumstances the question of marriage does not become an issue.

Consider a person who inherits cattle from his father and from his mother, each with their own earmarks. When a cow calves, its young usually are given the earmark of their mother, so that over time the two original earmarks remain represented in the herd. When the owner dies the herd is divided among his children. These children, in turn, also inherit from their mother so that, theoretically, with each generation, the number of earmarks represented in a herd doubles.

There are two factors which prevent this from happening. In the first place, when a man watches his cattle he often notices that one part of his herd, which carries a certain earmark, grows faster than other parts. The owner will then be inclined to give new calves the earmark which thus seems blessed.

A second factor is even more important. When you ask someone why he is so interested in having a large herd he will say that without cattle few people would "take care of" him when he dies. Sakalava funeral ceremonies may last weeks. When at such a ceremony many people are present, the transition of the deceased into the world of the ancestors will be a happy one. One way to attract and hold a large crowd is to sacrifice many zebus and to provide for ample wine. It is felt that cattle sacrificed at funeral ceremonies should have earmarks appropriate
to the ancestors buried at the cemetery. The cattle earmarks of a particular ancestor include those of his father and of his mother. The earmarks of the father, in turn, include those of both of his parents but exclude those of his wife. Thus with each ascending generation the earmarks introduced by the wives of ancestors become irrelevant. These considerations maintain the specific interest in that particular earmark which is inherited patrilineally. Independently of the earmark of the mother cow, calves are often given this preferred mark.

The same considerations apply to women. A woman usually leaves her cattle in the care of her father or her brothers. These relatives in turn use the same criteria in managing her part of the herd as they do in managing their own.

A clan always has certain taboos (falindrazana) associated with it. These taboos usually refer to the color or markings of the hide of cattle (volon'omby). Sakalava cattle are black, white, red, or black and white, red and white, and so forth. In the intermediate categories numerous distinctions are made, depending, for example, on the position of white spots or large white areas on the body. I estimate that the Sakalava distinguish as many as fifty types of black and white cattle alone. A type which is taboo with many clans is vakivoho, a black zebu whose body (voho; literally "back") seems divided (vaky) in two by an elongated white spot. Another type frequently taboo is vandamena which is red (mena) and has
many small white spots (*vanda* = spotted). The meat of a zebu which is taboo for a certain clan cannot be eaten by members of this clan. Sometimes the taboo extends to rearing the animal and/or drinking its milk.

As with cattle earmarks, children inherit the clan taboos of their father as well as their mother. Theoretically this leads to the same difficulty as before with a doubling in each generation. That this nevertheless never reaches astronomical proportions is mainly due to the following two facts. In the first place, many clans share approximately the same taboos. Secondly, clan taboos are associated with cattle earmarks. When, by the process I have explained above, a certain earmark is no longer represented in a herd, the taboos associated with it are soon forgotten. It may happen, then, that people, after eating the meat from an animal with a certain coloration pattern, hear from older or better informed relatives that this type was taboo for them. When no ill effects occur it is simply pronounced that "the taboo no longer applies to us."

**Kinship Terminology**

Sakalava kinship terms are shown in Table 6. The first four terms are terms of reference for consanguineal relatives in ego's generation and distinguish on the basis of the sex of ego, and the sex of the person referred to. These terms are used to explain the relationship between two individuals.
Thus, people would say "he is my (male) rahalahy" or "she is his anabavy," and so forth. Another set of reference terms for consanguineal relatives in ego's generation, terms 5 through 8, distinguishes on the basis of relative age and the sex of the person referred to. The word lahy is a sex marker meaning "male." By saying "she is my zoky" one indicates that the person referred to is older and, secondarily, that she is a sibling or cousin.
Table 6: Index of Kinship Terms

Consanguineal Relatives:

1. rahalahy | male ego, person referred to is a brother or a male cousin
2. anadahy | female ego, person referred to is a brother or a male cousin
3. rahavavy | female ego, person referred to is a sister or a female cousin
4. anabavy | male ego, person referred to is a sister or a female cousin
5. zoky | older sibling or cousin, usually female
6. zandry | younger sibling or cousin, usually female
7. zoky lahy | older brother or male cousin
8. zandry lahy | younger brother or male cousin
9. baba | father
10. baba be | big father: older brother or male cousin of father
11. baba keiy | little father: younger brother or male cousin of father
12. angovavy | father's sister: sister or female cousin of father
13. niny | mother
14. niny be | big mother: older sister or female cousin of mother
15. niny keiy | little mother: younger sister or female cousin of mother
16. zama | mother's brother: brother or male cousin of mother
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In the first ascending generation, terms 9 through 16, a distinction is made between paternal and maternal relatives. For some of these terms the relative age of ego's parents and the person referred to is also seen to be important. In the second ascending generation, terms 17 and 18, the distinction between paternal and maternal relatives once again disappears. The word dady, literally means (great ---) grandparent but without the sex marker lahy for "male" is often taken to mean grandmother. For the third ascending generation the sex marker is usually dropped and all ancestors are called by one term (term 19). This term also applies to all ancestors in generations beyond that of great grandparents. Among descendants (taranaky) five terms are distinguished on the basis of generation alone.

Terms of reference for affinal relatives are listed under numbers 25 through 35. Some of these terms (30 through 34) also apply to consanguineal relatives (see terms 10, 11 and 13 through 16).

Relative age is an important factor in Sakalava kinship. The relationship between a person and his younger sibling is an authoritative one and resembles that between parent and child. The relationship between people in generations once removed, such as between grandparents and grandchildren, is one of indulgence. Thus, if a "big father" is like a father to my father, he is like a grandfather to me and our relationship is one of indulgence. Also, if my father is like a father
to my "little father," the latter is like an older brother to me and treats me in an authoritative fashion. Similarly, a "big mother" treats me like her grandchild and a "little mother" like her younger sibling.

Both in the case of mother's brother and father's sister the importance of relative age is second to the consequences of the difference in sex. Independent of relative age a brother stands in somewhat of an authoritative relationship to his sister. A mother's brother, therefore, is somewhat like a grandfather to me and our relationship is one of indulgence. My father's sister, on the other hand, is like his daughter. Consequently she treats me as she would her younger sibling.

The importance of relative age is reflected in address terminology. The first set of reference terms given above, for consanguineal relatives in ego's generation (terms 1 through 4), does not distinguish on the basis of relative age and is never used in address. Instead, (part of) the second set is used. To be older carries prestige and to call someone a younger sibling or cousin could be interpreted to mean that one wants to emphasize one's own importance at the expense of the other person. For that reason the terms zandry (younger sibling or cousin) and zandry lahy (younger brother or male cousin) are not normally used in address but are usually replaced by baba (father) or niny (mother), depending on the sex of the person addressed.
For the same reason the terms for relatives in descending
generations are also never used in address. Approximately until
they reach puberty children are called by their personal names.
In addition they are often addressed by the terms baba (father)
or niny (mother). Later they are given teknonomic names such
as "little father of X" or "mother's brother of X" and, when
having children of their own, "father of X," and so forth.

Address terms between in-laws of different generations
again reflect the issue of age. The term vinanto (son- or
daughter-in-law) is never used but replaced by baba (father) or
niny (mother) when no confusion with others present is possible,
or by rafozza (parent-in-law).

Next to relative age, a second important factor in
Sakalava kinship is sex. The incest taboo applies to relatives
of opposite sex in the same and adjacent generations, while
sexual joking is the norm between relatives in generations
once and further removed. Thus grandparents often engage in
sexual joking with their grandchildren. This includes calling
them spouse and touching their genitals. When a man calls his
son- or daughter-in-law by the term rafozza (parent-in-law) he
is referring to this person's daughter, whether or not already
born, whom he jokingly considers his wife; the same holds for
a woman with respect to her son- or daughter-in-law whose son
she jokingly considers her husband. In cases where the incest
taboo applies it is taken very seriously. People who are sub-
ject to it are not allowed to sleep in the same quarters, to
mention the subject of sex in each other's presence or to refer to each other's sexuality to third parties. Even during the day brothers and sisters are not supposed to be inside the same hut without others present.

The incest taboo importantly colors the relationship between in-laws of the same generation. The relationship between two brothers-in-law (valahy) involves incessant joking but absolutely no mention of sex. This type of joking is similar to that between members of lineages who are joking partners. Some of my informants claim that joking relationships (ziva) between two lineages originate with two brothers-in-law. Sisters-in-law behave toward each other somewhat like brothers-in-law but call one another raMao. Their joking is more restrained and their relationship more intimate.

The term raMao primarily refers to brothers- and sisters-in-law of opposite sex. This relationship involves obsessive sexual joking. It is believed that if people who stand in this relationship do not engage in sexual joking they are likely to have secret designs on each other. Sexual joking includes calling each other "spouse," inviting the other party to see one's private parts, and touching each other's bodies close to the private parts, occasionally manipulating them briefly. The atmosphere of sexual permissiveness between brothers- and sisters-in-law facilitates sororal polygyny. Polygyny, it turns out, is modeled on the sororal principle and whether or not co-wives are sisters or cousins they call each other such.
If a man is married to another man's sister, the second calls the first his valahy. Likewise the first one calls the second by the same term and considers the latter's wife as his own sister. Consequently the incest taboo applies between a man and his wife's brother's wife. In this case the incest taboo is taken even more seriously than between real siblings or cousins and behavior appropriate to the taboo is very strictly adhered to.

Most kinship terms are complementary. Thus, for instance, with baba be (big father) and niny be (big mother) being husband and wife, the wife of any person I call baba be is niny be and the husband of any person I call niny be is baba be. The one exception to this is zena (wife of mother's brother). She is the wife of zama (mother's brother). Yet the husband of angovavy (father's sister) is also called zama so that one would expect the wife of zama to be called angovavy. But zama, as we saw, is indulgent towards his sister's children and it certainly would not make sense to have his wife, who is an outsider, stand in the authoritative relationship of angovavy towards them. For that reason a completely different term (zena) is called for.

Ancestors and Children

The Sakalava are not very concerned about their ancestors. Clan history is virtually unknown: Information only extends to the level of grandfather and in some rare cases includes
the latter's father. It would indeed be difficult to retain a historical perspective beyond the level of grandfather. Because of the taboo on the name of a dead person, ancestors have to be identified by relationship terms. But there are only two such terms available for lineal relatives in the ascending series: father and grandfather. This contrasts with five terms for the descending series of children, grandchildren, and so forth. When I tried to be specific about an ancestor by using compound terms such as "father of grandfather" or "grandfather of father" my informants would often translate my attempt in descending terminology, saying, for example, "the person who would call me his great grandchild." But even when it became clear who we were talking about not much further information could be obtained.

Lack of interest also obtains for ancestors who are closely related and buried at the lineage cemetery. Attitudes surrounding certain funerary rites clearly demonstrate how the living view their relatives recently deceased. Approximately one year after someone's funeral his relatives are expected to organize a second funeral (mirangan'dolo). This is a feast at the cemetery, lasting a few days to a week, at which time many zebus are offered to the ancestors and the meat distributed to the participants, large quantities of wine are consumed and song and dance are the order of the day and, especially, the night. Very often the survivors forget to
organize the event, in which case the ancestors may cause one of them to be sick. When it is found by divination that this is the cause of the disease (see, for instance, the discussion of the northern group in case X, Chapter Four). The family, reminded of its duty, stages the feast. At the conclusion of a second funeral the ancestors are told to be happy and to "stop being bothersome" (ka mikota koa).

How does this de-emphasis of relations with ancestors fit in with the importance of age in Sakalava kinship? As we saw, an older person stands in an authoritative relationship to a younger one, especially when the two belong to the same or adjacent generations. With generational distance this principle quickly attenuates and when two people belong to generations once removed, authority associated with age is to a large extent compensated for, and replaced by, attitudes of indulgence on the part of the old person towards the younger one. Upon the death of an old person his relationship with his grandchildren remains inconsequential. This type of relationship, moreover, is terminologically extended to include all ancestors further removed.

As expected, then, the only ancestors of immediate consequence are one's dead parents and especially one's dead father. During life a father stands in a relation of authority to his children and this relationship does not vanish when he dies. If anything, it intensifies and may even become threatening
because it escapes the direct control of face-to-face encounters. The Sakalava deal with threatening aspects of their supernatural world by making these part of day-to-day life. This underlies the popularity of spirit possession, in general, and the occurrence of spontaneous trances in time of danger, in particular (see Chapter Seven). Similarly an ancestor who has recently died may be made a part of everyday life by the transfer of his name to his grandchild (manesy anara). This is especially meaningful to the child's parents, but much less so to his siblings. The father of the child treats him with extreme reverence as he would his own father and even more so. But the child knows that the person thus treating him is his father rather than his own child. The attitudes associated with these two roles largely cancel each other, allowing the relationship to be as between equals. In this way the supernatural threat of the ancestor, which stems from his parental authority while still alive, is effectively dealt with.

Since the only important ancestors are one's dead parents, and particularly one's dead father, the lineage cemetery cannot be much of a binding force holding a number of lineage segments together. Each person is only interested in the lineage cemetery to the extent that it is the resting place of his very close relatives. Usually these include people from previous generations, particularly one's father, and occasionally also one's siblings and children.
In life a person invests most of his affective energy in his immediate relatives. The first group of immediate relatives someone becomes familiar with is his natal family, consisting of parents and siblings. As children grow up they are exposed to incessant discussions of adults about the untrustworthiness of relatives. Occasionally these include siblings of their parents, but more generally the latter's cousins. None of these relatives is singled out for special attention and the impression is created that anyone who is not very closely related cannot be trusted.

How can a society, in which distrust is so rife, effectively operate? While familial attitudes of trust are confined to immediate relatives, such attitudes are pretended for most other relatives. This extension is facilitated by the use of Hawaiian kinship terminology in all generations but the parental one, where strong Hawaiian tendencies exist in conjunction with bifurcate merging. Thus when ego calls a distant cousin by the same term he uses for his brother he suggests that the feelings he has for his brother also apply to his relationship with the cousin. Likewise distant relatives in other generations are called by terms which also stand for much closer relatives and the use of these terms suggests the trust associated with familial relations. The Sakalava are very aware of this and say that how a person acts and what he says do not count because you may never "know what goes on in his mind." While not knowing what goes
on in another person's mind you can also, at least for outer appearances, give him the benefit of the doubt. And it is here that Hawaiian kinship terminology facilitates matters, allowing two people to behave as if they trusted each other.

The general atmosphere of distrust produces a tendency towards exclusive dependence on relations within one's circle of close relatives. Consequently, during puberty and beyond, strong directives are needed to channel sexuality outside this circle of close relatives. Hence the importance of the incest taboo. This taboo forces people to go outside their circle of close relatives for the expression of their sexuality.

Whenever sex is a criterion in a Sakalava kinship term the underlying relationship is in some way or another colored by the incest taboo. Thus, for instance, my informants say that it is unnecessary to distinguish between great grandparents on the basis of sex because between great grandparents and great grandchildren the incest taboo is totally irrelevant. The same holds to some extent for grandparents. Between grandparents and grandchildren the incest taboo is irrelevant and occasionally I have heard children refer to, or address, their grandfather by the neuter term dady (grandparent). But although incest is not a relevant issue between them, grandparents and grandchildren are nevertheless relatives. The conflict between these two notions is resolved in sexual joking. Thus, in this negative sense, the incest taboo also colors the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren.
In the generation of parents we find kinship terms which distinguish on the basis of sex and relative age of the connecting relative. In ego's generation two sets are used, one which distinguishes on the basis of sex and the other on the basis of sex and relative age. The first set of terms distinguishes not only according to the sex of the person referred to but also according to ego's sex. That it is felt necessary to draw distinctions that are this fine reflects the importance of the criterion of sex in relations between siblings which, in turn, reflects the importance of the incest taboo within generations.

The incest taboo forces people to look beyond the circle of relatives for marriage partners. Under Sakalava circumstances this means that marriage partners are recruited from a category of people who cannot be trusted at all. Interestingly, though, even between newlyweds trust is nearly total. For a man to suggest that his wife is using sorcery to make him love her, or vice versa, is tantamount to suggesting that the partner "knows things" (mahay raha: used this way the expression has a sinister connotation) and cannot be trusted. Food is an excellent carrier for sorcery concoctions and a man who eats the food his wife prepares might be handing over his life. Nevertheless, nothing but total trust is expected and if the man gives the slightest indication of distrust, for instance by inspecting the kitchen, he will soon be without his wife.
Meanwhile, not even familial relations are immune to decay. As we saw, lineage segments typically break up as the result of disputes between siblings over inheritance. But also while the old man is still alive his children already are in competition over his cattle, each one trying to ensure that he or she will receive a fair share. This smoldering strife fosters mistrust between siblings long before the ultimate breakup of the lineage segment after the death of its head.

It is no surprise that with relations between siblings deteriorating a person transfers his affective energies away from his natal family and into his conjugal family of spouse and children. Children are innocent and can be trusted completely. This holds for children in general but especially for one's own. One of the harshest comments about other people is that they use their children for evil purposes. When an adult uses a child to put something in your food or drinking water or leave something in your house, the blame does not fall on the child. The child is not expected to understand what is going on or he may be an unwitting accomplice, not realizing that he is carrying a sorcery substance. But the adult is considered especially devilish that he should use children for his machinations.

Only a strong-day-child (see Chapter Three) can be a threat to his own parents. We saw that removing the bad destiny from a strong-day-child is an elaborate and difficult
process which requires an expert. Some destinies are so strong and dangerous that they may kill the expert trying to remove them. After it has been determined that a child is subject to a dangerous destiny his parents may be unable to find an expert who is willing to take the risk involved in its removal. In that case they will have to dispose of the child, for instance by placing it in a termite nest. I do not know whether this is often done, but all of my informants included it as a terrifying, yet viable, alternative. This demonstrates the seriousness of the issue of bad destiny where it concerns children. Conversely, the dangers associated with bad destinies emphasize the innocence and desirability of those children (the majority) not subject to them.

To have children of one's own is highly desired. Most teknonomous names are of the form "father of X" or "mother of X" and refer to the person's own children. A man without children or nephews and nieces may be called baba ny zaza (father of the child) in anticipation of happier circumstances. Similar considerations apply to usage of the term rafaza (parent-in-law) to address one's son- or daughter-in-law, which alludes to the couple's child even if yet unborn.

We saw that five terms are distinguished for lineal relatives in descending generations and only two for such relatives in ascending generations. The fact that many more terms exist in the descending series is related to the use of these terms.
When an old man, such as the head of a lineage segment, conducts a prayer for the well-being of his descendants, he calls his father, grandfather and all other ancestors, saying, "We, your children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, great great grandchildren and great great great grandchildren, are gathered here to ask you. . . ." Or else, a person in praying for offspring may ask to be blessed with "many children, grandchildren, . . . .", and so forth, using all five terms. In the first example the enumeration of the entire list of descendants present connotes profuse offspring, a fact which is expected to please the ancestors. The anticipation of profuse offspring is obvious in the second example.

However much desired, children may die. Sakalava culture denies the importance of death. This holds especially true for children: Customs surrounding the death of children deny the importance of the event and serve to obliterate the memory of it. Thus, when a toothless infant dies he cannot be mourned or interred at the lineage cemetery (see Chapter Seven). With an unmarked grave somewhere in the bush he may soon be forgotten by all except a very few. The taboo on the use of the names of dead people is strictly adhered to, especially in the case of children. Again this facilitates the obliteration of memories about children that have died. By erasing any association between children and death, the association between youth and the world of the living becomes more pronounced.
Despite the importance of children divorce is frequent. I estimate that an average person during his lifetime may be involved in as many as three marriages. The relationship between divorcees always remains exceedingly civil. This is a direct result of the importance that the two parties in the divorce attach to their children. Each party in the divorce goes out of its way to treat the other party, including the in-laws, as well as possible. Thus, for instance, if the relatives of a person's ex-wife organize a feast such as a second funeral, the ex-husband makes sure to be present. Likewise, at sad family affairs, such as funerals, the ex-spouse also shows his concern. Both ex-spouses fear that their child will say: "My father (mother) does not love me; how else could he (she) not realize that half of me is part of them?"

Thus, concern for their children forces divorcees to associate with each other. At the same time the total trust commonly found between married partners is probably no longer in effect. But having an important stake in continued good relations one participates on as many social occasions as possible. Otherwise one would communicate mistrust, thereby transforming the ex in-laws into instant enemies. This would make it very difficult to maintain normal relations with one's children.

Considering marriage as an integrative mechanism the Sakalava case is very interesting. Here the link holding two groups together is not the conjugal one between husband and wife, but the relation each one has with the child. This
relation is highly prized and does not suffer from divorce. Consequently, divorce and remarriage does not threaten societal integration, but by creating more ties enhances it. Again this supports my contention that Sakalava society is child-oriented.

In this section I have shown that the Sakalava are child-oriented and how this is related to the fear of sorcery in their society. Fear of sorcery produces an atmosphere of distrust in which anyone not closely related is considered a potential evil-doer. Intense distrust between two relatives is not congruent with a strong orientation of each towards the ancestor they have in common. Thus we find that interest in ancestors is minimal and that groupings which are focused on ancestors, such as clans and lineages, are unimportant.

Distrust of anyone not closely related leads to a strong dependence on close relatives for the satisfaction of all needs. This tendency is countered by a powerful incest taboo forcing people to look beyond the circle of immediate relatives for marriage partners. At the same time, sibling relations suffer from competition over resources. This facilitates the transfer of affective energies from one's natal family to the conjugal family of spouse and children. Children become so important that they can serve as integrative links between affinal relatives even after the dissolution of the marriage of their parents.
Fictive Kinship

The constant abrasion of kinship relations in ego's generation leads both to the deflection of his attention away from ancestors and onto descendants, and to the creation of fictive kinship ties. Fictive kinship in Sakalava society takes two forms: slavery and blood siblingship.

SLAVERY. The subjects of the chief are called his slaves (andevo) and the more subjects he has the more highly respected he is as a chief (see Chapter Six). When subjects, in turn, build up a following by buying slaves, they come to resemble the chief. To prevent this from happening the chief does not ban the purchase of slaves by commoners; instead, he tells his subjects to go ahead and buy people but to "consider and treat them as relatives" (atao longo!). In this way rich subjects are prevented from becoming threats to the chief. Rather, by actually increasing the number of his subjects, they enhance his position.

An informant related a longstanding fight between two of her ancestors who were brothers. One of them was rich and bought many slaves, which made the other one angry. Years later when the herd of the latter increased his wife told him: "Your brother has many relatives; let us buy people so that we 'become many' as well." When a group of relatives breaks up, the size of each of the resulting fragments is obviously smaller than that of the original group and buying slaves is a means of "becoming many" again. Slavery is no longer practiced today.
BLOOD SIBLINGSHIP. Blood siblingship (*fatidra*), a pan-Malagasy institution, is very important among the Sakalava. Nearly every adult, man or woman, has one or more blood siblings of the same or opposite sex (I prefer the term blood siblingship to bloodbrotherhood because of its asexual connotation). Ties of blood siblingship transcend those based on residence and ethnicity.

The high frequency of relationships based on blood siblingship is related to the geographic mobility of the Sakalava and their mistrust of non-relatives. For instance, while travelling around one may want to spend the night in a village where one has no close relatives. In that case it would be advantageous to have a blood sibling on whom one could count for a hospitable reception, a meal and a place to sleep. It is especially with this in mind that these relationships are entered into.

Blood siblings treat each other like siblings. Ideally two siblings do not mistrust each other but when their relationship deteriorates, for instance as the result of competition over inheritance, trust may give way to suspicion. Between two blood siblings, on the other hand, no conflict is likely to arise and their relationship tends to remain pure and trusting. Trust among siblings is based on the expectation of close kinship and the violation of this trust does not carry supernatural sanctions. It is not felt that a sibling who has done one wrong will be punished; conversely,
the threat of supernatural sanctions does not act as a deterrent against unsiblinglike behavior. This is different in the case of blood siblingship. Here to act in an unsiblinglike fashion violates a taboo and has serious consequences for the evil-doer. Thus, for instance, if a person engages in sorcery towards his blood sibling, the evil act will come back and strike the evil-doer as well. This belief may act as a sanction against such behavior but, more importantly, everybody thinks it does. Because people think that blood siblings would not dare do anything harmful to each other, they can, and do, put full trust in each other.

Blood siblingship is extended to include the relatives of each party. For example, the little son of my bloodsister in Ambalatany called me zama (mother's brother). Theoretically such relations extend indefinitely as far as real kinship relations are meaningful but in practice they attenuate very much faster. For instance, my brother is likely to consider my bloodbrother as his own brother, but he would not extend the relationship to my bloodbrother's brother. Consequently, ties of blood siblingship are primarily meaningful to the immediate partners involved.
Chapter Six

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

At the moment chiefs and their retinues of court functionaries only represent the religious remnant of a structure which in the past carried impressive political weight. Many of the family histories I collected show past population movements as the result of conflict with chiefs. But presently chiefs are no longer very important in the life of commoners. Consequently much of this chapter refers to the past and constitutes ethnohistory.

Nevertheless, I devote an entire chapter to this topic. The realm of chiefs, it turns out, is the only sphere of Sakalava culture which is free from the pervasive influence of wizardry. Thus a discussion of political organization provides an interesting contrast to the previous chapters. At the same time it establishes the second pole on the continuum along which the intensity and ubiquity of wizardry varies. Against this background I will further explore the influence of wizardry on other aspects of Sakalava society and culture in a subsequent chapter.

The Political Balance Between Chiefdoms

Ambongo is dotted with numerous chiefdoms. Their populations range from that of Milanja (see Chapter Two), about 5000, all the way down to zero, the latter represented by
numerous "chiefs without followers". Manonga, embracing approximately ten villages, is of fairly typical size. How did this profusion of chiefdoms develop and perpetuate?

"God (Ndreñañahary) and the chief (mpanjaka) shared the same place. When they were thus living together god saw that the chief had a good personality, so he said: 'I will give you high honour but we will no longer share the same place, I want you to go down, I want you to have people, I want you to have a following (fanjaka), you will be chief (mpanjaka; literally: He by virtue of whom a fanjaka exists), to be respected by people, to be obeyed by people, which will add to your esteem. You will be below there, I will be up here keeping an eye on you. The earth below there will be yours: You are the proprietor of the land (tompon'tany). I, god up here, who makes hands and feet, who makes everything, who gives life to everything I can give life to, I will watch. I have given you high honour, so do not entertain inappropriate thoughts because you will be the proprietor of the land. The earth will be yours, your following will be yours, everything will be yours.'"

This myth shows the two things important to a chief: subjects and land. Of these two, the first, as I will shortly explain, is of prime importance. As far as the second is concerned land ownership could only be an issue if commoners were also allowed to hold land in proprietorship, or if the chief's claim to the land would be used by him to allow or
refuse access to certain commoners. Neither of these possibilities, however, seems relevant in the Sakalava context. Ownership of the land by the chief enters the chief-commoner relationship not as an issue but as a given.

Yet, in the beginning of my fieldwork I was often surprised by commoner remarks to the effect that the chief is the "proprietor of the land". If this is an implicit given in the chief-commoner relationship why would this have to be so explicitly expressed? Perhaps, I thought, it reflects the conquest, if there ever was one, of the Sakalava rulers over the original proprietors of the land. Or else, it might be a reaffirmation of traditional against modern ways and ideas. At the moment I am inclined to think that the term "proprietor of the land" should be interpreted to mean "caretaker of the land". Whenever people talked about the chief being the proprietor of the land it was always as a justification of taking him presents or attending chiefly ceremonies. Such actions were not in the first place meant to prevent the chief's wrath (in the past this may have loomed importantly) but rather to ensure that the land would continue to be properly taken care of so that it would continue to fatten cattle and otherwise bear fruits.

An exclusive emphasis on people instead of land or territory is seen in another myth, told by the same informant, which relates the agony of a former chief of Milanja who did not have any subjects. After all, "what makes a chief a
chief is people." This chief had two wives. His first wife urged him to do something about his lack of subjects: Without subjects, she felt, the chief and his dependents were defenseless and would surely one day be attacked and plundered by one of the surrounding chiefs. So the chief called a diviner who pronounced that it was god's wish that something from the chief's house and very dear to him be buried alive. The first wife offered herself and was interred together with two zebu with special hide coloration patterns. The woman's posthumous name is NDREMANDIKAVAVY. Soon after the event many people came to be followers of the chief of Milanja.

The first preoccupation of a chief is indeed his following: "What makes a chief a chief is people." The chief is chief by virtue of his following. It only so happens that these people occupy a certain territory. Thus, in first instance a Sakalava chiefdom is not territorially defined; instead it concerns a group of people. Such a group of people centered around a chief was endogamous because no chief would willingly allow a female subject and her potential progeny to be lost to a rival.

When someone offers his allegiance to a chief he expects protection in return. He wants to be able to live in peace with his neighbors and wants to be safe from war raids from neighboring chiefs (notice that in the story of NDREMANDIKAVAVY above, the wife of the chief, i.e., one of his sub-
jects, urged him to become a real chief who could provide proper protection). Thus, if someone finds himself living among people who already have pledged their allegiance to a certain chief he would do well to join them. If he did not he would be an easy prey with little protection. Apart from that, "chiefs are all the same" (mpanjaka tsisy hafa; literally: Among chiefs there is no difference).

A chief, therefore, functions as a rallying point of peace-ensuring forces. Obviously, protection can most effectively be ensured over short distances. For these reasons a Sakalava chiefdom is also to some extent territorially defined, but where there are no natural boundaries, there are hardly any boundaries at all. Far away from the center it becomes a matter of equilibrium with the various other surrounding centers of power at play.

In this situation each more or less imaginary boundary between two chiefdoms is a power vacuum. Sometimes such vacui became filled up as a result of a taboo according to which children of chiefs were not supposed to be reared by their parents or even be living in the same village as their parents. At the age of around four or five such children used to be sent away to another village to be brought up by a respected and dependable family. Thus the children of the former chief of Manongá were all brought up in Ankorobe, a village about seven kilometers southeast of Besalampy. Manongá is an example of a chiefdom that itself became
established as a result of the taboo. The father of the present chief of Manonga came from Milanja when he was still young. When he died in Besalampy, people from Milanja came to fetch his corpse to be interred at the chiefly cemetery there. But the people of Besalampy did not want to let him go because "there are no important people here" (tsy misy olo be aty). The posthumous name of this person, NDRETOHANIARIVO, is supposed to illustrate this fact. Toha is the root of a verb which means "to disagree" (Ndre, "master," is a common prefix, and arivo, "thousand" a common suffix of posthumous names of chiefs).

To maintain such a situation it is necessary that alliances between chiefs do not take place. This is the function of a second taboo by which children whose parents are both chiefs or from chiefly families are not allowed to hold the throne (mitondra raha: literally: to carry things). Such children are called "red chiefs" (mpanjaka mena).14

Mainly as a result of these two taboos the situation as it exists today developed and has maintained itself. Some other factors may also have contributed. I have been told, for instance, that there always was a lot of rivalry between chiefs and rich people. Evidently, one way for a chief to blunt the dangerous ambitions of a rich man was to make him his friend by giving him chiefly privileges, such as the right to hold slaves (about which more later), or chiefly attributes, such as a ceremonial conch (antsiva; see below).
It is not difficult to imagine that the descendants of such people later found a way to trace their ancestry to an actual chief. Within Manongâ, the chiefly family Feno may be an example of this. The ceremonial assistants (see below) of Feno told me that they were of African descent and had been bought by the ancestors of their present masters. Otherwise, Feno is a typical example of a "chief without followers" (mpanjaka tsisy olo).

The overall political situation as described in this section, greatly facilitates movement of people over the region. When someone decides to leave a chiefdom and settle elsewhere he can usually be assured that some neighboring chief will receive him with open arms. For the stranger in search of a new home, therefore, the world is wide open.

The Internal Structure of a Chiefdom

MASTERS AND SLAVES. Sakalava often use the word andevo, which Malagasy word (i.e., not specifically Sakalava) one usually finds translated by "slave" in the literature. For Sakalava, however, the word carries various meanings depending on the context:

1. Slaves of the chief
   a. This can mean his subjects, his following (fanjaka).
   b. It can also mean "servants of the chief" of which there are two sorts:
      1) ceremonial assistants and other court functionaries
2) personal slaves, such as his water bearers

2. Slaves-twice-over

These are the slaves of commoners. Commoners themselves are already slaves of the chief in the sense that they are his subjects, hence the term twice-over. Slaves-twice-over are also often called chicken-shit\textsuperscript{15} slaves. The word slave does not always carry a negative meaning. In the sense of "subjects of the chief" the meaning is neutral; in the sense of "ceremonial assistants" it is even positive in that in many respects these people are more important than the chief they serve (see below).

I have already mentioned that holding personal slaves was a chiefly privilege which was sometimes extended by the chief to his friends. By the time the descendants of these friends of the chief themselves started claiming chiefly ancestry their personal slaves automatically, or so I would imagine, became their ceremonial assistants. Other commoners also were allowed to buy people, under the condition, however, that they were made part of the family (\textit{atao longo}). In my interviews I have come across many examples of this. It is obvious why this condition was imposed: "What makes a chief a chief is people," not a big family. Thus, with time, slaves-twice-over, whether they were the personal slaves of rich people or the bought family of other commoners, generally became emancipated. Only the personal slaves of the chief had no avenue of upward mobility unless it was by
infiltration into the ranks of ceremonial assistants and other court functionaries. Ceremonial assistants, however, were supposed to be of "pure stock" (see below), by which is meant not of African ancestry, a condition which, as we saw in the previous section, is clearly violated in the Feno case.

CHIEFS AND CEREMONIAL ASSISTANTS. Ceremonial assistants, I mentioned above, are in many respects more important than the chief they serve. A Sakalava chiefdom, in fact, revolves around them. Why this should be so will be discussed shortly. First I will list the various categories of ceremonial assistants and other court functionaries and briefly indicate what each position entails.

A. Ceremonial assistants

1. Head ceremonial assistant (manantany)
   a. Relations between the chief and his subjects:
      1) when the chief is planning to hold an important ceremony at which he wants his subjects to be present the head ceremonial assistant tells people about it;
      2) when a commoner wants to visit the chief he has to explain the reason to the head ceremonial assistant who, in turn, informs the chief.
   b. In official relations between the chief and his other ceremonial assistants, the head ceremonial assistant again serves as a go-between.
2. Common ceremonial assistants

In importance these immediately follow the head ceremonial assistant. In one respect they are even more important than the head ceremonial assistant in that no chief, whether or not he has subjects, can do without them. This holds for no other category of court functionaries including the head ceremonial assistant. The primary task of these common ceremonial assistants has to do with everything surrounding death and burial of the chief. The male ceremonial assistants (tsaro) cut the throat of the chief when he is seriously ill and there is no hope for recovery. Female ceremonial assistants (marovavy) are needed specifically in the case of female chiefs, for instance, to wash her corpse. In addition, the ceremonial assistants, including the head ceremonial assistant, are the only people allowed to pray to the ancestors of the chief.

B. Less important court functionaries

1. Conversation partner of the chief (tindrife)

This person is the friend and conversation partner of the chief and has no important duties. Nevertheless the head ceremonial assistant, for instance, has to take notice of his presence. When the head ceremonial assistant wants to see the chief who happens to be with his conversation partner, he first has to
explain the purpose of his visit to the conversation partner. After the latter informs the chief the head ceremonial assistant is allowed to proceed.

2. Master of ceremony (mpikaiky; literally: announcer) At important occasions the master of ceremony sees to it that people clap and sing, and that they do not go to sleep or aimlessly wander about. Together with the blower of the ceremonial conch (next category) he takes orders directly from the ceremonial assistants.

3. Blower of the ceremonial conch (mpisioky antsiva) When called upon to do so by the ceremonial assistants this person blows the ceremonial conch by the sound of which the ancestors of the chief are expected to take notice of people trying to communicate with them or to welcome a chief recently deceased.

The special position of ceremonial assistants is mythically justified as follows. When god sent the first chief down to live on earth he also told him: "Your children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, great great grandchildren and great great great grandchildren, are not allowed to take care of you when you die, are not allowed to bury you. You will need people, people of pure stock (fotopototsy olo), not just anybody but people of good reputation. Take them. When you die, they will
bury you. When you have to do things' (manao raha: this often and certainly here means to hold a ceremony which for chiefs always involves their ancestors), they will take care of it; you yourself are not allowed to occupy yourself with it. You will have to feed these people, you will have to respect them, you will have to obey them because they are somewhat like you. Although they are not of chiefly birth themselves you should consider them as your parents because they dare occupy themselves with your ancestors, the people that have given birth to you. They will respect you; you will respect them also."

Thus it is taboo for a chief to bury his relatives or otherwise have anything to do with his ancestors. Sakalava ancestors in general, but especially chiefly ancestors, are the embodiment of strong supernatural powers (see Chapter Four). These powers are not diffuse but are focussed on the living descendants. A chief, therefore, has strong supernatural forces focussed on him, forces he himself cannot deal with. That is why, even aside from the burial taboo, it is of utmost importance for him to have ceremonial assistants. For the latter, however, the chief is little more than a focussing device which allows them to do their work, i.e., which allows them to regulate and placate the powerful supernatural forces in question.

Ceremonial assistants occupy a special position. They are the earthly representatives of the ancestors of the chief.
They respect the chief they serve but, more importantly, he also has to respect them. "Although we are his slaves the chief should never treat us wrong. If he were to treat us wrong he would have to ask forgiveness; he would have to present us with cattle to be sacrificed and large quantities of wine. Only then would he dare to ask us again to 'do his things.'" A chief cannot even dismiss a ceremonial assistant: "He does not dare to because we are like his ancestors."

Upon death of a ceremonial assistant, his particular function is automatically taken over by a younger member of his lineage. Only when the lineage in question has no more appropriate members can the chief appoint someone of another lineage.

The ceremonial assistants are the real holders of power issuing from the ancestors of the chief. The group functions as a governing body. It decides, for instance, when to hold ceremonial gatherings of the chief's subjects and from whom to requisition cattle to be sacrificed at such occasions. To the outside world such decisions are always communicated in the name of the chief: "It is the wish of the chief...," as it indeed may be after this group has brought its pressure to bear. If they are angry with the chief their anger may kill him, just as the anger of the chief may kill them; the ancestors of the chief will come to the aid of the party which is in its right.

After the death of a chief it is also this group which selects his successor from among the available candidates:
"We consider all children of the chiefly lineage and choose the one with the best personality, whether a woman or a man, a child or a grownup." All other factors being equal, however, succession normally is from older sibling to younger and, after the youngest, skips to the oldest child of the oldest male, bypassing descendants in the female line.

In sketching the relationship between the chief and his ceremonial assistants I have deliberately emphasized the importance of the latter. My informant about these matters was a male ceremonial assistant of the chief of Manongá, approximately 75 years of age. I have had numerous interviews with this informant, during which times my field assistant, who is the son of the former chief of Manongá, was usually present. Considering the presence of the "prince," I have often been surprised by the brazen language of my informant when he discussed the relationship between the chief and the ceremonial assistants. I found it equally surprising that, even in private, my field assistant never took issue with what he had said.

The relationship between our informant and my field assistant was like that between an older man and his son or grandson, a fact which, among other things, was expressed in their respective mode of address. For example, at one time my field assistant had promised his ancestors that he would offer a zebu if his wife would successfully give birth. When a few months after the birth of his son my field assistant had still
not done anything about his promise our informant became increasingly annoyed with him. On several occasions I have heard him tell my assistant, in what was certainly more of an ordering than a pleading tone of voice, to get on with it and get them that zebu he had promised (for the resulting ceremony see below).

Finally, it is interesting that my field assistant, an intelligent man of about 40, did not really know anything more about the chieftaincy than any other reasonably well informed man. Yet I have heard some people express the opinion that he would probably become the next chief. Quite obviously he is not being prepared for this and if he is not, neither, I am sure, are any of his brothers or sisters. All of this supports my contention that a chief is little more than a figurehead.

The Power of Ceremonial Assistants

To further explore the central role of ceremonial assistants within Sakalava chiefdoms I will first treat chiefly funerals and propitiation in detail. This is followed by a discussion of political power and checks on its abuse.

DEATH AND FUNERAL. One of the important tasks of ceremonial assistants is to cut the throat of the chief when the latter is seriously ill and there is no hope for recovery. When the time has come the person responsible for this lowers the ceremonial sword (verara; see below) towards the neck of
the chief and if the chief does not raise his hand, to indicate that he might recover, the ceremonial assistant actually cuts his throat. When you ask a commoner what might be the reason for this custom he will answer that this way "our master does not unnecessarily suffer like other human beings." On one occasion I was talking to a ceremonial assistant (different from my regular informant) who made a slip of the tongue and mentioned that it was his special duty to kill the chief. My assistant who was present became very embarrassed and immediately added that this was something of "the past" and no longer happened in modern times. The man in question, however, was talking in the present tense and I am reasonably sure that this custom is still practiced today. When I asked him why this "used to be done" he answered without a moment of hesitation: "So that we can go on with our work."

The actual funeral ceremony for chiefs, though somewhat more elaborate, is in essence like that for commoners. For both it involves a waiting period at what could be called an open-air morgue, a place away from the house of the deceased as well as from the cemetery. Here the corpse, lying on a stretcher, awaits the time for interment: In the past this could be many months; nowadays one month would be long. During this waiting period many people are in attendance and every night a party atmosphere prevails which continues till daybreak. During these nightly sessions women, sitting close to the stretcher and facing it, clap, sing and dance,
occasionally joined by men who are generally somewhat more restrained.

In the case of a chief, some male ceremonial assistants, upon his death, make the death stretcher while others shave him, cut his hair and wash his body, after which he is dressed with the aid of female ceremonial assistants; in the case of a female chief, the female ceremonial assistants do her hair, wash her body and dress her. Subsequently male ceremonial assistants cut a hole in the roof of the house above the door, through which they slip the body out (this way of removing the body is typical for chiefs) to be put on the death stretcher waiting outside. The body is then carried to the open-air morgue of the chief. Here a zebu hide is placed under the stretcher (this is only done for chiefs) to catch the liquids which leave the body. At the time of interment of the body, the hide of the zebu and its contents are deposited in a river or marsh.

During the waiting period at the open-air morgue all subjects are supposed to be present, especially at night, to participate in the usual activities. In the past chiefly funeral festivities were accompanied by sexual license: a woman could not refuse an advance; neither, if she was married, could her husband not consent to it.

Among commoners actual burial practices differ somewhat. Some use a grave, the walls of which are lined with stones; others, especially those living close to the sea, use a
canoe-like coffin. Chiefs are always buried in such coffins. But what really sets a chief apart from commoners is his cemetery. Whereas commoner cemeteries are open, the chiefly cemetery, his "red corral" (vala mena), is characterized by an enclosure of pointed sticks. These sticks are made of katrafay, a very hard and durable sort of wood. To be buried in a "red corral" is a privilege exclusively reserved for true chiefs and members of their lineages. People whose chiefly ancestry is in doubt are sometimes allowed to use a "symbolic red corral" (vala mena famantara) which consists of four pointed katrafay sticks placed at the four corners of a grave.

PROPITIATION. Ceremonial assistants are the only people who are allowed to pray and make offerings to the ancestors of the chief. Such prayers and offerings are usually conducted within a special structure, the chiefly shrine (zomba), which houses relics and possessions of former chiefs. Sakalava houses are always rectangular and oriented north-south. Doors are usually on the long sides opening to the east and sometimes to the west. A chiefly shrine, on the other hand, is always oriented east-west. The two chiefly shrines that I am familiar with, the ones of Manongá and Tsienge, both have only one door, which is situated in the northwest corner and opens to the west. At Manongá the chiefly shrine is situated about thirty meters northeast of the house of the chief. This particular shrine is surrounded
by an enclosure of pointed sticks with a gate on the west side. In addition, about ten meters west from the gate of the enclosure stands a big Tamarind tree, the holy tree for Sakalava, which during public ceremonies offers shade to the assembled subjects.

The interior of the chiefly shrine of Manongá is as shown in Figure 6. In the northeast corner stands a high table upon which lie important possessions of former chiefs, mostly white china cups, saucers and dishes, drinking glasses and eating utensils, and further the ceremonial conch and the ceremonial sword. The ceremonial sword in the chiefly shrine of Manongá is very rusty and looks very old—it could well be one to two hundred years old. Then there are four spears which stand up straight through holes in the table and rest on the floor. These spears have wooden handles and metal three-pronged tops. Each spear reaches to a silver box, about twenty centimeters high, half cylindrical, at the bottom of which three little pipes are attached, also of about twenty centimeters length, curving outwards and forwards. These boxes, which are beautifully worked, are called mitahy and hold pieces of the nails, some of the hair of head and eyebrows, and teeth of former chiefs.

The former chiefs whose relics are in the chiefly shrine of Manongá are:

A: NDRETOHINARIRO

B: NDRENIHINARIRO ("the one who is followed by others"),
Figure 6:
The Chiefly Shrine of Manongá
A's sister who had come to Besalampy before him

C: NDREMANDRONJIARIVO, the father of A and B

D: NDREMAHATANTIARIVO, C's father.

The last two, C and D, are still interred at the royal cemetery of Milanja; only their relics were brought to Manongá.

In the minds of commoners their chief, but particularly his ancestry, is one of the many powers (see Chapter Four) influencing their wealth and health. Individuals sometimes go to visit their chief to ask for their future well-being or to thank him for their riches or recovery from illness. Persons who want to visit the chief for such a purpose first approach the head ceremonial assistant explaining the reason of their visit and what they have brought along. This could be coffee, sugar, or clothes, but must include alcohol. The head ceremonial assistant then goes to talk to the chief, telling him everything that has been said, whereupon the chief is obliged to invite the guests. At this point the head ceremonial assistant goes to fetch the guests and takes them to the house of the chief. Upon entering the house with the guests, the head ceremonial assistant repeats to the chief everything that he has already told him considering the reason of the visit and the presents that have been brought along. When the head ceremonial assistant has finished his introduction each member of the visiting party greets the chief by saying "how are things with us,"²⁰ whereupon the chief answers, "and how are things with you people,"²¹ what about all the news
with you since long ago?". Then the chief thanks his guests for the presents they have brought along. As far as the alcoholic beverage is concerned, about half is consumed right there and then. Everybody gets some and people just sit around and chat among each other and with the chief. At this point the atmosphere becomes very informal. When there is no more left to drink people simply get up and leave the house of the chief without much further ado.

The other half of the alcoholic beverage, meanwhile, is taken by the head ceremonial assistant to be offered to the ancestors of the chief. This may be done shortly after the visit or at some future occasion. It is not necessary for the persons on whose behalf the offering is made to be present, although when this is done the same day as the visit, they generally will be.

When I witnessed such an occasion many people were present. My field assistant that day came to offer the zebu which he had promised to sacrifice if his wife would successfully get through pregnancy and labor. In addition a woman, about seven months pregnant, was there and also many relatives of both parties.

After the pregnant woman and my assistant each had visited the chief in her house, some men went to fetch the zebu to be sacrificed. The zebu was made to fall, bound by its legs and dragged within the enclosure of the chiefly shrine. There it was laid down with its head by the door, its body extending
westwards, leaving sufficient room for people to pass and enter the shrine.

Meanwhile the ceremonial assistants were getting things ready within the shrine. In particular they lighted incense (emboky), made of tree leaves and used by all Sakalava when communicating with the ancestors.

When it was time for people to enter the shrine the master of ceremony positioned himself by the gate of the enclosure. The chief was the first to go in. I had been told to enter with my right foot but I thought that this referred to the shrine. As it turned out they had meant the enclosure and the master of ceremony was standing by the gate to see to it that people did it correctly. When I entered with my left foot first he made an angry remark: "You people from Paris never know which way is up." I was told later that since I had not known about the taboo my transgression would not bring me disaster. Upon entering the shrine each person squatted by the door, put his hands together in a cup-like fashion, moved them three times over his head, each time saying "koezy."

Inside there did not seem to be any particular seating arrangement. The chief sat down at the northern wall and anybody entering just seemed to choose for himself an empty spot. We all sat on the floor and those who were not actually facing the relic boxes had only to turn their heads slightly to do so. In everyday life, it is extremely rude, while
sitting, to put one's feet close to somebody else. Here it was in fact strictly taboo to extend one's legs in the direction of the relic boxes.

When everyone was inside, the oldest ceremonial assistant ordered that the ceremonial conch be blown, whereupon he positioned himself directly in front of the table with relics and proceeded to address the ancestors. While he, and everybody else present, held their hands cupped over their heads, he explained the reason for our gathering. He thanked the ancestors for the birth of the son of my field assistant and prayed that the pregnant woman who was there would also successfully give birth. Then he asked for the well-being of everybody present. That request ended his prayer. Subsequently, aided by a female ceremonial assistant, he poured liquor into four white china cups, one of which he put in front of each relic box. Finally it was the turn of everyone present to drink part of the liquor. At this point everything became quite informal again and some people left, while others lingered inside. When leaving the shrine, people walked backwards, constantly facing the relic boxes until they reached the door. There they squatted and said "koezy," as they had done upon entering.

Meanwhile, during the prayers of the ceremonial assistant, I saw some men, who had remained outside, kill the zebu. One of them simulated cutting movements with the ceremonial sword over the neck of the zebu, while another actually cut its
throat with a sharp knife.

The dead zebu was subsequently dragged out of the enclosure and, in the shade of a tree close to the house of the chief, it was cut up and distributed to those present. I am sure that if it had not been for this opportunity to get free meat, many of the relatives of my field assistant would not have shown up. This may also hold for some of the relatives of the pregnant woman. For although the zebu of my field assistant had not been sacrificed on her behalf, it is customary among the Sakalava to share sacrificial items with all present.

CEREMONIAL ASSISTANTS AND COMMONERS. The circle of ceremonial assistants is a council of elders which operates in secret, away from the public eye, and does not take direct responsibility for its decisions and other actions. The group decides, as I have already mentioned, when to hold ceremonial meetings and from whom to requisition cattle to be sacrificed on such occasions. More importantly, in the past it was probably also this group that decided on certain courses of action of the chief which, in extreme cases, even led to flight of selected commoners (see Chapter Seven).

The inner circle of ceremonial assistants operates in secret. Public councils do not exist in Sakalava country and would be unthinkable. Nobody would dare to pass judgment publicly or support action adversely influencing other people for fear of exposing himself to their revenge. Revenge
would take the form of witchcraft and/or sorcery. The best protection from witchcraft and sorcery is either not to engage in any activity which could provoke a potential evil-doer or to keep such activities secret.

The issue of wizardry looms very large among Sakalava and permeates nearly all parts of their society. Yet, in chiefly matters it is of no consequence. I do not know how this is effected or why ceremonial assistants would not suspect each other of sorcery practices. But it is clear that if they did, the entire structure would ultimately collapse. Internally, the circle of ceremonial assistants is a council and precisely one of the reasons this council can effectively go about its work is that its members need not fear the dangers of wizardry with respect to each other.

In summary, I see a Sakalava court as an elaborate apparatus enabling a select group of elders to wield power over other commoners. In his article concerning checks on the abuse of political power in African States, John Beattie (1959) mentions that royal councils sometimes use the threat of refusal of collaboration in ritual as a check on the power of the ruler. The Sakalava have gone a step further: instead of checking the power of the chief, the circle of ceremonial assistants has actually taken this power in its own hands and uses the threat of refusal of cooperation in ritual, among other things, to maintain its position.
Chapter Seven
WIZARDRY AND OTHER ASPECTS OF SAKALAVA LIFE

I have described wizardry as being very important in the sphere of kinship and social organization and not important at all in the political realm. In this chapter I want to explore the way wizardry influences some other aspects of Sakalava culture.

Covert Evasiveness in Social Interaction

Each Sakalava individual is convinced that almost everybody else "knows things" (mahay raha)--things these other people may use to cause him harm. He also feels that the less these other people know about himself the more difficult it will be for them to tailor their evil sorcery concoctions or witchcraft machinations to specifically cause him harm. Thus, one way of minimizing the danger of attacks by wizardry is to be very secretive and not divulge information about oneself. But this has to be done without giving others the impression, by being overtly evasive, that one mistrusts them. Instead, one has to appear to be quite willing to divulge information. This can be accomplished by substituting falsehoods for facts. For example, a person planning a trip might be inclined to give his neighbor a day and time of departure different from the one he has in mind. When he departs a day or so earlier he can easily find an excuse for his change of plans. But
meanwhile, possible attempts on the part of the neighbor to use the information to cause him harm, for instance by leaving a sorcery substance on his path, will in all likelihood have been thwarted.

This covert evasiveness in social interaction is also apparent in the manipulation of the taboo structure. I have mentioned that taboos are taken seriously to the extent that transgressions are unthinkable. Because of this, and also because the enormous variety of taboos is perplexing even to the Sakalava themselves, taboos can be effectively manipulated for ulterior ends. While on a trip, for example, one of my companions refused a meal of chicken offered to us on the grounds that it was taboo for him. Later he explained to me that he had refused because he did not trust our host.

I have seen something similar happen between fairly close relatives. A girl, after visiting her sister, came back to the house of her mother's sister, where she was living at the time, carrying some prepared food which her own sister had given her. It was dinner time and I happened to be there. The aunt refused to taste the food her niece had brought on the grounds that it was taboo for her. The niece, who had lived with her aunt for a considerable period of time, knew that her aunt was the regular medium of a spirit and also knew the taboos associated with the spirit. Yet, she respected and did not question her aunt's explanation. Later I found out that the aunt had recently had an argument with the niece
who had prepared the food. She told me that she was afraid
that the niece might have added something to the food to
cause her harm.

Another instance, not directly involving food, came to
my attention when my cook refused to give someone a burning
piece of wood which this person needed to light her own fire.
My cook refused on the ground that it was taboo for her to
assist someone in lighting his fire. She later explained to
me, however, that she did not trust the person who came to
ask for fire. She was afraid that person, while taking the
burning piece of wood from our kitchen, might leave something
behind to cause us harm.

Because nobody ever questions these matters the taboo
structure provides a very convenient mechanism for dealing
with people whom one does not trust. If a person were to
refuse a dinner he would communicate distrust to his host.
In doing so he would make his host into a true enemy, thereby
opening himself up to outright revenge. By appealing to a
taboo, on the other hand, one can regulate an uneasy personal
relationship without causing anybody any additional anxieties.

The fact that taboos are not questioned also comes out in
a story I was told and which purports to explain why human
beings tell lies. The character of the story is very mis-
chievous and people try to catch him. They take a wooden
statue, representing the wife of a chief, cover it with a
very sticky tree resin and put it by a waterhole. When the
mischievous person comes to drink at the waterhole he touches the statue and cannot get away. Having caught him, people now want to kill him but he pleads with the crowd not to beat him to death or to spear him as it is taboo for him to be murdered in a way which is likely to draw blood. Instead, he suggests that they build a fire and burn him to death. The crowd, respecting his taboo, decides to follow his suggestion. But when the heat of the flames causes the resin to melt, our character jumps off the burning pile of wood and runs away. And that is why human beings tell so many lies--they are the descendants of this original liar.

Spirits Possession

Spirit possession is very common among the Sakalava. It allows a person to say what is on his mind without having to take responsibility for it. In particular, it provides a mechanism of voicing one's opinions about other people without having to fear their revenge: the responsibility clearly rests with the spirit.

Of the four categories of supernatural beings discussed in Chapter Three, god, the ancestors of chiefs, the ancestors of commoners and bush spirits, only two, chiefly ancestors and bush spirits, are relevant in the context of spirit possession. When discussing spirit possession among the Sakalava it is useful to distinguish between private possession and public possession. This distinction is somewhat
similar to the one made by Lewis (1971) between peripheral and central possession cults. Whereas Lewis emphasizes the difference in personnel of both media and spirits, among the Sakalava the difference in the setting is the most important factor. Possession in private only involves close relatives of the medium; possession in public, on the other hand, is open to a much wider audience.

BACKGROUND. The first time an individual becomes possessed by a spirit is often a private occasion, with only his close relatives present. Typically, a person will have felt sickly for some time and a diviner will have pronounced the affliction to be the work of a spirit. Next, arrangements are made for the spirit to possess its medium. Alcoholic beverages are bought and someone, preferably one of the prospective medium's relatives or in-laws who plays the native guitar (valiha) or the accordion, is invited to be present at the event.

When the day arrives the attendants gather inside the house of the prospective medium. Everyone sits on the floor, the medium faces east, the musician starts playing, and all spectators clap their hands in rhythm. After fifteen minutes or more, the medium involuntarily moves his head and shoulders in response to the rhythm. These movements are interpreted as attempts on the part of the spirit to enter the medium. Several of these attempts, each lasting a few minutes, may be made before one is successful. In a successful attempt
the movements of the medium become progressively more frantic and often lose touch with the rhythm of the music. Now the medium's head and shoulders and his entire upper torso move and twist. At the point when these activities seem to reach a climax the body of the medium suddenly goes limp and falls into the lap of someone sitting immediately behind him. The music stops and when, a few seconds later, the medium returns to a sitting position the spirit is considered to be within him. During the entire period of possession the medium acts as if keeping calm and composed required a tremendous effort on his part.

Whatever is said by a medium during the period of possession is considered to be the word of the spirit. At a first possession people ask the spirit who he is. Is he a bush spirit and, if so, which one; or else, if he is a deceased chief, what is his posthumous name. If the spirit has an important message he delivers it, but a message is not required. At the time a message is delivered the atmosphere changes from very relaxed to tense. During the ceremony liquor or wine is drunk and everybody present, including the spirit, through its medium, enjoys it.

A change in the composure of the medium after an hour signals the end of the session. The return to a normal state parallels the entrance into the possessed one but is much less spectacular. The body of the medium starts to move again but less violently. After a short period of such movements the
medium goes limp, falls back and then, almost immediately, returns to an upright position. At this point the medium is no longer possessed.

The diagnosis by a diviner that someone's sickly condition is the work of a spirit carries no moral significance. The illness is simply seen to communicate the desire of the spirit to possess the patient.

An individual becomes a regular medium when a spirit discloses the taboos to be followed (for examples, see Chapter Three). These taboos may not be revealed at the first possession. Sometimes it takes several sessions for the spirit to disclose all of his taboos. Once the medium knows the taboos of his spirit he is expected to obey these meticulously. As in the case of ancestral taboos, their transgression not only unleashes dangerous supernatural forces but also invites the wrath of the spirit. The combined effect is considered extremely dangerous, even lethal. As a consequence infringements of such taboos are very unlikely to take place.

Once the identity of someone's spirit is known, subsequent possessions will reflect this new knowledge. If the spirit is a defunct chief the act of regicide is symbolically reenacted. Thus, when the body of the medium goes limp one of the attendants lowers a machete to within a few inches of the medium's neck and makes cutting movements. This is done at the time the spirit enters, as well as when he departs. If it is a bush spirit it will have a favorite diet. In the
trance state, therefore, the medium is expected to eat such things as raw fish or worms to satisfy the appetite of the animal spirit possessing him. The Malagasy Government has outlawed possession by bush spirits, allegedly because it considers some of the associated practices unsanitary. As a consequence people hide these activities from outsiders including ethnographers.

Spirit possession may be spontaneous or planned. I witnessed a spontaneous possession by a dead chief which resulted from severe toothache. The person with the toothache was a regular medium of the spirit. The spirit blamed the toothache on the evil doings of someone whom the medium had believed to be a friend.

A twelve-year-old girl from Ambalatany told me about a spontaneous possession by a bush spirit. A few weeks earlier, when the girl became sick, her uncle and a third person took her to Besalampy by night. Approximately halfway between Ambalatany and Besalampy, in a densely vegetated spot, the party encountered a bush spirit by the road. At this point her uncle, who is the regular medium of another bush spirit, became possessed by his spirit. The spirit possessing the uncle and the bush spirit by the side of the road then exchanged greetings and casual conversation. Soon the bush spirit told them to continue their journey and promised them his protection. When someone flashed a light on the bush spirit the entire party could see it. They also could follow
the conversation between both spirits verbatim. The fact that her uncle became possessed by another bush spirit, she felt, had saved everybody's life. This girl was a mature, intelligent child who was not given to idle fantasies. I am sure that her version of what happened that night was not unduly influenced by the fact that she was sick at the time, but represented the consensus of everyone involved.

POSSSESSION IN PRIVATE. Most spirit possessions are not spontaneous, but are planned and occur in private. Typically a person learns through divination that a spirit desires to possess him. Or else, more rarely, a session may be planned as an alternative to divination. Whichever happens a spirit often gives advice or divulges information about the cause of the disease from which his human charge is suffering. In this case the information is likely to be more specific than the information which could be obtained from the more common type of divination discussed in Chapter Four.

It is not surprising that a medium considers his spirit as an important means of protection. As I will explain shortly, I believe that this is the reason why primarily Sakalava women are subject to spirit possession. Women, I will argue, feel most need of the kind of protection spirits provide.

The Sakalava say that the preponderance of female media is related to the inferiority of women. "Women are weak," they claim, and are "easily caught by things." They are
considered to be like children in this respect (this refers to their general disposition: I am not aware of the existence of child-media).

The Sakalava point of view is similar to views expressed by most anthropologists. Lewis (1961), for example, in summarizing a voluminous literature, concludes that participation in peripheral possession cults is the prerogative of the downtrodden. Sakalava women, however, although considered somewhat inferior to men, are by no means downtrodden. In fact, the female element asserts itself in many spheres of Sakalava culture. For instance, the Sakalava have male and female chiefs. Women, moreover, are rather independent of men, a consequence, among other things, of the custom whereby a woman becomes the proprietor of the bride price which was paid on her behalf.

On several occasions I have heard women comment on the protective qualities of spirits for which they serve as media. At marriage a woman leaves the village of her relatives to join her husband in his compound. In doing so she leaves an atmosphere of trust and moves into an environment which she perceives as hostile and dangerous. The same place which a woman perceives negatively is considered more positively by her husband and his immediate blood relatives.

Spirit possession is a convenient mechanism for bridging the gap between these divergent perceptions. It allows the woman to express any misgivings she may have about her new
environment in a more direct and less ambiguous way than would otherwise be possible. If it were not for spirit possession, for instance, she would not as easily be able to pinpoint the blame for a misfortune on a person in her environment. Normal divination would point to a broad category of people she is in contact with, most likely her husband's relatives. But the inherent ambiguity of this, combined with the fact that her husband tends to perceive his own relatives in less threatening terms would make it difficult for the woman to be taken seriously. On the other hand, by pointing at a certain individual, ambiguity is avoided and the charge can only be taken seriously. But when an accusing finger is thus pointed it is unlikely that the accused is present. The conventions against publicly accusing a person are too strong; at the same time the privacy of the session is probably only shared with a few trusted individuals.

Spirit possession among the Sakalava involves dead chiefs and bush spirits but not the ancestors of commoners. The supernatural reality of deceased chiefs and bush spirits is the same for everybody independent of membership in social groupings; the ancestors of commoners, however, while very relevant to their immediate descendants, are not at all so to outsiders. Thus, a woman, acting as a medium for a bush spirit or a defunct chief, subjects herself and her audience to a common authority. The impartiality of this authority, moreover, is beyond doubt.
To sum up we can say that by focussing vague misgivings on a precise target the woman overcomes a large part of her problem. At the same time, as a result of the impartiality of the spirit, she is also likely to gain support for her feelings of distrust from her husband and a few of his close relatives. With spirit possession thus being instrumental in reducing her anxiety it is no wonder that she considers her spirit as a guardian.

POSSESSION IN PUBLIC BY CHIEFLY ANCESTORS. Possession of commoners by chiefly ancestors at public ceremonies is a means whereby Sakalava commoners check the power of ceremonial assistants. This mechanism is not included by Beattie in his survey of African material. I have seen it in operation on several occasions.

One such occasion was a ceremony accompanying the reconstruction of the chiefly shrine of Manongá. This took place in April and lasted one week, during which time the table with relics was placed outside in the shade of the Tamarind tree. During the day men did their work on the shrine, while at night women, sitting on the ground close to the table with relics, sang and clapped. As usual during such singing and clapping performances, from time to time one or two women would get up and start dancing, eagerly watched by the men and sometimes joined by some of them. Occasionally, the master of ceremony also prompted men to sing, at which times the women would get a few moments respite.
All subjects were supposed to have been present at this ceremony but very few people attended. This had to do with timing. The ceremony started on Friday the 6th of April, 1973. The new moon, however, appeared on Wednesday night, the 4th to 5th of April. By Sakalava time reckoning the night belongs to the following day, thus the new moon appeared on Thursday. But Thursday is ritually unclean (vorery) for chiefs, and when the new moon makes its appearance on a Thursday the entire month is unclean. In an unclean period it is taboo for chiefs to hold ceremonies.

Many rumors went around. One of the sons of the chief of Tsienge with whom I talked about it shook his head in disgust, saying that at Manongá the chief and her court functionaries were obviously incompetent. In Besalampy people were reluctant to talk about it. I have heard it said, though, that people were very angry with their chief and that the chief, in turn, feared desertion on a mass scale in favor of another chief.

One of the persons almost constantly present at the ceremony was a commoner woman, a known medium of one of the ancestors of the chief. Now and then this woman became possessed, at which times the head ceremonial assistant went quickly to fetch the chief, who was usually in her house. I was sitting too far away to follow the conversations between the chief and her ancestor, but I know it often concerned the unfortunate timing for the ceremony and it was obvious that
the chief was always very severely reprimanded for "her" mistakes.

At Tsienge I saw a similar situation. There, during a chiefly ceremony, a woman also from time to time became possessed by one of the ancestors of the chief. Here again the chief had to swallow many reprimands: her ancestor acted very angrily and was especially perturbed about the fact that a certain ceremonial assistant was not present. Afterwards, I heard the children of the chief discuss with her how unfriendly grandfather had been.

Spirit possession at chiefly ceremonies obviously serves as a way for commoners to exert control over their chief and his circle of ceremonial assistants. At present, this control may only function to protect the traditional ways. In the past, when chiefs had despotic powers over their subjects (see next section), this control in all likelihood also served to keep these powers from being abused. Of course this only works after the fact, but criticism after the fact may have a preventive effect.

In both of the cases of media who regularly become possessed at ceremonies that I am familiar with, one at Manongá, the other at Tsienge, the media are women. Because Sakalava chiefdoms are endogamous, both men and women are equally well-known to the chief. As a consequence the sex of the medium is irrelevant to the political function of the type of spirit possession under consideration. The pool of
potential female media is, however, substantially larger than the pool of male media, so it is not surprising that the two cases I observed should have involved women.

POSSESSION IN PUBLIC BY BUSH SPIRITS. A final type of possession is possession by bush spirits at public ceremonies expressly organized for the occasion. Such ceremonies are held once or twice a year. Typically they involve all the inhabitants of one village or of a small number of neighboring villages.

I have never witnessed possession by bush spirits at public ceremonies. My observations at other types of spirit possessions lead me to suggest that possession by bush spirits in public provides a means of resolving conflict through the establishment of a supernatural authority. This supernatural authority is established on a village level, where the political authority of the chief is either weak or not sufficiently relevant to the problems at hand. In this sense possession by bush spirits at public ceremonies is complementary to direct political control by the chief.

When discussing the royal council I suggested that the secrecy surrounding its operation results from the fear of its members of exposing themselves to the dangers of witchcraft and sorcery. I also suggested that due to this pervasive fear, public councils among the Sakalava would be unthinkable. No one person would dare to criticize or otherwise pass judgment on another person in public for fear of
inviting his revenge. In the case of public possession by bush spirits, on the other hand, the sentiment of a small community is given supernatural expression. Thus authority can be exercised and conflict can be resolved without exposing any one person or party to the dangers of witchcraft or sorcery.

Because possession by bush spirits in public is only significant in a local context one expects the media to be recruited from the local population. As a result of de-facto village exogamy (see Chapter Six) the women in a village are either young, unmarried girls or married women originating from other villages. The agnatic core consists mainly of males. Thus one would expect the media in question to be male. This expectation indeed holds true in the case of Ambalatany.

The idea that possession by bush spirits at public ceremonies is complementary to direct political control by the chief finds interesting support in a number of ideas surrounding bush spirits and chiefs. In the first place, like chiefs, bush spirits are called "proprietors of the earth." The difference is that this designation, when it applies to chiefs, is more general than when it applies to bush spirits. Spirits are proprietors of very specific locations; the chief is the proprietor of any location occupied or otherwise used by his subjects. While generally a person always has to take cognizance of his chief, it depends on the particular location as
to the particular bush spirits that have to be placated as well. Thus, people in Ambalatany pay tribute to the chief of Manonga in Besalampy but also to the bush spirits that are the owners of their village grounds and immediate surroundings.

Another interesting example of a set of beliefs which at the same time link and contrast the realm of bush spirits and that of the chief is provided by notions surrounding infants. As long as a human infant does not have teeth, approximately during the first nine months of his life, he is called a bibly (animal, bush spirit). If he dies in this state his relatives are not allowed to mourn, nor is he supposed to be interred at the family cemetery. Instead the corpse has to be disposed of in an unceremonial and casual manner. The body is not buried but "thrown away" in a simple hole, rather like the body of a dead animal.

This practice makes sense in view of the fact that Sakalava funeral ceremonies tend to be exceedingly elaborate and costly. With infant mortality being high, elaborate and costly funeral ceremonies for young children would constitute a substantial drain on economic resources.

For present purposes the emic point of view is more interesting. The Sakalava themselves say that a toothless infant should not be given a regular funeral because "he is an animal (bush spirit) and not yet a subject of the chief." These two ideas are always expressed in the same breath; yet,
regular funerals do not involve the chief at all.

Note that the saying contrasts two categories of beings: subjects of the chief and animals (bush spirits). Depending on the state of his first teeth a person is either a subject of the chief or an animal (bush spirit). Thus the explicit political organization of the chiefdom is contrasted with the realm of animals and bush spirits. This realm impinges on human beings mainly by means of spirit possession. Possession by bush spirits, thus, provides an alternative to direct political control by the chief.

SUMMARY. The phenomenon of spirit possession among the Sakalava can be summarized as follows. The Sakalava distinguish four types of supernatural beings: god, the ancestors of chiefs, the ancestors of commoners and bush spirits. Of these, god is too far removed to be relevant to everyday life, while the ancestors of commoners are only relevant to the lives of their immediate descendants. This leaves the ancestors of chiefs and bush spirits, who at the same time are close to the everyday affairs of the living, and are given equal recognition by members of different social groupings. This makes these beings particularly suitable for spirit possession.

Possession by chiefly ancestors or bush spirits is usually a private affair primarily involving female media. I observed that for women in patrilocal residence these types of spirit possession serve as means to reduce the threat of
an alien environment.

The functions of spirit possession in public vary depending on whether it involves chiefly ancestors or bush spirits. Possession at public ceremonies of a commoner by the ancestor of the chief serves as a check on the power of the chief and his ceremonial assistants. Possession by bush spirits, on the other hand, by establishing supernatural authority away from the center of chiefly power, functions to resolve conflict on a local level.

**Dispersal**

Covert evasiveness in social interaction and spirit possession provide two means of coping with the constant threat of wizardry. Another means of coping with this threat is moving away. This issue, which is the topic of the present section, will be dealt with on three levels. In the first place I argue that Sakalava culture predisposes people toward high geographic mobility. Secondly, given the potential for dispersal some actual instances of population movements are examined to determine the immediate causes. Finally, the question of resettlement is briefly examined.

**POTENTIAL GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY.** The lineage cemetery is a fixed point in an otherwise fluid situation. It exerts somewhat of a centripetal force, deterring lineage members from leaving their natal village and wandering far afield. But, as will be explained, this centripetal force is very
weak and easily overcome by more powerful centrifugal forces.

The lineage cemetery is important to the extent that it is the resting place of very close relatives, such as one's father, siblings and children, and ultimately of oneself. At the same time, the importance of death and of anything associated with death is denied and played down, minimizing the significance of the lineage cemetery as a centripetal force. For example, a man who decides to leave his natal village and establish himself elsewhere does not consciously consider the problems this may create for his own funeral: to do so would be to invite disaster. While living at his new residence, he is equally unlikely to instruct his children about the funeral arrangements they should make in the event of his death. Without the expressed wishes of their father, the interest of the children takes precedence. Particularly if their father's cemetery is far away, say more than one day of walking, the children will be inclined to inter their father close to their present homestead. Or else, the children may be aware of a deep rift which exists between their father and members of his natal family, such as his siblings and, more importantly, his parents while these were still alive. In that case the children may rightly assume that their father would not want to be interred at the cemetery of his lineage. In this way new cemeteries constantly come into being. Thus, a cemetery is not much of a force drawing and holding people together, whether
affectively or residentially.

This state of affairs expresses the unimportance of ancestors and of groups focussed on ancestors. Instead, as we saw in Chapter Five, groups oriented toward children are more important. These include the lineage segment and, especially, the nuclear family.

Child oriented groups tend to be small. The lower limit of the size of effective kinship groups is determined by economic considerations. Small herds of up to ten or even twenty zebus can easily be taken care of by one adult male and his wife. A large herd of, for example, one hundred beasts may require more herders. But herds of this size are usually owned by old people who can depend on their sons and grandsons to help them out. Thus, the nuclear family constitutes the lower limit of effective kinship groups. Child orientation, being the important factor it is under Sakalava circumstances, tends to push kinship groups to the lower limit of their effective size. In other words, the nuclear family, in all respects a viable unit, can be considered the most important kinship group.

All other factors being equal, when the most important kinship group is smallest, the potential geographic mobility is highest. With the nuclear family being the most important kinship group, the size can hardly be further reduced or potential geographic mobility further increased. Thus kinship relations greatly enhance the potential geographic
mobility of Sakalava society.

In addition to the relations of a person with his relatives, dead or living, his relations with the means of production, capital and land, also importantly effect his potential geographic mobility. Capital among the Sakalava means cattle. Cattle are a mobile commodity and can be transported from one locale to another with the greatest of ease. Thus, the form of its capital also predisposes Sakalava society toward high geographic mobility.

Land, as we saw, is owned by the chief. All subjects of the chief automatically have grazing rights in the territory under his control. Such rights extend throughout the entire chiefdom and are not regionally delimited. This greatly facilitates movement of people and their cattle within chiefdoms.

Chiefs usually welcome newcomers with open arms. A chief, as was pointed out, measures his success in terms of the number of his followers and the more followers the better to withstand the constant threat of neighboring chiefs. In this respect Sakalava chiefs are very much like Mandari chiefs of the South Sudan who were also always anxious to attract new clients (Buxton, 1958:81-82).

The chief, in accepting a newcomer, formally approves the earmark of the latter's cattle. Often the chief orders that a new earmark be used, especially when the settler comes without cattle or when the cattle he bring have earmarks which
resemble those already being used. In this way the visible identification of a person with his place of origin and the relatives he left behind is severed and replaced by one firmly connected to the new homeland.

We observe, then, that neither the relations of a person with his ancestors and with his living relatives, nor the form of his capital or his relations with the land importantly inhibits his geographic mobility. But this does not necessarily mean that population movements frequently take place: the potential is there but something else is needed to induce people actually to leave their natal villages and establish themselves elsewhere. This will be examined next.

IMMEDIATE CAUSES OF ACTUAL DISPLACEMENT. In order to understand the dynamics of population movement better I collected lineage histories of subjects of the chiefdom of Manongá. Nearly everyone I approached was willing to cooperate. In total I interviewed twenty-eight lineage elders. That sample represents the majority of the total population of Manongá. The following are some typical accounts.

1. "We are of the MANANADABO clan. My father was born in Boina. When he was still young my grandparents moved to Milanja. That is where my father grew up and married and where I was born. The chief of Milanja, a woman, wanted my father for her husband. But my father did not want to. He
was afraid: after all, this was not our custom. As a result the chief became angry with our lineage. One day all our cattle were gone—we had some one hundred head. When we went to the chief to ask for help in finding our lost cattle, she refused to cooperate. Later we found out that the chief had let people of the Heñaby clan steal our cattle. At this point our father said: 'Chiefs are all the same; let us go elsewhere. If the chief here does this sort of thing to our property, our very lives may be next.' That is why we left Milanja. When we arrived here we went to the chief and said: 'We do not practice sorcery; we do not steal; we have not done anything wrong, but this is what happened to us up at Milanja. Now we have come here to present ourselves to you.' 'Yes,' said the proprietor of Manongã, 'I am very happy and I will make you happy, too. I welcome you; I am extending both of my hands.' The chief made my father's older brother head ceremonial assistant. My father was made a ceremonial assistant and that is why I am a ceremonial assistant also.29

When my grandparents died we interred them close to Ankorobe. When we had been living here for some time the foreigners came who made my father into village headman. But my father had many children and decided to go look for a place where there would be enough to eat for all. That is why we went to Marofototsy. Much later the foreigners made me headman of the village of Marofototsy, a post I held for many years.'
Asked about their joking partners, my informant listed eight clans, four of which are represented in Manonga. One of those represented in Manonga is Heñaby, members of which stole their cattle while they were still living in Milanja.

2. "We are of the ANDRAFANGA clan. Our ancestors lived south of here, around Maintirano, and were of chiefly blood. At one point there were two brothers and two sisters. The chief there wanted one of the sisters for his wife. But the two brothers did not consent: 'You will not be his wife; we won't like it. We are all of chiefly blood but the chief wants to belittle our ancestry by making you his wife.' When the chief heard about this he became angry and killed the sister in question. But what were the two brothers to do? The chief had many followers; they had none. They decided to wait till nightfall and to spear the chief when he was asleep in his hut. This they did and they also killed everyone else in the compound of the chief. Then the two brothers fled, taking their surviving sister along. Upon arriving here they went to the chief and said: 'We have killed people; we have killed a chief. We have come here to tell you the truth, we subject ourselves to you.' The chief here checked up on their story and found out that they were indeed of chiefly blood. Then he told them: 'You and I are the same type of people. I cannot make you into slaves. I consider you conversation
partners. When I travel, you follow me; if I want to kill people and you do not agree I have to follow your advice.' Thus we became conversation partners of the chief and to this day it is taboo for us to marry a chief."

Comments:

I asked why the chief would have killed the woman he wanted to marry. Answer: so that no one else could marry her either, as that would put the chief to shame.

3. "We are of the MAROLAHY VOHITSY clan. The father of our grandfather lived in Boina and belonged to a chiefly family. He married a female ceremonial assistant who gave him two sons. His brothers then told him that they wanted to make his sons into ceremonial assistants. He did not like this and decided to leave. His father gave him a ceremonial conch and a ceremonial sword to take along. When he arrived with his two sons here at Manongá he went to the chief who said: 'Give me your ceremonial conch but keep your ceremonial sword for family ceremonies.' Upon being accepted by the chief of Manongá he married a woman who bore him more offspring. When he died he was interred close by. The offspring of the woman he married here also use that cemetery. The two children he had brought along from Boina, our little and big grandfather, were interred at another spot. When the children of our little and our big grandfather had a fight
over cattle, the children of the little grandfather, one of which is my father, exhumed his body and reinterred him elsewhere. This is the place our lineage segment is using for cemetery. Although our people have three cemeteries we do not intermarry. At funerals or second funerals the people of all three groups participate."

Comments:

These people no longer practice the customs of chiefs. In fact, the word vohitsy in their name means "commoner(s)" and is meant to distinguish them from a chiefly family called Marolahy, to the south of Manongá. That they are of chiefly ancestry and have a name which appears to connect them with the Marolahy chief is pure coincidence. The word marolahy means "many males" and may refer to bulls in a herd or men in a chiefdom, and so forth.

These accounts are typical of the histories I collected. Most of them share the element of confrontation with the chief and in the majority of cases this revolves around the chief wanting to take someone for his wife (sava) or for her husband (savalahy). This same element often emerges in casual conversation about the past. I have often been assured that chiefs used to be despotic and unpredictable. Chiefs could, and often would, take someone for a spouse who was already married. And then, adding insult to injury, he would
expect her former husband (in the case of a woman) to present the chief with cattle, indicating that he did not mind having been deprived and did not harbor any ill feelings toward the chief as a result.

The first history recounted above involved a person who was already married. But as the second history illustrates, even if the person is single it is not considered a blessing to have been selected as spouse of the chief. Usually it prompts her (his) immediate relatives to accompany her (him) in flight.

I am at a loss to explain the immediate reasons for such drastic action; the people whom I have asked about it did not give me any convincing answers either. Many lineage histories point to chiefly ancestry, and for a chief to take someone for a spouse who claims chiefly ancestry is equivalent to denying that person's claim. But why this would prompt the person in question to leave is not clear.

I have been told that the spouse of a chief has a very difficult life. The chief is surrounded by numerous taboos of which his (her) spouse should constantly be aware lest she (he) should cause a transgression. I am sure this is true, as I have heard people who are married to members of chiefly lineages express annoyance on this point. But again, I do not think that this fact alone could have been the reason for out and out flight. Something truly awesome must have been involved, and as I write this I am reminded of the
myth of Ndremandikavavy, the chiefly spouse who was buried alive. But I have no firm evidence that would justify my making this connection.

Whatever it was, however, it is clear that the chief had great powers over his subjects. These were the only powers, in fact, that could force people to give up relatives and familiar surroundings to go to another chiefdom, knowing that although one could thus escape the tyranny of a particular chief, things might not be much better elsewhere, for "chiefs are all the same."

I am phrasing this conclusion in terms of chiefly power. In the chapter on political organization I emphasized the power of ceremonial assistants. But decisions by the circle of ceremonial assistants are communicated to the population in the name of the chief. Thus, from the point of view of the general population it is indeed the chief who wields power.

Before I started collecting these histories I had expected to encounter many stories about sorcery and witchcraft. To my initial surprise neither of these issues was ever given as a reason for movement. At the moment this no longer surprises me. Small scale movements which culminate in the splitting up of cemeteries are always the result of fights between siblings, usually about inheritance of cattle. The daily idiom of such fights is sorcery but this is so obvious and natural to the Sakalava that it need not be expressly commented upon, certainly not after time has
stripped all emotional fringes off the underlying issue.

The third history above demonstrates such small scale movements due to problems between siblings. That history is just one example out of many, the majority of which refer to fights between siblings over cattle. Not once have I encountered reference to fights between members of different generations, such as parents and children.

I have four cases where siblings who have a father in common divided in several groups according to their respective mothers. In one example a man had six sons by his first wife and two sons by his second. The man was rich and while still alive gave 300 head of cattle to the sons of his first wife and an equal number to the sons of his second wife. Being jealous of the fact that the herd their two half-brothers were taking care of always provided large quantities of milk, the sons of the first wife provoked a fight and speared one of their half-brothers. This led to their ultimate split-up. Another example involving half-siblings concerned a fight over chiefly succession. In this case the oldest son of the second wife was the oldest of all children, including those of the first wife. When their father (the chief) died the children of the second wife claimed the ceremonial sword, the ceremonial conch and the ceremonial assistants for their oldest sibling, but their claim was refuted by the children of the first wife who wanted these things for their own oldest sibling.
These cases illustrate a serious ambiguity. The offspring of polygynous unions can be identified either with their respective mothers (for instance, in the first example the two groups of siblings each were given an equal number of cattle to take care of), or, undifferentiatedly, with their father (in which case, and this is the norm, the herd would be equally divided amongst all children). In some cases, and this is illustrated in the second example, the difficulty becomes confounded when seniority is also taken into account. Seniority produces a hierarchy of co-wives, and this hierarchy can be extended to establish a hierarchy of their respective offspring. But seniority can also be used directly to establish a hierarchy of all siblings by order of birth and independent of maternal affiliation. Such ambiguities often produce a variety of claims over inheritance of cattle or office, which, instead of being resolved, usually lead to lineage fission and dispersal of the people involved.

RESETTLEMENT. A man who leaves his natal village to establish himself in another chiefdom does not usually attach himself to an existing village. With chiefdoms being endogamous he would be unable to locate a village inhabited by relatives. To attach himself to a village comprised of non-relatives would be to expose himself to the threat of witchcraft. The alternative is to establish oneself at a location away from existing villages--this indeed is the norm.
The same applies to the man who leaves his natal village to establish himself at another location within his own chiefdom. His closest relatives are those he left behind in his natal village. No other village within the chiefdom compares to his natal village in this respect; instead, other villages are comprised of more distant relatives, non-relatives or in-laws. Distant relatives and non-relatives are considered as potential practitioners of wizardry and attaching oneself to a village inhabited by these people is not an inviting prospect.

A village consisting of in-laws would seem to be an attractive place to settle. The two cases of uxorilocal residence that I am familiar with both involved a poor man and a rich woman and the violation of the norm of virilocal residence seemed directly related to economic factors. Why uxorilocal residence is not used to escape from sorcery practiced by relatives in one's natal village can be explained as follows. The immediate reason why a person leaves his natal village is that members of his nuclear family repeatedly contract diseases which are diagnosed as the evil work of relatives. When these diseases occur often and in rapid succession the person slowly gains the impression that all his relatives are scheming to cause him and other members of his nuclear family harm. During this period it is likely that he has occasion to take his wife and children to visit her relatives. But the chronic state of disease to which he
and/or other members of his nuclear family are subject, does not abate. Additional divination again points to relatives, this time on his wife's side. It is felt, therefore, that the best way to escape from the threat of sorcery is to withdraw completely from association with both consanguineal and affinal relatives.

It can be concluded, then, that resettlement always takes place away from existing villages. This is largely due to fear of wizardry. The theoretical possibility of attaching oneself to a village of affines is not resorted to: the immediate reason of taking flight is a chronic state of disease which has repeatedly been divined as the work of relatives--mainly consanguineal relatives, but at times also affinal relatives.

Resettlement away from existing villages has two advantages. In the first place it tends to isolate people with communicable diseases from contact with others. Secondly, it contributes to an even distribution of people and their cattle over the countryside. Even distribution of cattle through a region facilitates the optimum utilization of the grassland resources of that region.
Chapter Eight
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study I present data in support of a proposition by Middleton and Winter that beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery when coexisting in the same society fit into the social system in different ways (1963:8). The data concern the Central Sakalava of West Madagascar. Among the Sakalava witchcraft applies between people who are not related, while sorcery concerns relatives. These findings are the exact opposite of what Harwood found among the Safwa of Tanzania. Among the Safwa, witchcraft applies between relatives, while sorcery concerns relationships involving non-relatives. Harwood's data thus also support the proposition by Middleton and Winter. Taken together the two sets of data support the more general hypothesis that beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery may be used in the same society to mark off and contrast any two social categories (Harwood, 1970:139).

Central to Sakalava beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery is their system of divination which is used exclusively as a device for diagnosing disease. The system is a randomizing one, in which the answers (though not necessarily their interpretations) to questions posed are determined by factors outside of the control of human agents. Divination proceeds by the examination of a pattern of seeds. The pattern is laid out according to precise rules and the interpretation
follows along predictable lines. The rules for constructing a pattern are such that each pattern is essentially a random drawing from the total number of patterns theoretically possible; this total number is large but finite. Since the interpretation of a pattern yields the cause of a disease, the interpretation of all patterns should provide an inventory of all culturally recognized causes for disease. Unfortunately an exhaustive analysis is prohibitive as it would take years to complete. What I have done instead, is to construct a random sample of patterns which I then presented to a diviner for his interpretation. The interpretations can be regarded as a random sample of the universe of all culturally recognized causes for disease.

Analysis of the results indicate the importance of witchcraft and sorcery, especially sorcery, as causes for disease. Sorcery is associated with relatives and its prime importance as a cause for disease has significant consequences in the realm of kinship.

The importance of relatives in causing disease results in constant abrasion of kinship relations. Ultimately the only important group left is the nuclear family: for children their natal family, for adults the conjugal family of spouse and children. These groups, being small, have high potential geographic mobility. High potential geographic mobility, in turn, facilitates village fission.

The fission of Sakalava villages is a gradual process and
involves the moving away of small kinship groups, such as nuclear families. Typically a movement results when a chronic illness of one or more members of a nuclear family had repeatedly been diagnosed as resulting from sorcery by relatives. Resettlement takes place far away from existing villages: these other villages are occupied by strangers who are considered dangerous practitioners of witchcraft.

Thus witchcraft and sorcery fit into the social system in different ways. Sorcery expresses conflict within the category of relatives and serves to distinguish close relatives who can be trusted from relatives who cannot be trusted. Witchcraft, on the other hand, applies to non-relatives. An allegation of witchcraft directed toward a relative who is also believed to be a frequent practitioner of sorcery effectively brands him as a non-relative.

Belief in witchcraft and sorcery permeates nearly all spheres of Sakalava life. In general it gives rise to a pervasive atmosphere of mistrust and fear which applies to anyone who is not very closely related. The Sakalava cope with mistrust and fear by pretending trust and avoiding all situations which might provoke the evil action of others.

Spirit possession is often used by women in patrilocal residence to cope with the threat posed by affinal relatives. The Sakalava material does not fit the conclusion Lewis (1961) draws from his review of the literature, that spirit possession provides an outlet for the downtrodden and that female
media are therefore prevalent in societies which are male
dominant. Sakalava women, mistrusting words, constantly
demand tangible signs of appreciation, such as money or
cattle, from their husbands. This provides women with an
avenue of economic independence and contributes to equality
of the sexes.

Possession by bush spirits serves local political
functions at places or in circumstances where the political
presence of the chief is not felt or is irrelevant to the
issues at hand. It allows a community to express its opinion
through a recognized medium. When the spirit suggests action
affecting certain individuals, the medium need not fear their
revenge.

Sakalava chiefs are surrounded by ceremonial assistants
who wield power in his name. The power of the ceremonial
assistants is checked by spirit possession at chiefly cere-
monies. On these occasions certain commoners become possessed
by the ancestors of the chief, the very source from which the
chief himself derives his authority. This method of control
of political power was not included by Beattie (1959) in his
survey of African material on the subject.

Sakalava beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery, in causing
village fission and resettlement away from other villages,
maintain a high degree of human dispersal. In most societies
where the population is geographically mobile and highly
dispersed, beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery are not very
important (Baxter, 1972). The anomaly can be explained by
the nature of Sakalava divination. This system of divination
continuously supports beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery
independently of the realm of social interaction. Thus, the
Sakalava beliefs can contribute to the dispersal of the human
population, which condition in other societies would cause
these beliefs to become less prominent.

The high degree of human dispersal leads to an even dis-
tribution of cattle over the region. Sakalava country is
classified as periodically dry savanna. It has a rainy sea-
son of approximately four months, during which time the grass
cover rejuvenates. In the long dry season that follows the
grass quickly turns to hay-on-the-stalk. Since drinking water
is nowhere a problem this resource can best be exploited by
cattle which are evenly distributed over the region. One way
to distribute cattle evenly over a region is to disperse their
owners. Thus, beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery, by causing
a high degree of human dispersal, contribute positively to
Sakalava subsistence.
APPENDIX

Sample of divination configurations and list of groupings associated with each configuration.
CASE I

West

1 male interrogator or husband of female interrogator
5 child
7 female interrogator or wife of male interrogator
10 medicine man
14 relative
16 house
17 steel, iron
22 sorcery
25 witchcraft
31 sudden death
36 disease which has taken hold of someone

West '

2 cattle, wealth
4 earth
13 cemetery, ancestral spirit, old person
27 I will die
30 open-air morgue
41 Saturday
43 Monday
44 Tuesday
45 money

South

3 a third person
8  disease
11  food
12  god, bush, feature of nature, spirit possession, surprise
19  woman in a different house
24  to be happy
26  alcoholic beverage
28  cemetery, ancestral spirit
32  weak as the result of illness
35  leave
38  Wednesday
40  Friday

North
6  dirt, sadness bordering on anger
9  medicine
15  road
21  talk
23  woman in a different house
29  old person
33  regret
39  Thursday
42  Sunday

East
18  untrustworthy person
20  ineffective action
34  return, lost
37  the person will live
CASE II

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North

1. male interrogator or husband of female interrogator
2. earth
3. cemetery, ancestral spirit, old person
4. house
5. I will die
6. open-air morgue
7. the person will live
8. Saturday
9. Monday

South

2. cattle, wealth
3. a third person
4. medicine
5. medicine man
6. food
7. god, bush, feature of nature, spirit possession, surprise
8. road
9. woman in a different house
10. witchcraft
11. cemetery, ancestral spirit
12. weak as the result of illness
13. return, lost
14. Wednesday
15. Thursday
16. Friday
17. Sunday
West

5 child
6 dirt, sadness bordering on anger

West

7 female interrogator or wife of male interrogator
14 relative
17 steel, iron
18 untrustworthy person
21 talk
22 sorcery
23 woman in a different house
29 old person
31 sudden death
36 disease which has taken hold of someone
44 Tuesday
45 money

East

8 disease
15 road
24 to be happy
26 alcoholic beverage
33 regret
35 leave
CASE III

8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1
0 o  o  o  o  o  o  o o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o
0 o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o
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0 o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o

East

1 male interrogator or husband of female interrogator
5 child
16 house
20 ineffective action

South

2 cattle, wealth
6 dirt, sadness bordering on anger
12 god, bush, feature of nature, spirit possession, surprise
18 untrustworthy person
24 to be happy
29 old person
32 weak as the result of illness
34 return, lost
35 leave
44 Tuesday
45 money

West

3 a third person
7 female interrogator or wife of male interrogator
9 medicine
10 medicine man
13 cemetery, ancestral spirit, old person
14 relative
22 sorcery
23 woman in a different house
28 cemetery, ancestral spirit
36 disease which has taken hold of someone
39 Thursday
41 Saturday
43 Monday

North

4 earth
8 disease
11 food
15 road
21 talk
25 witchcraft
26 alcoholic beverage
27 I will die
30 open-air morgue
31 sudden death
33 regret
37 the person will live
38 Wednesday
40 Friday
42 Sunday

West"

17 steel, iron
19 woman in a different house
CASE IV

8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1
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 o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o
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 o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o
 o  o  o  o  o  o  o  o

South
1  male interrogator or husband of female interrogator
4  earth
5  child
12 god, bush, feature of nature, spirit possession, surprise
18 untrustworthy person
20 ineffective action
21 talk
27 I will die
29 old person
30 open-air morgue
32 weak as the result of illness
35 leave
41 Saturday

North
2  cattle, wealth
6  dirt, sadness bordering on anger
8  disease
9  medicine
10 medicine man
26 alcoholic beverage
39 Thursday
40 Friday
West'

3 a third person
13 cemetery, ancestral spirit, old person
16 house
17 steel, iron
24 to be happy
25 witchcraft
28 cemetery, ancestral spirit
33 regret
43 Monday

East

7 female interrogator or wife of male interrogator
11 food
14 relative
19 woman in a different house
22 sorcery
23 woman in a different house
34 return, lost
36 disease which has taken hold of someone
37 the person will live
38 Wednesday
44 Tuesday
45 money

West''

15 road
31 sudden death
42 Sunday
CASE V

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North

1 male interrogator or husband of female interrogator
19 woman in a different house
20 ineffective action
23 woman in a different house
26 alcoholic beverage
27 I will die
33 regret
40 Friday
44 Tuesday
45 money

West"

2 cattle, wealth
4 earth
6 dirt, sadness bordering on anger
8 disease
11 food
15 road
22 sorcery
30 open-air morgue
38 Wednesday
42 Sunday

East

3 a third person
13 cemetery, ancestral spirit, old person
14 relative
28 cemetery, ancestral spirit
29 old person
43 Monday

**South**

5 child
9 medicine
12 god, bush, feature of nature, spirit possession, surprise
16 house
18 untrustworthy person
25 witchcraft
31 sudden death
32 weak as the result of illness
34 return, lost
37 the person will live ... 
39 Thursday
41 Saturday

**West**

7 female interrogator or wife of male interrogator
10 medicine man
17 steel, iron
21 talk
24 to be happy
35 leave
36 disease which has taken hold of someone
CASE VI

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West

1. male interrogator or husband of female interrogator
8. disease
12. god, bush, feature of nature, spirit possession, surprise
15. road
17. steel, iron
21. talk
32. weak as the result of illness
41. Saturday
47. Sunday

North

2. cattle, wealth
10. medicine man
13. cemetery, ancestral spirit, old person
16. house
26. alcoholic beverage
29. old person
31. sudden death
33. regret
34. return, lost
43. Monday

South

3. a third person
9. medicine
ineffective action
sorcery
I will die
cemetery, ancestral spirit
the person will live
Thursday
Friday

West
earth
food
untrustworthy person
witchcraft
open-air morgue
leave
Wednesday

East
child
dirt, sadness bordering on anger
female interrogator or wife of male interrogator
relative
woman in a different house
woman in a different house
to be happy
disease which has taken hold of someone
Tuesday
money
CASE VII

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West

1 male interrogator or husband of female interrogator
6 dirt, sadness bordering on anger
8 disease
12 god, bush, feature of nature, spirit possession, surprise
15 road
29 old person
32 weak as the result of illness
42 Sunday
44 Tuesday
45 money

North

2 cattle, wealth
9 medicine
20 ineffective action
31 sudden death
33 regret
35 leave
39 Thursday

East

3 a third person
7 female interrogator or wife of male interrogator
10 medicine man
18 untrustworthy person
to be happy
I will die
cemetery, ancestral spirit
disease which has taken hold of someone
the person will live

South

earth
child
food
cemetery, ancestral spirit, old person
relative
house
steel, iron
woman in a different house
talk
sorcery
woman in a different house
open-air morgue
return, lost
Wednesday
Monday

West

witchcraft
alcoholic beverage
Friday
Saturday
CASE VIII

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\_West '``
1. male interrogator or husband of female interrogator
5. child
21. talk
24. to be happy
33. regret
37. the person will live

\_South
2. cattle, wealth
4. earth
6. dirt, sadness bordering on anger
12. god, bush, feature of nature, spirit possession, surprise
14. relative
17. steel, iron
22. sorcery
23. woman in a different house
30. open-air morgue
32. weak as the result of illness
35. leave
44. Tuesday
45. money

\_West '
3. a third person
8. disease
9 medicine
15 road
16 house
26 alcoholic beverage
27 I will die
28 cemetery, ancestral spirit
29 old person
39 Thursday
42 Sunday

North

7 female interrogator or wife of male interrogator
11 food
18 untrustworthy person
25 witchcraft
36 disease which has taken hold of someone
38 Wednesday
41 Saturday

East

10 medicine man
13 cemetery, ancestral spirit, old person
19 woman in a different house
20 ineffective action
31 sudden death
34 return, lost
40 Friday
43 Monday
CASE IX

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**East**

1  male interrogator or husband of female interrogator
13  cemetery, ancestral spirit, old person
20  ineffective action
23  woman in a different house
24  to be happy
29  old person
35  leave
37  the person will live
40  Friday
43  Monday
44  Tuesday
45  money

**West**

2  cattle, wealth
3  a third person
6  dirt, sadness bordering on anger
10  medicine man
14  relative
22  sorcery
26  alcoholic beverage
28  cemetery, ancestral spirit
34  return, lost
South

4 earth
9 medicine
15 road
16 house
17 steel, iron
19 woman in a different house
30 open-air morgue
39 Thursday
42 Sunday

West '

5 child
8 disease
18 untrustworthy person
21 talk
27 I will die
33 regret

North

7 female interrogator or wife of male interrogator
11 food
12 god, bush, feature of nature, spirit possession, surprise
25 witchcraft
31 sudden death
32 weak as the result of illness
36 disease which has taken hold of someone
38 Wednesday
41 Saturday
CASE X

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North

1  male interrogator or husband of female interrogator
3  a third person
4  earth
5  child
11  food
13  cemetery, ancestral spirit, old person
19  woman in a different house
23  woman in a different house
28  cemetery, ancestral spirit
29  old person
30  open-air morgue
38  Wednesday
43  Monday

West

2  cattle, wealth
7  female interrogator or wife of male interrogator
14  relative
18  untrustworthy person
22  sorcery
31  sudden death
34  return, lost
35  leave
36  disease which has taken hold of someone
South

6 dirt, sadness bordering on anger
9 medicine
10 medicine man
21 talk
37 the person will live
39 Thursday
41 Saturday

East

8 disease
12 god, bush, feature of nature, spirit possession, surprise
15 road
16 house
17 steel, iron
20 ineffective action
24 to be happy
26 alcoholic beverage
27 I will die
32 weak as the result of illness
40 Friday
42 Sunday

West

25 witchcraft
33 regret
44 Tuesday
45 money
NOTES

1. The new Malagasy Government which came to power after the student disturbances of May, 1972, soon did away with the very unpopular head-tax on cattle. People in the bush do not trust the intentions of the Government and fear that the levy will be reinstated before long.

2. According to one: "Once you know Sakalava very well, you are going to make a little thing to go in the radio that can speak our language. From then on we will no longer be forced to listen to Merina of which we only understand half."

3. "Xamboa Hassana" (spelling as in the Portuguese original) was probably situated close to the present village of Nosy Vaolavo, about 10 kilometers northwest of Besalampy.

4. My translation from the French.


6. See note 3.

7. My translation from the French.

8. The official 1972 figures show a total population of 32,125 and a total area of 11,392 km².

9. Reported totals for 1970, 1971 and 1972 were 89,262, 83,677 and 77,870 head respectively. I took the 1970 figure and related it to the 8,965 km² of savanna country in the Sous-préfecture to arrive at a cattle density of 10.0 head/km².

10. According to the Sous-préfet of Besalampy the Malagasy Government assumes that 50% of the cattle herd is never declared. Several indigenous informants mention figures as high as 70% especially for owners of large herds with, say, 100 or more head.

11. For 29 of the 69 African savanna associations distinguished by Rattray (1960) estimates of carrying capacities are available. These vary from 0.4 to 24 ha. per beast but more typically range from 2 to 12 ha. per beast. High carrying capacities (low values of ha. per beast) are usually associated with high annual rainfall and a short dry season. Comparing the climatic conditions of Ambongo with those of the 29 regions for which data
are available a carrying capacity of between 3.3 and 5 ha. per beast seems indeed likely.

12. If necessary, zebu cattle can do without drinking water for 2 days. Maximum walking distance is around 25 km/day (Montsma, personal communication). In Ambongo cattle are allowed to drink twice a day.

13. After I had not gone to see this informant for over a week, he came by my hut one morning and said that he was sure that I would be very interested in the story he had to tell. He also casually mentioned that he was in need of money, making it seem that this was not related to his eagerness to tell the story. I had always given him a "present" of money after each one of our sessions. I am sure he felt that the money he would gain this time would depend on the length of our session: it took him over half an hour to tell the story only the essence of which I have related.

14. The color red symbolizes wealth and matters associated with chiefs and kings. Witness, for instance, the name of the large Sakalava kingdom in the South, Menabe, (the big red), and the designations for gold, vola mena (red money), and chiefly cemetery, vala mena (red corral), et cetera.

15. Here I have translated the word tai (feces) as "shit" because of the intense derogatory connotation of the expression. The fact that the fecal matter is that of chicken expresses ambiguity: chicken feces is not considered real feces because of its liquid consistency. Similarly slaves-twice-over are not like the regular slaves of the chief.

16. Some terms I do not know how to translate. Perhaps manantany means "he who has land." Marovavy literally means "many women." In the word tindrife I recognize the verb root -tindry (press) and the noun fe (thigh). Perhaps tindrife means "he who presses the thigh" and indicates familiarity as in "he who slaps the back."

17. In regicide it is probably only symbolically used, the actual cutting being done with a sharp knife.

18. The man who used to make them is no longer alive and there is no one left in Besalampy who knows the art.

19. My informant told me that C and D are still buried at "Tongay, the 'red corral' of Milanja." He claims to have visited this cemetery on several occasions in the
presence of the chief of Manongá. Curiously, however, Tongay is also the name of the royal cemetery of Boına which is situated close to Majunga about 300 km north-east of Besalampy. Perhaps both cemeteries are called by the same name.

20. Malagasy distinguishes between we-inclusive and we-exclusive the person addressed. Here the inclusive form is used.

21. The short exchange "how are things with us...and how are things with you people" is common when and wherever people meet the chief casually. Interestingly, this exchange is the inverse of the traditional greeting among Sakalava commoners: "How are things with you people...and how are things with us."

22. The head ceremonial assistant was absent that day so another ceremonial assistant, my court informant, performed the duties of head ceremonial assistant as well as his own.

23. My court informant told me this and further: "Since I am the person who is sponsoring you here (notice that it was at the occasion of my field assistant's offering of a zebu to his chiefly ancestors) the ill-effects of your transgressions will probably strike me. We should hold a little offering to prevent this from happening." Since the start of our cooperation, however, this informant had become more and more inventive in creating, what seemed, inevitable situations which always cost me money. When I told my assistant about what our court informant had said he laughed and agreed that I should ignore it.

24. Sometimes "koezy" is also said to a chief instead of the usual "how are things with us?" Koezy is a normal greeting among Comorians.

25. The idea that toothless infants are bush spirits has no counterpart in old age: old people whose teeth have fallen out are not considered to have become bush spirits once again.
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