

Proceedings of the 10th Annual Gilder Lehrman Center International Conference at Yale University

## **Slavery and the Slave Trades in the Indian Ocean and Arab Worlds: Global Connections and Disconnections**

November 7-8, 2008  
Yale University  
New Haven, Connecticut

### *Ocean of Letters: Abolition and Literacy in an Indian Ocean Diaspora*

Pier M. Larson, The Johns Hopkins University

Available online at <http://www.yale.edu/glc/indian-ocean/larson.pdf>

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Slavery came to an end in the labor-hungry sugar colony of Mauritius on 1 February 1835, two months later than at the Cape Colony. The measure suppressed the servile legal status of more than 66,000 men, women, and children. According to the provisions of the Abolition Act passed by the British parliament in 1833 all enslaved persons over the age of five were to be transformed into “apprentices” and required to labor for their masters for an additional six years (plantation slaves, otherwise known as praedials) or four years (non-plantation slaves, or non-praedials). Masters were to feed and clothe their apprentices during this transitional period, and wages were to be paid for overtime labor of more than 7.5 hours a day or 45 hours a week. Numerous abuses of the labor-time regulations followed, and many apprentices never received the pay to which they were legally entitled. However received in England,” wrote one observer of apprenticeship in Mauritius, “the blacks themselves have ever regarded, and to the last hour of their apprenticeship will regard it as a grievous continuation of slavery.” Others did pocket the funds due to them and employed the monies to purchase an early freedom from apprenticeship or to acquire land on which to settle at final emancipation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Baker, “Observations on the Apprenticeship System in Mauritius, 1st May, 1836,” in *Extracts from the Letters of James Backhouse* (London: Harvey and Darton, 1839), Sixth Part, 73.

As the date for liberation of the non-*praedial*s approached (1 February 1839), London pressured the governor of Mauritius to free the *praedial* apprentices as well, though by the terms of the Abolition Act two years remained on their compulsory service. On 31 March 1839, two months after non-plantation slaves received their freedom, the *praedial* apprentices were released from compulsory contracts fixing their residence and forcing their labor on Mauritius's sugar estates. Within days, most *praedial* apprentices had abandoned the plantations of their enslavement, expressing disdain with their feet for the erstwhile locations and conditions of their servility. *La liberté c'est la promenade* (liberty is a stroll), cynically concluded an article in the Mauritius daily *Le Cernéen* about the mass movement of ex-apprentices across the island colony. In all, 53,230 apprentices received their freedom between 1 February and 31 March 1839; nearly three-fifths of these had been *praedial*s working on rural sugar estates.<sup>2</sup>

Among the ex-apprentices who joined the throng of wearied laborers migrating away from the sugar estates of Mauritius was a significant minority of Malagasy speakers, men and women who had been born in Madagascar along with their colony-born children. Together, these probably comprised about a quarter of the ex-apprentice population, though we cannot determine their share with precision. Virtually all Malagasy speakers, whether born on the Big Island (Madagascar) or on Mauritius, mastered the island's French creole at some level, and a few of them were also learning English. As at the Cape Colony in the same period, most ex-apprentices from Madagascar and their creole children were functionally bilingual in the decades following emancipation. Those residing around Port Louis usually moved in and out of the island's two most important speech communities – creole and Malagasy – with ease. “In

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<sup>2</sup> *Le Cernéen*, 2 April 1839, as reproduced in Marina Carter and Raymond d'Unienville, *Unshackling Slaves: Liberation and Adaptation of Ex-Apprentices* (London: Pink Pigeon Books, 2001), 38. Important studies of the end of slavery in Mauritius include Moses Nwulia, “The ‘Apprenticeship’ System in Mauritius,” *African Studies Review* 21,1 (April 1978), 89–101; Moses Nwulia, *The History of Slavery in Mauritius and the Seychelles, 1810–1875* (East Brunswick: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1981), 144–180, 201–208; Lawrence Charles Jennings, “Réflexions d'un observateur sur l'émancipation des esclaves britanniques à l'île Maurice,” *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 29 (1982), 462–470; Vijaya Teelock, *Bitter Sugar: Sugar and Slavery in 19th Century Mauritius* (Moka: Mahatma Gandhi Institute, 1998), 273–276; Richard B. Allen, *Slaves, Freedmen and Indentured Laborers in Colonial Mauritius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 105–135; Carter and d'Unienville, *Unshackling Slaves*; Jocelyn Chan Low, “Aux origines du ‘malaise créole’? Les ex-apprentis dans la société mauricienne (1839–1860),” in Edmond Maestri, ed., *Esclavage et abolitions dans l'océan Indien, 1723–1860* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), 267–284; Sateeanund Peerthum, “Le système d'apprentissage à l'île Maurice 1835–1839,” in Maestri, ed., *Esclavage et abolitions*, 285–294.

general they speak Malagasy very well,” wrote Mary Johns in 1842 of Malagasy ex-apprentices living in the residential camps of Port Louis, “yet they accustom themselves more to the Creole.” A decade later a visitor to Port Louis commented that “a number of the Malagasy still retain their native language.” The visitor was impressed by the presence of “Creoles of Africa or Madagascar” together with Arabs and Indians on the streets of the city, writing that “the language of all these different nations may also at times be heard, though French is perhaps the most common.” Port Louis’s streets had long offered an array of tongues to those who cared to listen in.<sup>3</sup>

The bilingualism of Malagasy in their mother tongue and in the French creole was a defining feature of Mascarene society to which Catholic missionaries of the Lazarist order and colonial administrators responded in the eighteenth century with forms of vernacular evangelization and a set of Roman-character publications in the Malagasy tongue. There is less evidence of vernacular evangelization following the French Revolution, but at least one priest on île de France especially interested in Madagascar, Père Flageollet, continued to employ a manuscript catechism in Malagasy in his work around Moka during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Some European merchants and literati in the Mascarenes were sufficiently interested in Madagascar and concerned about commercial relations with it during the first decades of the nineteenth century to produce a corpus of writing on Madagascar and bilingual colonial lexicons which they hoped would boost economic relationships among the islands and communication on Mascarene estates. Most recent work on Catholic evangelization among Mascarene ex-slaves in the era of emancipation, however, appears to ignore this earlier labor and to assume a deep-seated monolingual and cultural créolité within Mascarene ex-slave populations. In part the créolophone orientation of recent studies of the ex-slave population is a reflection of the linguistic competence of most Catholic missionaries working in the Mascarene islands during the nineteenth century, as well as of many modern researchers who today employ the documents these missionaries produced. With the exception of Jesuits who sought to move into Madagascar and who initially based themselves in île Bourbon for that

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Johns to Revds. A. Tidman & J. J. Freeman, Port Louis, September 1842, LMS ILMAU 3 1 C, 26; William Ellis, *Three Visits to Madagascar during the Years 1853–1854–1856* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1859), 72.

purpose, few Catholic missionaries working in the Mascarenes in the era of emancipation were competent in Malagasy or in any east African language.<sup>4</sup>

This was largely true, too, of the early educational work of the Rev. John Le Brun's Protestant, London Missionary Society (LMS)-affiliated mission to *gens de couleur* and to slaves on Mauritius between 1814 and 1835. A bilingual French-English native of the Channel Island of Jersey, Le Brun commenced his work in and around Port Louis "among the poor coloured population" of the colony, who included many children of Madagascar-born mothers. After the definitive departure of Governor Farquhar in 1823, Le Brun began to teach catechism and basic literacy among slaves on scattered and mostly British-owned rural estates and at the "King's Garden" at Pamplémousses. "All these instructions are given in the French creole language, a curious composition," Le Brun explained in 1826. One of the first publications in the French creole language of the island, a Protestant catechism emerged from the work of Le Brun and his creole-speaking catechists among slaves. As emancipation neared, Le Brun's creole-language work deteriorated significantly. The LMS discontinued its mission to Mauritius between 1833 and 1841, supporting its "Madagascar" missionaries in the colonial island instead and forcing Le Brun, who did not speak Malagasy, to seek employment with the Mico Charity, an educational venture operating in several British colonies at the time.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "Catéchisme abrégé à l'usage des Insulaires de Madagascar, par M. l'Abbé Ante. Flageollet...Port Louis, Isle Maurice, le 5 Janvier 1816," BL MD Add. Mss. 18131, 133r-158v (due to constraints of space, I am unable to discuss this fascinating catechism here). Francophone studies of Catholic missions among Mascarene ex-slaves include F. Delaplace, *Le P. Jacques-Désiré Laval, apôtre de l'île Maurice (1830-1864)*, ed. rev. et augm. par P. J. M. Pivault (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1932); René Piacentini, *Le "Pierre Claver" de l'île Maurice: Jacques-Désiré Laval (1803-1864)* (Issoudun: Dillen, 1949); Claude Prud'homme, *Histoire religieuse de La Réunion* (Paris: Karthala, 1984); Joseph Michel, *De l'esclavage à l'apostolat: les auxiliaires laïcs du bienheureux Jacques Laval, apôtre de l'île Maurice* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1988); Gillette Staudacher-Villiamée, *Catéchisme créole et Mission des Noirs à l'île Bourbon* (Paris: Peeters, 2000); Gillette Staudacher-Villiamée, "Écriture et histoire: Frédéric Levavasseur et la mission des noirs, 1842-1849," in Maestri, ed., *Esclavage et abolitions*, 31-48. For the Jesuits at île Bourbon see Adrien Boudou, *Les Jésuites à Madagascar au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1940), I, 98-99, 153-163; Herbert Mondon, "Collèges ecclésiastiques et petits séminaires de La Réunion," *Recueil de documents et travaux inédits pour servir à l'histoire de La Réunion* n. s. 1 (1964), 11-35; Prud'homme, *Histoire religieuse*, 84, 107; Raoul Lucas, *Bourbon à l'école, 1815-1946* (Saint-André: Océan Éditions, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> J. Le Brun to LMS Directors, Port Louis, 28 November 1826, LMS ILMAU 1 3 C, 5-6 (all these instructions); Pierre Le Brun to J. J. Freeman, Providence College, Johnston, Moka, 1 June 1851, LMS ILMAU 4 1 A, 3 (among the poor). For Le Brun's catechism see "Catéchisme en Créole de l'île Maurice en 1828, communiqué par M. le Capitaine Laray," *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* (1885), cxxiii-cxxxii; Robert Chaudenson, *Textes créoles anciens (La Réunion et Ile Maurice)* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske, 1981), 107-114. This and other publications issuing from the LMS at the time served as linguistic models for later Catholic missions among ex-slaves (the so-called *missions des noirs*) which commenced work on both Mauritius and île Bourbon beginning in 1840. The best

Two key developments in the western Indian Ocean during the 1830s combined to transform the LMS's moribund mission in Mauritius from a largely unsuccessful créolophone effort into a multilingual undertaking focused primarily on Malagasy adults and their Mauritius-born children. The first of these was the ending of slavery in British crown colonies. Although adult ex-slaves were not immediately released from compulsory labor and residence in 1835, the new laws provided them with significantly greater freedom of physical movement than when they were slaves. Enrollment at Mico Charity schools and chapels staffed by former LMS personnel began to rise almost immediately in the aftermath of the general emancipation of February 1835, particularly in the vicinity of large sugar estates. The most substantial gains appeared to have been at Piton in the Rivière du Rempart district (see map), as John Le Brun explained to the Secretary for the Colonies in London.

Until the emancipation Bill came into operation, the number of [slaves/apprentices] who attended [school], was very small, since then, it has been increasing, being from 30 to 40, which would no doubt be considerably augmented, were there a sufficient number of able teachers to instruct them.... Up to the same date the attendance at the Riv. de Rempart chapel was nearly limited to the children of the poorer orders of the [free] coloured population; since then, the number of the apprentices who have attended has increased each Sunday.

The school-going apprentice population in Port Louis and Piton consisted of both children and adults. Attendance increased up through the end of 1835.

At Riv. du Rempart where we built a chapel in 1825, when we began in Feby. last we had only nine in attendance and now we have 100. They are not satisfied of coming on Sundays, but many of them come in the week days evening to repeat their prayers and to recite their catechism. Mr. Pierre Pakion who is our school master in that part of the island gives them public instructions on the Wednesday evening, when about 50 attend regularly. They have begged of him to give another evening more.

By September 1835 the number of apprentices of all ages attending the Rivière du Rempart school at Piton had increased to 150, where "they are taught to repeat a Catechism, and are now learning to read" in French. Because of their thirst for literacy, apprentices "come also, by

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single published study of Le Brun's creole-language efforts is L. Rivaltz Quenette, *L'oeuvre du Révérend Jean Lebrun à l'île Maurice* (Port-Louis: Regent Press, 1982). It appears most students enrolled at Mico Charity schools were the children of Malagasy speakers.

their own desire, two evenings in the week.” In early 1836 there were 180 students, “both children & adults” attending school at Piton.<sup>6</sup>

The second development favoring the LMS’s shift away from an exclusively French or creole-language effort among slaves and apprentices to a specifically Malagasy focused mission was the prohibition of Christianity in nearby highland Madagascar in February-March that year and the accompanying flight of British Nonconformist missionaries and literate Malagasy refugees from the Big Island to other regions of the western Indian Ocean – most notably to Mauritius, the Comores, and the Cape Colony – in search of Malagasy speaking communities. When evangelists fluent in the Malagasy tongue and fresh from printing the bible and much vernacular sacred literature in Madagascar turned up on Mauritius and began describing what they found there, it was as if the contemporary archive reader lifted a new set of reading glasses to his eyes, enabling him to perceive Malagasy with far greater clarity in the archived LMS correspondence than had previously been the case. “It is believed that there are not fewer than 10,000 of the natives of Madagascar living in Mauritius,” wrote the LMS’s “Madagascar” missionaries in 1840 of their discoveries in the colonial island of Mauritius, “most of whom were either originally imported as slaves, or brought [here] by ships as ‘prize negroes,’ or are the descendants of such.” Some contemporary observers even put the number of Malagasy speakers of Mauritius as high as 20,000 in the late 1830s.<sup>7</sup>

## Governors and Unknown Tongues

The invisibility of Malagasy to so many European residents of Mauritius at the time, and thereby also to the modern historical researcher, was as much the product of purposeful gubernatorial policy as it was of linguistic ignorance on the part of the island’s whites. (Patrick Eisenlohr writes of a comparable invisibility of Bhojpuri among South Asians in colonial Mauritius some time later, so such linguistic erasures are not uncommon to Mauritius.) Arriving

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<sup>6</sup> J. J. Freeman to William Ellis, Port Louis, 14 September 1835, LMS ILMAU 2 1 A, 1 (taught to repeat); J. Le Brun to Revd. Mr. Ellis, Port Louis, 17 June 1835, LMS ILMAU 2 1 A, 2 (at Riv. du Rempart); “Replies of the Revd. J. Le Brun minister of the independent denomination at Mauritius...to a Series of Queries proposed to him for solution, for the information of the Right Honourable The Secretary of State for the Colonies,” Port Louis, 12 June 1835, LMS ILMAU 2 1 A, 1–2 (until the emancipation Bill); Teelock, *Bitter Sugar*, 273–274 (freedom of movement).

<sup>7</sup> Freeman and Johns, *Narrative of the Persecution*, 276 (not fewer than 10,000, emphasis added); James Trenchard Hardyman, “Malagasy Refugees to Britain, 1838–1841,” *Omalysy Anio* 5–6 (1977), 163 (20,000).

in Mauritius directly from Antananarivo in 1834, for example, John Canham sought to evangelize among Malagasy speakers in the British colony. He requested the governor's permission to approach Malagasy through the medium of their ancestral tongue. Many of Canham's contacts in Mauritius were "of opinion that I might begin to speak to some of the Malagasy slaves *in their own language*." But this "is objected to for the present," he wrote referring to the governor's decline of his petition, "lest I should excite the jealousy of their masters & others by speaking to them in an *unknown* language." Unknown, of course, to most of those who employed slaves or were in a position to produce the government documents that now fill both the Mauritius and the British national archives. Subalterns might chatter among themselves in country languages, went the reasoning, but Protestant missionaries communicating with slaves in a tongue unknown to Catholic masters and to the colonial police were a cause for considerable suspicion. Opposed from every quarter, but especially "by the Slave Proprietors against the instruction of the slaves by Protestant missionaries," Canham soon grew discouraged with prospects for commencing a vernacular mission in the Malagasy tongue at Mauritius. "I am seriously thinking of proceeding to the Cape without delay," he wrote with despondency in December 1834. Because his French language skills were poor, Canham faced little prospect of "usefulness" at Mauritius. Within months, he was in Cape Town assembling congregations of Malagasy speakers and opening schools for them and their children.<sup>8</sup>

Nearly two years later, David Johns and Edward Baker arrived in Port Louis from Antananarivo, the last of the LMS missionaries to depart from highland Madagascar. The political climate in Mauritius had changed significantly since Canham's departure for the Cape in early 1835, for in the meantime slaves had been released as apprentices and the complete end of legal servitude lay also within sight. "I find hundreds of the Malagasy here who can speak the language perfectly well," Johns wrote of his discoveries among the apprentices of

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<sup>8</sup> John Canham to William Ellis, Mauritius, 9 September 1834, LMS ILMAU 1 4 C, 2 (unknown language, emphasis added); J. Canham to Revd. J. Le Brun, Port Louis, 4 December 1834, LMS ILMAU 2 1 A, 1 (seriously thinking). Canham later reported about Mauritius that teaching and preaching in Malagasy "was objected to by His Excellency the Governor, on the grounds of its being likely to excite suspicion in the minds of the inhabitants, should their slaves be taught in a *strange* language": John Canham to Revd. W. Ellis, Cape Town, 27 February 1835, LMS ILSA 14 3 C, 2 (emphasis added). See also Patrick Eisenlohr, *Little India: Diaspora, Time, and Ethnolinguistic Belonging in Hindu Mauritius* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 181.

Mauritius, “and they tell me that they never attend any place of worship on the Sabbath.” Like Canham before him, Johns sought to commence evangelizing among the Malagasy of the island and wrote to Governor Nicolay requesting permission to instruct ex-apprentices “in their own language,” plying him with news that his LMS colleagues in South Africa had procured authorization to preach in the vernacular to the freed slaves of Cape Town. “I feel encouraged to submit this proposition to His Excellency,” Johns wrote in the application,

in the hope that equally satisfactory results will attend the measure, if tried here, as have attended the attempt made at the Cape by a Missionary from Madagascar [Canham] who stopped there on his way to England & who has been employed preaching in Malagasy to such of the Emancipated Blacks at that settlement as are acquainted with that language during the last 18 months.<sup>9</sup>

The governor equivocated in response. He “thinks that the Malagasy here are too ignorant yet to preach to,” Johns reported of the governor’s reply to his request, “but I may teach them to read” in their own language. A glimmer of hope, but not the unambiguous authorization that Johns had anticipated. Johns assumed the governor was bowing to pressure from estate owners and from both Catholic and Anglican clergy who, he believed, were far from keen on Nonconformist ministers speaking the native language of apprentices and competing with them over finite servile souls. “If they will allow the school to be opened with reading a chapter & prayer &c” in Malagasy, he continued

it will be worth trying, but if they exclude all religious instructions I fear no good can be done, for almost all the Malagasy residing here are persons in age and few of those in [younger] years [such as] we found in Madagascar having sufficient perseverance to learn, unless they were brought to see in some measure, the value of the word of God first, but you shall hear again on this subject after the experiment be made.<sup>10</sup>

Johns was not entirely correct in his assessment of the advanced age of Malagasy speakers at Mauritius, for the slave trade into the colonial islands had only ended a decade earlier and included many children. In addition, the children of Malagasy parents generally understood and spoke at least some of the Big Island’s language (more on this below). It is true that most Madagascar-born apprentices would have been above the age of fifteen in 1836,

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<sup>9</sup> David Johns to William Ellis, Port Louis, 9 September 1836, LMS ILMAU 2 1 C, 3 (hundreds); David Johns to G. F. Dick, Port Louis, 29 September 1836, LMS ILMAU 2 1 D, 1 (block quotation).

<sup>10</sup> David Johns to William Ellis, Port Louis, 14 November 1836, LMS ILMAU 2 1 D, 6–7.

with a skewing toward more mature years. Despite the governor's equivocating answer to his query, Johns was soon meeting with small numbers of Malagasy in the Mico Charity school room in Port Louis "for the purpose of teaching them and reading the scriptures & praying with them *in their own language*." He meanwhile continued to press Government House for explicit permission to preach in the Malagasy tongue. The response to Johns's repeated entreaties was a revealing statement of imperial thinking about language in the British colony of French planters.

I have been directed to acquaint you that His Excellency can have no objection to your giving instruction in the Christian religion to such of the natives of Madagascar now resident here as may be desirous of availing themselves of your assistance. But as these people are generally well acquainted with the creole French and perhaps more so with that dialect than with their native tongue, His Excellency cannot consider it in any wise necessary to the object which you have in view (and to which he is disposed to give every encouragement) that such religious instruction should be imparted in the Madagascar language.

His Excellency does not feel it incumbent on him to give his sanction to your preaching and publicly giving religious instruction in what may be considered an *unknown* tongue whilst the same object can be equally well attained thro' the medium of the other languages spoken here, English & French.

Between English and French, of course, the Governor favored English, though it was little spoken anywhere in the colony except among the rather diminutive population of Britons. "Very important advantages would accrue both in a national and a religious point of view," he believed, "by making the English language the medium of communicating religious instruction." Malagasy were more conversant in creole than in their mother tongue, went the Governor's rather ill-informed (or perhaps motivated) reasoning, and in any case a British missionary (Johns was a Welshman) ought to promote "a national point of view" by abandoning French entirely to teach and preach in English.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> G. F. Dick to David Johns, Colonial Secretary's Office, Port Louis, 25 November 1836, LMS ILMAU 2 1 D, 1 (block quotation, emphasis added); David Johns to G. F. Dick, Chaussée, Mabelle's Establishment [Mauritius], 15 November 1836, LMS ILMAU 2 1 D, 2 (for the purpose, emphasis added). See also David Johns to William Ellis, Port Louis, 14 November 1836, LMS ILMAU 2 1 D, 12. For the illicit slave trade see Hubert Gerbeau, "Quelques aspects de la traite illégale des esclaves à l'île Bourbon au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle," in Catherine Méhaud, ed., *Mouvements de populations dans l'océan Indien* (Paris: Henri Champion, 1980), 273–307; Richard B. Allen, "Licentious and Unbridled Proceedings: The Illegal Slave Trade to Mauritius and the Seychelles during the Early Nineteenth Century," *Journal of African History* 42 (2001), 91–116.

By virtue of having corresponded with the Governor's office about language, Johns was now officially prohibited from preaching to ex-slaves "in their own language." Echoing the linguistic policy of the colonial island's masters, gubernatorial edict sought to relegate ancestral languages to the prattle of slaves, where it would remain invisible and – went the thinking – harmless. And British missionaries *did* occasionally preach in English at Mauritius, but at first they did not seriously consider making it the language of instruction in their schools. They harbored no illusions that preaching God's Word in English would prove entirely ineffective in francophone Mauritius. The problem was, few of the LMS missionaries arriving from Madagascar actually knew French or its Mascarene creole with any fluency; they sought to communicate with Malagasy directly in the mother tongue of the Big Island, a language which they had toiled to acquire over the last decade. Printer Edward Baker, who was not a minister and had not been served with a linguistic restriction, took immediate charge of Malagasy instruction and preaching in Port Louis. At Piton, Pakion continued to teach exclusively in the French creole. "I took upon myself the instruction of the few Malagasy with whom Mr. Johns commenced before the Government prohibition reached him," Baker explained in early 1837.

Our first religious service was on December the 4th 1836, in a house of the natives hired at 1 dollar a month for the purpose. The service is on Sundays and Wednesdays, the attendance small only from 10 to 13 at present. Still it is something to have the name and character of God made known amongst them in their own (the Malagasy) language, and in the midst of a very neglected district....the part of the town where they reside contains several thousand inhabitants chiefly former slaves, or present apprentices, amongst whom never has there existed a school, or place of christian instruction for children or adults.<sup>12</sup>

Soon after these lines were written, Johns and Baker established a regular school specifically for the children of Malagasy speakers in the same location, the "southern camp" of Port Louis at the foot of Signal Mountain (see map). "I trust the establishment of this school will enable us to enlarge our acquaintance with the Malagasy and raise the standard of the gospel," Baker anticipated. "We made up our minds to establish a school for the children of the Malagasy resident here," Johns elaborated in his own letter.

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<sup>12</sup> Edward Baker to William Ellis, Mauritius, 13 January 1837, LMS ILMAU 2 2 A, 2. See also David Johns to William Ellis, Port Louis, 11 January 1837, LMS ILMAU 2 2 A, 2–3.

And I am happy to say that the measure has been carried to effect and we have now 50 children in the school who improve very fast in knowledge.... The school room is occupied every Sabbath. In the morning we have our Sabbath school and in the afternoon we have our Malagasy service in it. Mr. Le B[run] also preaches every Tuesday evening in French and the French service generally is well attended, and I hope that some good has been done there at least many have been brought there under the sound of the gospel who never heard of it before.

“Our school prospers as a school and a place of preaching,” Baker informed London a month later. “There are near 60 scholars chiefly children of the Malagasy. Mr. Le Brun wants me to establish another in an opposite part of the town on the same plan, availing ourselves of the interest the Malagasy take in our schools.” That “interest,” promoted in part by the newfound freedoms of apprenticeship and in part by the unique presence of Malagasy speaking British Protestant missionaries in the colony, was the first sign of a renaissance in Malagasy language linked to the accessibility of mass literacy training.<sup>13</sup>

The polyglot nature of the new evangelistic work in Port Louis mirrored the multilingualism of the newly apprenticed population. Literacy education sought by apprentices for their children in Port Louis was, at this time, offered exclusively in French, which it was thought would most assist ex-slaves in negotiating the colonial economy. But LMS missionaries preached trilingually in Malagasy, in French, and occasionally in English. “My time has been employed chiefly in preaching English & Malagasy,” wrote Johns, belying his surreptitious disregard for the Governor’s prohibition issued only a short time earlier. “Had I been able to preach in French I might have been well employed here. No one can be extensively useful here without a thorough knowledge of the French,” he wrote (prematurely it turned out given later developments in the LMS’s Mauritius mission). Teaching, Baker confirmed, “must be through the medium of the Creole French & for this my deficit utterly disqualifies me.” Not long after his arrival in Mauritius, Baker began printing French-language *Premières leçons* for use in the schools affiliated with the Nonconformists. When it came to religious indoctrination however, LMS missionaries felt that the Malagasy tongue provided them a usable, even a privileged,

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<sup>13</sup> Edward Baker to William Ellis, Mauritius, 20 June 1837, LMS ILMAU 2 2 A, 4 (school prospers); Edward Baker to William Ellis, Mauritius, 2 February 1837, LMS ILMAU 2 2 A, 2 (I trust); David Johns to the Revd. W. Ellis, Port Louis, 22 May 1837, LMS ILMAU 2 2 A, 3 (made up our minds). For a description of the school see also David Jones to Revd. W. Ellis, Port Louis, 24 August 1837, LMS ILMAU 2 2 C, 3.

entry to subaltern hearts. Johns and Baker, explained a colleague about work with Malagasy in the island, have “not an adequate knowledge of French to teach them in the principles of the Christian religion, [but] might do it with greater facility & even sooner through the medium of *their native tongue*.”<sup>14</sup>

As they amplified their knowledge of the Malagasy communities in Mauritius, the LMS’s Madagascar missionaries began to consider the utility of delivering literacy education to adults directly in the native tongue of the Big Island, not simply in French. In late April 1837 David Johns visited Grand Port, on the opposite side of the island to Port Louis, to meet with Malagasy there.

On the day of my arrival I was introduced to a Malagasy who could speak the language very well, I requested him to assemble all the Malagasy in the neighbourhood at the chapel on the following Sabbath. From 10 to 15 assembled and I preached to them in the morning and evening. And they promised to assemble more by the following Sabbath. That promise induced me to remain there another week. And I am happy to say that from 40 to 50 assembled and listened with great attention. After the service was over I told them that if any of them wished to learn to read *in their own language* that I would be very happy to supply them with spelling books &c – 29 of them came forward and requested to have a [Malagasy spelling] book and commenced immediately to learn. If these will persevere they may be the means of inducing many of their countrymen to follow their example. I intend to go down next Saturday and shall remain with them for 10 or 12 days to teach and encourage them to persevere.

Word of mouth and vernacular spelling books were the means by which persons from the Big Island began to coalesce as Malagasy identifying religious communities.<sup>15</sup>

When he arrived in Mauritius in October 1837 from Britain (where he had been residing for some years after departing Antananarivo in 1830 following a decade of residence) David Jones was immediately inclined to set himself up in Grand Port among the Malagasy. He was dissuaded from doing so, however, and convinced by colleagues to remain in Port Louis to “take the whole charge of the school established here by [Johns and Baker] in connexion with the

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<sup>14</sup> Edward Baker to William Ellis, Mauritius, 9 September 1836, LMS ILMAU 2 1 C, 3 (through the medium, emphasis added); Edward Baker to William Ellis, Mauritius, 23 August 1837, LMS ILMAU 2 2 C, 1 (premières leçons); David Johns to the Revd. W. Ellis, Port Louis, 22 May 1837, LMS ILMAU 2 2 A, 3 (my time); David Jones to Revd. W. Ellis, Port Louis, 24 August 1837, LMS ILMAU 2 2 C, 2 (not an adequate knowledge). On the relative utilities of French and English at Mauritius see also David Jones to William Ellis, Port Louis, 6 December 1837, LMS ILMAU 2 2 D, 2.

<sup>15</sup> David Johns to the Revd. W. Ellis, Port Louis, 22 May 1837, LMS ILMAU 2 2 A, 2(emphasis added).

London M. Society for teaching apprentices, natives of Madagascar, their children &c.” Residence in Port Louis would provide Jones with the additional advantage of “corresponding with the natives [of Madagascar], for making enquiries of Captains of vessels trading there, for writing translating &c. & for embracing any favourable opportunity to visit any parts of Madagascar in the proper season.” Jones was particularly concerned about assisting Malagasy Christians to escape the Big Island for Mauritius because of the recent prohibition against Christianity in Queen Ranaivalona’s kingdom.<sup>16</sup>

Like Canham and Johns before him, David Jones immediately requested permission from the colonial Governor to conduct his Mauritius-based work in Malagasy. But as the importance of the Malagasy communities of the island were being progressively revealed to them – and as some ex-apprentices were gathering to learn to read and write “in their own language” – LMS missionaries faced unchanged official thinking about language and evangelism. “The Governor wishes every success to your endeavours to propagate the gospel in this colony,” was the reply to Jones’s request, “but□...□it must be done in the languages known by the local authorities & not in any with which they are unacquainted.” “I do not approve of this restriction & prohibition,” Jones chaffed when he learned of the governor’s response,

not only because it is unjust, but because it prevents me & also Messrs Johns & Baker to propagate the gospel to Natives of Madagascar in this Island, many of whom have told me that they intend returning to their native country & among their own people & relatives after the expiration of their apprenticeship term of years.... Besides, teaching them *in their native language* would induce many more to attend the schools & the preaching of the gospel; they could be taught sooner & easier in the knowledge of the gospel than in French Creole, & as to pure grammatical French they do not understand. At the same time, it would enable us to preserve our knowledge of the Malagasy language against the time the door will be again re-opened there.<sup>17</sup>

Jones’s assessment of the willingness (as opposed to the yearning) of Malagasy speakers to return “to their native country & among their own people & relatives” at the end of apprenticeship was overdrawn, but opinion about the relative merits of literacy instruction and

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<sup>16</sup> David Jones to William Ellis, Port Louis, 6 December 1837, LMS ILMAU 2 2 D, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Geo. F. Dick to David Jones, Colonial Secretary’s Office, Port Louis, 17 August 1837, LMS ILMAU 2 2 C, 1; David Jones to Revd. W. Ellis, Port Louis, 24 August 1837, LMS ILMAU 2 2 C, 2 (emphasis added). For similar reactions to the Governor’s prohibition see also David Jones to Revd. W. Ellis, Port Louis, 27 September 1837, LMS ILMAU 2 2 D.

preaching in French and Malagasy was shifting within the LMS mission at Mauritius. When they ventured into the countryside, Malagasy speaking foreign clerics were drawing Malagasy to themselves in increasing numbers by virtue of their linguistic skills and what appears to have been a newfound sense of Big Island solidarity at the end of slavery – but to the dissatisfaction of estate managers.

I have made several attempts to collect a Malagasy congregation in different places in the island, and have, in a few instances, succeeded to assemble from 35 to 40 for the first and second sabbath, but the influence which the masters have over the apprentices is a formidable obstacle in our way. The masters are universally opposed to the apprentices being instructed and *especially in a foreign language*.<sup>18</sup>

From the Catholic and Anglican churches, to the planters, to the Governor's office, powerful interests lined up against assemblies by Malagasy and the vernacular speech of Nonconformist missionaries. Blocked at every turn on Mauritius, the LMS missionaries sought the intervention of the influential Rev. Dr. John Philip, superintendent of the LMS's South Africa mission, directly with the Colonial Office in London to end the restriction on evangelization and education in the Malagasy tongue. In this they were soon successful. In early February 1838 LMS personnel at Port Louis learned in private correspondence from London that the Colonial Office had forwarded instructions to Governor Cole of Mauritius requiring him to repeal gubernatorial decisions on evangelization in apprentices' native tongues. And at the end of the same month, an official letter did arrive from the Colonial Secretary in Port Louis lifting the prohibition against preaching in Malagasy. His hand having been forced by clerics who went over his head to London, the Governor warned Nonconformists to employ the tongue of the Big Island with caution.

But in as much as the Madagascar language is unknown to all the Public Functionaries as well as to the Resident Inhabitants of Mauritius except those born on that island, His Excellency trusts that you will use the permission now granted to you with such discretion as to create no excitement, or unnecessary anxiety, in the Public mind, with regard to the religious communications you may hold with the Madagascar people of the colony in their native language.

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<sup>18</sup> David Johns to Revd. W. Ellis, Port Louis, 6 March 1838, LMS ILMAU 2 3 A, 2. Emphasis added.

As apprentices neared the end of their extended terms of servitude, many of the official restrictions that Evangelical Protestant missionaries had experienced in the island fell away. Malagasy were now free to assemble as they desired, and to do so through the medium of “their own language.” Government sought assiduously to silence vernacular speech in the age of emancipation, but failed. The renaissance in Malagasy letters at Mauritius was linked to freedom and to Protestant Nonconformist missionaries, the most influential of whom were Welsh and highland Malagasy. These men and women brought the speech variety of Imerina with them to Mauritius as a standardized “Malagasy language” for reading, writing, and printing. There, speakers of Madagascar’s many dialectal variants embraced literacy in Antananarivo’s standardized variety as an emblem of their newfound liberty. Freedom and vernacular literacy were key aspects of British imperialism in the mid-nineteenth century that promoted new programs of language and identity in the Indian Ocean region. They were also programs in which a variety of Malagasy speakers actively participated.<sup>19</sup>

### **Forming Malagasy Villages**

The release of apprentices from compulsory labor and residential contracts by the end of March 1839 marked not only a watershed in the lives of Mauritius’s ex-slaves, but also in our knowledge of how the Malagasy among them thought about and organized themselves into corporate groups in their newfound freedom. The long four years during which most apprentices prepared for their final emancipation allowed them to think carefully about what kind of life they would fashion for themselves after abolition. Among the considerations facing ex-slaves were the despotism of their masters and the necessity for cash income and access to land once completely freed. A year before the end of apprenticeship, David Johns reported the challenges facing Malagasy apprentices on the sugar estates.

They are kept at work in the field from day light till dark and that every day of the week, except on the Sabbath. Their masters generally promise them 2, 3 or 4 shillings pr

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<sup>19</sup> J. J. Freeman to Thomas Wilson Esqr., Cape Town, 20 February 1836, LMS ILSA 15 1 B, 2; Geo. F. Dick to Revd. D. Johns, Col. Secy. Office, Port Louis, 27 February 1838, LMS ILMAU 2 3 A, 1 (block quotation); David Jones, David Johns, and Edward Baker to Rev. W. Ellis, Mauritius, 10 February 1838, LMS ILMAU 2 3 A, 2. For how the end of restrictions affected the formation of schools see Dulari Prithipaul, *A Comparative Analysis of French & British Colonial Policies of Education in Mauritius (1735–1889)* (Port-Louis: Imprimerie Idéale, 1976), 103–104; Ramesh Dutt Ramdoyal, *The Development of Education in Mauritius, 1710–1976* (Réduit: The Mauritius Institute of Education, 1977), 67.

month for their labour over the appointed hours, but the apprentices say that they seldom receive any thing, for the masters frequently find some excuse either that they have not behaved themselves well during the month or that they have not finished their tasks &c for such pretended reasons they are deprived of the little remuneration promised them, and *as the greatest part of these apprentices have a family to support* they are compelled to work on the sabbath to obtain food for their children. Scores of the Malagasy have given me this reason for not attending to religious instruction on the Sabbath. I believe, this is the chief reason that the Malagasy have not attended more regularly to our instruction.<sup>20</sup>

Given apprentices' repeated experience of the extralegal refusal of their masters to pay overtime wages, it is not surprising that they abandoned the sugar estates en masse in the months after March 1839. Most whites took this move as confirming their view of "blacks" as lazy and thieving, but ex-apprentices had responsibilities of their own and families to unite and support. They could not fulfill these goals by offering their labor for free. In the immediate aftermath of emancipation, ex-apprentices moved about the island into a variety of temporary arrangements as sharecroppers, day laborers, scavengers, visitors, and squatters, with many building temporary accommodations in the countryside or in the residential "camps" of urban Port-Louis. In his study of the end of slavery in Mauritius, historian Richard Allen writes that eventually many ex-apprentices sought land on which to cultivate either in marginal parts of the island, especially if these were in any proximity to a town, or on the edges of sugar estates. For several years after 1839, many landowners sold off small portions of their holdings or engaged in speculation by purchasing large blocks of land and subdividing them into modest plots of a few *arpents* offered for sale to ex-apprentices for prices between \$10 and \$200 per arpent. This *petit morcellement* of properties brought an income to cash-strapped estate holders and land speculators, individuals now deprived of their servile labor force and required to pay wages to attract workers, including the contract laborers newly arriving from South Asia. Keeping ex-apprentices on the margins of estates, went the thinking, might also offer plantation managers seasonal access to the valuable labor of the newly emancipated. The strategies of some ex-apprentices to remake their lives in this era of dramatic economic

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<sup>20</sup> David Johns to Revd. W. Ellis, Port Louis, 6 March 1838, LMS ILMAU 2 3 A, 2. Emphasis added.

transformation in Mauritius meshed with the economy of petit morcellement between 1840 and 1845.<sup>21</sup>

As described by LMS missionaries, the first tangible effect of the end of apprenticeship was an increase in school enrollment. “The emancipation of the praedial apprentices which took place here on March 31st (Easter Sunday) has passed off without the slightest disturbance,” wrote Edward Baker less than two weeks after the event,

although many thousands of Blacks are to this day out of employment; they are refusing to work on the same terms as the coolies from India, and refusing to enter into engagements for the year before the Stipendiary Magistrates. I have sanguine hopes that all will ultimately and indeed speedily tend to the furtherance of the Gospel. Already several of the schools have had their numbers augmented by the emancipation having enabled & excited the parents to send their children to school.

For a year, however, the missionaries had little to say about how ex-apprentices organized their home and family lives. In some coastal areas, such as Pointe au Piments, Malagasy took up residence on land they did not own (mainly the *pas géométriques* along the coast) and a decade later were “being turned out of the plots of ground they have for many a year lived upon, on account of their looking up to us for religious instructions.” In May 1840, David Jones provided a first inkling that Malagasy coming off the sugar estates were seeking land on which to settle their families and to create new village communities of Malagasy speakers. “The inclination manifested by the emancipated population,” he explained, “is, to settle down as the day labourers and free peasantry of the island. They accumulate in various parts of Port Louis, and, in the country districts are forming rural hamlets not unlike the villages of Madagascar.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Allen, *Slaves, Freedmen and Indentured Laborers*, 106–134; Chan Low, “Aux origines du ‘malaise créole’”; Musleem Jumeer, “Les Libres et l’économie de plantation à l’île Maurice (1810–1835),” *Revue historique de l’océan Indien* 1 (2005), 208–221. See also the documents collected in Carter and d’Unienville, *Unshackling Slaves*, 33–85. On whites’ views of ex-apprentices see Eugène Bernard, *Essai sur les nouveaux affranchis de l’île Maurice* (Ile Maurice: Imprimerie du Mauricien, 1834). This work was probably written by George Dick, the Colonial Secretary, and was published in anticipation of the general emancipation of early 1835, to which the author was personally opposed. Relatively little has been written about family formation among slaves and ex-slaves in Mauritius, but see Teelock, *Bitter Sugar*, 186–202; Megan Vaughan, *Creating the Creole Island: Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Mauritius* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 135–138.

<sup>22</sup> Edward Baker to Rev. W. Ellis, Piton, 12 April 1839, LMS ILMAU 2 3 C, 1 (block quotation); David Jones to Revd. Wm. Ellis, Mauritius, 25 May 1840, LMS ILMAU 2 4 A, 2–3 (inclination manifested); J. J. Le Brun to Rev. A. Tidman, Port Louis, 21 June 1852, LMS ILMAU 4 1 A, 3 (being turned out). For increasing numbers of school children at emancipation see also Edward Baker to William Ellis, Piton, 9 August 1839, LMS ILMAU 2 3 D, 2.

In following years Malagasy speakers continued to form “hamlets not unlike the villages of Madagascar” that provided them with opportunities for subsistence, proximity to urban centers of wage employment, and markets for their garden produce. These newly founded villages comprised one of the most significant material bases of the renaissance in Malagasy language and letters in post-emancipation Mauritius. Many Malagasy speakers purchased land on which to live and farm, acquiring it with hard-earned wages gained in the months and years after March 1839 and settling in villages on or near that land. Land, family, and native tongue formed the core of these renaissance settlements. By seeking to move together with other Malagasy speaking families either in ethnic agglomerations within the camps of Port Louis or in self-standing countryside villages, Malagasy ex-apprentices were acting on a sense of Big-Island identity that had apparently outlasted the bonds of slavery but which was now being renewed by decisions made after the British Parliament’s mandated emancipation of 1839. The constitution of landed communities through property acquisition suggests that while ex-apprentices were among the poorest persons in colonial society, many were able to invest post-emancipation earnings in the imagination of new lives and communities.

Homesteads were in general modest, consisting as one observer reported in 1853 of “little low cane or bamboo-walled cottages” surrounded by “gardens of lentils, pumpkins, cucumbers, sweet potatoes, bananas, and maize.” Partially responsible for supporting this burst of village formation between 1840 and 1845 may have been the relatively high wages available to ex-apprentices during the period that no contract laborers from South Asia arrived in the sugar island (1839–1843). Participation of Malagasy speaking Prize Negroes (also known as Liberated Africans) released from their contracts in the years after 1839 may also have aided in villagization, for many of them married into the ex-slave population. At the termination of their contracts these prize negro apprentices usually walked away with a lump sum of banked wages of between £7 and £15 stored for them as provided in statute by the Collector of Customs. At fifteen dollars per arpent, this sum could potentially purchase between 2 and 5 arpents of land (the pound sterling was set at five dollars). J. Le Brun described the development of these villages and the prominent role of Liberated Africans in some of them.

We have both in the camps [of the city] and in the environs of Port Louis several thousands of the liberated negroes, located at Peter Booth about 5 miles from Port

Louis 1500 of them who have located themselves on small pieces of ground which they have purchased & which they cultivate. At little further on, following the ridge of the long mountain about 2 miles you next [see a] collection of small villages containing about 300 families. On the south western side of the Signal Mountain of Port Louis, by the Moka Road you meet a small village 5 miles from Port Louis chiefly inhabited by Madagasy people, several of them attend on Sunday on the means of grace at Port Louis. Ten of them have been Baptized or married at the chapel.<sup>23</sup>

In May 1843 LMS missionaries commenced evangelizing among villages of Malagasy formed at Pailles, not far from Port Louis. A description of these villages by John Le Brun suggests an emerging gender division of labor among the Malagasy “day labourers and free peasantry,” with women tending to cultivation on the rural properties and men seeking waged employment in the city.

In the month of May last we began our work of Evangelization in the new village formed by the Madagassy emancipated people in a valy [*sic*] called Le Paille. The village is called Bibi [Malagasy for *biby*, “bug, animal, beast”] the others of the Port Louis mountain about 5 miles from P.L. where about 30 families have located themselves. Others are weekly purchasing some ground in the environs. It is a pleasant situation covered with woods & a fine rivulet of water flowing from the Pouce [the Thumb] in the valy – you stand about 800 feet above the ocean, which you see at a distance of 5 or six miles off. All was happiness & joy among the poor villagers, who received us with great Joy & hospitality, and for the first time the sound of the Gospel was heard, & the environing hills & vales echoed the praise of our Lord & saviour. Many of them since attend regularly our chapel at Port Louis. We were surprised Mrs. Johns & myself to find their houses all built, clean & simply & furnished with the necessaries of *un petit ménage* [a humble household], their small plots of ground well cultivated. This is the work of the women, the men going to work during the week at Port Louis to their different trades. These different families live happy together. O what a difference in their condition [compared with] what it was a few years since.<sup>24</sup>

Le Brun’s optimistic description of village formation in the valley of Pailles captures many important elements of ex-apprentice lives. Malagasy made collective decisions to purchase land together in areas on the periphery of Port Louis that were marginal to the sugar economy and where uncleared terrain could be had for the modest prices that ex-apprentices

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<sup>23</sup> J. Le Brun to Revd. Messrs. Tidman & Freeman, Port Louis, 13 April 1843, LMS ILMAU 3 2 A, 1 (block quotation); Ellis, *Three Visits*, 126 (cottages); Marina Carter, V. Govinden, and Satyendra Peerthum, *The Last Slaves: Liberated Africans in 19th Century Mauritius* (Port Louis: Centre for Research on Indian Ocean Societies, 2003), 63–65 (banked wages), 82 (marriage). For the spike in wages between 1839 and 1843 see also Baker, “Observations on the Apprenticeship System,” 74; Chan Low, “Aux origines du ‘malaise créole’?” 278–280.

<sup>24</sup> John Le Brun to Revds. Tidman & Freeman, Port Louis, 25 September 1843, LMS ILMAU 3 2 B, 6–7.

might afford. The Malagasy name of one of the villages – *Biby* – suggested the linguistic and ethnic bonds that drew ex-apprentices from the Big Island together. “Small plots of ground well cultivated” were complimented by humble and minimally furnished houses containing all the “necessaries” of a modest and respectable household. In this environment of social distance from the sugar estates, newly freed “Madagassy” families organized their lives and labor as they could and would, but also with attention to colonial concepts of domestic respectability. In doing so they exercised choices reflecting both the realities of the political economy of Mauritius and gender preferences that may have extended back to Madagascar.

Writing in the age of apprenticeship, the colonial government archivist at Mauritius observed that “the Malagasy (*le Malgache*...does not like to work the land, which in his natal country is abandoned to women; he prefers that of the woods. He is also successful in the crafts of carpenter, sawyer and blacksmith.” Unienville’s comments may have reflected the realities of Mauritius more than they did an erstwhile life in Madagascar, but they accurately portrayed the gendered choices of newly emancipated Malagasy in Mauritius that set women to tending the house and garden, and sent men into the city for waged work in a variety of skilled and unskilled professions. During the middle decades of the nineteenth century, it was common for persons departing Port Louis for the countryside to see “companies of the inhabitants of Moka,” mostly women, “carrying on their heads loads of vegetables, fruit, and flowers...for sale” in the city. The Malagasy villages of Mauritius were forward-looking projects, the creation of revived ethnic communities through land acquisition and physical propinquity within the specific environment of the Mascarene economy, not attempts to recreate the societies of Madagascar just as they were in the old country. Rice, for example, did not figure in the list of crops “the Madagassy” cultivated.<sup>25</sup>

David Johns provided more insight into the formation of villages by the “Aborigines of Madagascar” in a letter dated May 1843.

Within the last year there are several villages in different parts of this colony formed by the emancipated Malagasy, who, after the emancipation saved a little money from their wages, united together & purchased a large piece of ground, upon which they formed a

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<sup>25</sup> Antoine Marrier Unienville, *Statistique de l’île Maurice et ses dépendances*, 3 vols. (Paris: Gustave Barba, 1838), I, 278; Ellis, *Three Visits*, 90 (companies of the inhabitants). The labor-averse man of Madagascar is of long Mascarene genealogy; it is expressed also in Bernard, *Essai sur les nouveaux affranchis*, 127.

village. There is one of this kind at Moka about 8 or 10 miles from Port Louis. The last Sabbath in April I spent with these kind hearted & simple people. They are all from the Betsileo District [of Madagascar] and seem to be very willing to receive instruction, and wish to have a school there for their children. They say that within 2 or 3 miles to this village there are from 300 to 400 Malagasy besides their children. Whether they are so many or not I cannot say, but from the number of houses occupied by them, which were pointed out to me, there must be great many Malagasy there.

Malagasy about Moka were carving out new lives for themselves by homesteading on recently purchased land and recreating landed communities of Malagasy identity and language in mid nineteenth-century Mauritius. What is particularly revealing about this communication is that one of the Moka villages was formed by persons “from the Betsileo District” of interior Madagascar south of Imerina. Ex-apprentices were not only creating villages as *Malgaches*, an insular or national identity thrust on them by force of their servitude in Mauritius, but at least sometimes on the basis of Malagasy sub-ethnicities and particular dialects of the Big Island’s tongue. This is not the only mention I found in the LMS archive of the old-world ethnicity of the new Malagasy villages created in Mauritius during the early 1840s (recall also the Ambolambe” networks that Ratsitanina had energized in 1822). Refugee evangelists referred to the Malagasy congregation at Moka as “the Betsimisaraka,” possibly reflecting its composition by a preponderance of ex-slaves from Madagascar with east-coast origins. But the ethnonym also carried metaphoric overtones. Betsimisaraka literally means “the many united” and is suggestive of an imagined Christian union of Big Islanders with varying ethnic origins.<sup>26</sup>

Individuals in this period of Malagasy renaissance during a unique colonial *conjoncture* are also frequently identified by Malagasy sub-ethnicity: Hova, Betsimisaraka, Sakalava, Betsileo. “Now I stay at Mauritius [to] teach the people to pray to God,” David Ratsarahomba explained in late 1847 to Sakalava interlocutors during a short visit to the Bay of Baly in northwest Madagascar, “there are Betsimisarakas there [in Mauritius] whom I teach but I do not see Sakalavas of your country men but few.” While they acknowledged sub-Malagasy ethnicities within their “congregations of the Malagasy” in Mauritius, refugee evangelists

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<sup>26</sup> Mary Johns to Revds. A. Tidman & J. J. Freeman, Port Louis, September 1842, LMS ILMAU 3 1 C, 26 (hovah); David Johns to Revd. A. Tidman, Port Louis, 27 May 1843, LMS ILMAU 3 2 B, 2–3; John Joseph Le Brun to Secretary of the LMS [J. J. Freeman], Port Louis, 10 April 1843, LMS ILMAU 3 2 A, 3 (block quotation); David Ratsarahomba to J. J. Freeman, Mauritius, 20 February 1849, LMS AO 2 3 B, 3 (Sakalava & *zaza lahy Creole*, or “Creole boy”).

sought to erode a number of Big Island cultural practices they associated with a pre-Christian past. “As for the congregations of the Malagasy, sir,” David Ratsarahomba explained to a friend in England in late 1848, writing in his mother tongue, “they are good, zealous, and love instruction. They are changing and these days leave behind ancestral ways and idle playing (*ny fanaondrazana sy ny filalaovana foana*). So I am happy and give thanks to God when I observe them seeking the path to everlasting life.” If certain Malagasy ethnic practices eroded over time to the approval of Protestant evangelists, it was still the Malagasy language and identity that drew Big Island Christians like Ratsarahomba and many of his ex-slave compatriots to vernacular evangelism in “the congregations of the Malagasy.” In freedom, many ex-apprentices identified and organized themselves in ways that nurtured a social expansion of the Malagasy language and a renewed visibility of Malagasy as a colonial ethnic group.<sup>27</sup>

### **Multilingual Evangelism**

In the two decades following emancipation, the LMS’s former Madagascar Missionaries together with personnel of the reinstated LMS Mauritius mission concentrated their joint efforts in a broad circuit of newly formed Malagasy settlements ringing Port Louis at greater and lesser distance, employing the services of Madagascar-born Christian refugees who had only recently arrived from Madagascar (including Mary Rafaravavy, James Andrianisa, David Ratsarahomba, Joseph Rasoamaka, and Simeon Andrianomanana, all of whom are depicted on this book’s cover) to preach, provide literacy education, and visit the homes of Malagasy ex-apprentices. At the beginning the vernacular Christian discourse of LMS missionaries and Malagasy refugees presented linguistic obstacles to Mauritius’s ex-apprentices. The Madagascar missionaries and most of the refugees spoke the tongue of highland Madagascar, whereas ex-apprentices hailed from a range of Malagasy speech communities and probably spoke a form of Malagasy unique to Mauritius.

But most problems arose from the novel Christian vocabulary adopted by missionaries and their youthful Malagasy co-translators at Antananarivo in previous decades. These choices

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<sup>27</sup> David Ratsarahomba, “A Brief journal in Madagascar,” September–November 1847, LMS ILMAU 3 3 D, 9; David Ratsarahomba to Unknown (probably J. J. Freeman), Port Louis, 23 September 1848, LMS ILMAU 3 4 B, 1. Malagasy original: Ary ny toetra ny fiangonany ny Malagasy tompoko dia tsara hiany, mazoto sy tia fianarana izy ary miova mahafovy ny izy ankehitriny ka faly aho sady misaotra an’Andriamanitra aho no ho ny fahita ko azy mitady ny lalany ny fiainana mandrakizay.

had assimilated Malagasy words to new ecclesiastical meanings and had taken time for the Christians of highland Madagascar to learn and to accept. The Malagasy speakers of Mauritius were suddenly confronted with this new Christian vocabulary in Antananarivo's dialect and found it both strange and difficult to comprehend. Adjustment to the new sacred vocabulary would take time. "The fact is," wrote Johns and Baker, attributing these earliest difficulties not to the oddness and serendipitous meaning of vernacular Christian vocabulary but to a dubious assumption of language loss among Malagasy speakers,

the Malagasy who have partly forgotten their mother tongue, through having remained so many years in Mauritius, do not understand very well preaching in the Malagasy language, on account of so many words introduced into the Hova vocabulary [the dialect of highland Madagascar] unintelligible and therefore uninteresting to them: such as *fahamarinana*, righteousness, *fahamasinana*, sanctification, *fanahy*, soul, *lanitra*, the heavens which is the abode of glorified saints; *helo*, hell, and many others. On this account some told Mr. Jones they would prefer to hear a sermon in French, rather than in Malagasy, which induced him afterwards to preach always in French [at Port Louis]; yet using occasionally some creole expressions to make them understand him better. Therefore, from these considerations, we are of opinion that they can be much more benefitted from the schools and preaching in French, than in the Malagasy tongue, *at least, all who speak and understand French*. At the same time we have frequent opportunities to converse with them in the Malagasy language; and it forms an acquaintance, and induces some of them either to send their children to school, or to attend the weekly services. It is our privilege to inform you that many of our scholars have been instrumental in inducing some of their relatives and neighbours to attend the weekly services, and they have also proved the medium of conversation and acquaintance with persons not known before.<sup>28</sup>

Preaching in what was called the Union Chapel of Port Louis, the LMS's flagship church in the city, continued to be delivered primarily in French and creole with occasional Malagasy services and many Malagasy language meetings during the week. This was both to cater to those in the Malagasy community who could not speak French and to accustom Malagasy speakers to vernacular ecclesiastical vocabulary. Port Louis was an important base of LMS operations, supervised by John Le Brun, senior, and assisted from 1842 by his son, John Joseph, neither of whom were Malagasy speakers. By mid-1842, wrote David Johns, "the congregation

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<sup>28</sup> David Jones and Edward Baker to Rev. W. Ellis, Mauritius, 26 December 1839, LMS ILMAU 2 3 D, 2–3 (emphasis added). For changes to the meaning of Christian vocabulary in highland Madagascar see Pier M. Larson, "'Capacities and Modes of Thinking': Intellectual Engagements and Subaltern Hegemony in the Early History of Malagasy Christianity," *American Historical Review* 102,4 (1997), 969–1002.

consists chiefly of the emancipated Malagasy,” though a few years later Le Brun also signaled “Africans, Malays & creoles &c,” among the regular attendees. When he visited the Port Louis church in 1850, J. J. Freeman noted that “The majority of them consists of the natives of Madagascar, who though grown old in the Mauritius, still retain their knowledge of their mother tongue & their attachment to it.”<sup>29</sup>

Newly arrived Christian refugees David Ratsarahomba, Simeon Andrianomanana, Elias Ramiandrahasina, James Andrianisa, and Paoly Botomandry assisted in the LMS evangelistic work in and north of Port Louis, all preaching in their native tongue in the many *fiangonana amy ny Malagasy* (assemblies of the Malagasy) of the city and its environs and teaching in the schools formed for Malagasy children and adults in the various “camps” of ex-apprentices. Beyond the central chapel of the LMS in Mauritius’s capital, then, much work among Malagasy proceeded in their native tongue, often supplemented with some preaching and instruction in creole, which the Malagasy refugees struggled to learn. Ratsarahomba and Andrianomanana both spent time acquiring the craft of printing with Edward Baker at his residence in Piton, no doubt assisting him in editing and then printing his self-published book-length grammar of the Malagasy language, the first printed grammar issuing from the LMS’s Madagascar missionaries (1845) but joining a long tradition of Malagasy language works in Roman character produced within the Big Island’s exile communities at the Mascarenes. After a pause at the death of Barthélemy Huet de Froberville in 1835, important literary work in the tongue of the Big Island was again being conducted in its Mascarene diaspora. The LMS’s Malagasy evangelists probably consulted Baker’s grammar as they taught adults in Mauritius to read and write in their mother tongue.<sup>30</sup>

It was Moka, however, that served as the central headquarters for the LMS’s evangelization and education among peri-urban Malagasy farmers and laborers, with places of frequent visitation and “outstations” having resident refugee evangelists forming a broad arc

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<sup>29</sup> David Johns to J. J. Freeman, Port Louis, 24 June 1842, LMS ILMAU 3 1 B, 2; John Le Brun to J. J. Freeman, Port Louis, 26 November 1844, LMS ILMAU 3 3 A, 2–3; J. J. Freeman to Revd. Dr. Tidman, Colombo, Ceylon, 11 October 1850, LMS AO 2 5 C, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Baker to Rev Messrs. Tidman & Freeman, Port Louis, 27 November 1843, LMS ILMAU 3 2 D, 3–4; Edward Baker, *An Outline of a Grammar of the Madagascar Language, as Spoken by the Hovas* (Mauritius: Printed by E. Baker, 1845). The term *fiangonana amy ny Malagasy* is used in several letters, including in David Ratsarahomba to J. J. Freeman, Port Louis, 20 July 1848, LMS ILMAU 3 4 B, 4.

around Port Louis, from Petite Rivière in the southwest via Pailles, Plaines Wilhems, and Réduit, through the “Moka station” itself, and all the way around the back side of the mountains ringing Port Louis (Nouvelle Découverte, Pieter Booth, Crève Coeur, Montaigne Longue) right into the northern suburbs of the city (Rochebois & Riche Terre), and from there northward to Pointe aux Piments and Grand Baie via Piton (see map). The Malagasy villages in these regions served by LMS evangelists and occasionally visited by the LMS’s European missionaries could not have been the only agglomerations of Malagasy at the time – we know of Grand Port and ad hoc settlements along the coast, for example – but they represented a good share of the some ten thousand persons born in Madagascar known to have been living in Mauritius after the end of apprenticeship.<sup>31</sup>

**Map 6.1 Here**

In early 1843 David Johns purchased 18 arpents of land (about 15 acres) in Moka district near some Malagasy villages with funds of about £144 he borrowed from Elias Ramiandrahasina, a Malagasy refugee and former official in Queen Ranavalona’s government at Tamatave. Ramiandrahasina was unable to purchase the land at Moka himself, for colonial law permitted only British subjects to own the soil of the colony. The investment brought Ramiandrahasina an interest income in lieu of rent. The parcel of land at Moka was of “an excellent soil, having five acres of wood, and a River of excellent water flowing along side of it,” probably either the Moka River or one of its tributaries. “We thought that by this we might secure a sort of home for any of the Malagasy [refugees] – should they be able to escape,” wrote Mary Johns, David Johns’s wife, of their aspirations for the land. David Johns died only months after the purchase, and Mary was obliged to return to Britain.<sup>32</sup>

The LMS assumed ownership of the land at Moka and completed four buildings on it for refugee evangelists from Madagascar who moved there from Port Louis and served the villages of their ex-apprentice compatriots in the vicinity. The largest building at Moka contained three rooms and was the residence for British missionaries (first Mary Johns, then the Rev. J. J. Le

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<sup>31</sup> David Johns to J. J. Freeman, Port Louis, 24 June 1842, LMS ILMAU 3 1 B, 2. William Ellis observed Malagasy speakers among the inhabitants of Crève Coeur a decade later (1853): Ellis, *Three Visits*, 126.

<sup>32</sup> Mary Johns to Unknown (probably A. Tidman), Moka, 14 July 1843, LMS ILMAU 3 2 B, 1–2 (quotation, 2); J. Le Brun to J. J. Freeman, Port Louis, 13 January 1845, LMS ILMAU 3 3 B, 1 (property description). The LMS’s Moka property would have been in the near vicinity of what is now the Mahatma Gandhi Institute.

Brun, junior, and his wife, and finally Pierre Le Brun, the brother of the preceding) and a dual-use school/chapel. Another structure, quite large, was designed for Mary Rafaravavy, another for David Johns Andrianado, and the last, having two rooms with a shared kitchen, for Ramiadana and Rafaralahy. Each of the refugee Malagasy evangelists stationed at Moka cultivated “an acre or two” of the accompanying land with “bananas, indian corn, sweet potatoes, French beans and all kind of vegetable. They all rear fowls, ducks & geese.” If modest – the refugee evangelists were not remunerated better than ex-apprentice laborers, though they received their lodging and cultivating lands for free – these premises offered a comfortable life for the times.<sup>33</sup>

Originally financed by a Malagasy refugee and supervised successively by the two brothers Le Brun, both creole speakers born on Mauritius, the “Moka station” became a Malagasy Christian community and an educational and spiritual resource for the Malagasy ex-apprentice families living in the neighborhood. The LMS mission at Mauritius, in other words, brought differing diasporan communities of Malagasy into contact with each other in this exceptional moment in Mauritius’s colonial history: refugees and ex-apprentices. The core of the work consisted of Sabbath-day preaching and weekday education, a multilingual undertaking reminiscent of the LMS’s mission in Port Louis among Malagasy apprentices between 1835 and 1839. Taught in the French creole and English, the day school was designed for children whose parents had settled in the Moka region. While most of these youth would have been born in Mauritius, they were mostly native speakers of Malagasy. And they were far from evenly fluent in the island creole. “I wish to see their children all speak creole,” Mary Johns wrote in justification of the planned creole-language curriculum for the Moka school, belying the mother tongue of at least some of these young Mauritian creoles as – Malagasy. Childhood education in this community of the Malagasy renaissance was designed to bring colony born Malagasy speaking children up to speed in the common language of the Mascarenes’s African diaspora, to creolize them in the classical sense! Once again, vernacularizing colonial projects were implicated in the creation of creole speech and identity.

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<sup>33</sup> J. Le Brun to J. J. Freeman, Port Louis, 13 January 1845, LMS ILMAU 3 3 B, 2. For the early history of the LMS’s “Moka station” see John Le Brun to Revds. Tidman & Freeman, Port Louis, 25 September 1843, LMS ILMAU 3 2 B, 3, 7 and cover.

English was soon added to the mix. “The day school for children numbers on the books 35,” reported Le Brun, junior, some years after it was commenced

viz. 12 girls and 23 boys. We generally have from 20 to 25 present. The progress made by the children during the year was very satisfactory. In arithmetic, the more advanced have gone through Bowley’s intellectual calculator, as far as simple interest. Geography (sacred & profane), English translation & parsing, French grammar and Abbé Bossen’s vocabulary, as well as scripture lessons and interpretations have occupied the time and attention of our youthful charge with varied success. On the 19th instant my father came over to Moka and they were examined in what they had learnt during the year. The first class read in English and French the 10th chapter of John’s gospel v. 1 to 18 and translated literally a few verses.<sup>34</sup>

Even more important judging by attendance figures was the literacy school for adults, which was bilingual in Malagasy and French. Mary Johns had once thought that “the Malagasy are in general too old to learn to read,” echoing the sentiments of Government House some years earlier. But in practice this often-repeated colonial (if not also modern scholarly) platitude turned out not to be the case, as adults who set themselves to the task acquired literate fluency in both Malagasy and French. “As I am anxious that the people should read for themselves the Word of God,” wrote J. J. Le Brun of adult education at Moka in late 1847,

I opened, about 16 months ago, an adult evening school which has kept up pretty well. The number of persons who thus three times a week meet together to learn to read in French and Malagasy, varies from 30 to 40, some of whom read fluently in both languages. I am greatly assisted by the children of the school for the French and by Andrianado and his wife, and Rafaralahy for the Malagasy.... After devoting an hour or so to reading, I teach them the Catechism and close by singing hymns and prayers.

Neither the day nor the evening school served a large share of ex-apprentices in the area, but the determination of some Malagasy adults to read in both their mother tongue and in the French creole of Mauritius bespeaks their literate aspirations and their renewed affinities for their homeland and its ancestral tongue.<sup>35</sup>

Moka Sabbaths commenced with Sunday schools for both children and adults, “in which we go through nearly the same exercises as on week days.” Sunday preaching in the chapel was

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<sup>34</sup> Mary Johns to Unknown (probably A. Tidman), Moka, 14 July 1843, LMS ILMAU 3 2 B, 4; J. J. Le Brun to Revd. Arthur Tidman, Moka, 7 December 1847, LMS ILMAU 3 3 D, 3–4.

<sup>35</sup> Mary Johns to Unknown (probably A. Tidman), Moka, 14 July 1843, LMS ILMAU 3 2 B, 4; J. J. Le Brun to Revd. Arthur Tidman, Moka, 7 December 1847, LMS ILMAU 3 3 D, 3.

bilingual, in creole and Malagasy. Much of the work among Malagasy at Moka, Port Louis, and in the Malagasy villages of ex-apprentices ringing the city was turned over to Malagasy refugee evangelists, in part because the Madagascar missionaries who had pushed the LMS to focus its work among the Malagasy in Mauritius were expiring or leaving the island. David Johns died on Nosy Be island just off Madagascar’s northwest coast in late 1843 attempting in vain to bring Malagasy Christians away from the Big Island. David Jones expired in Port Louis a year later. And Edward Baker, who became progressively more involved in colonial politics and in publishing and co-editing the bilingual newspaper *La Sentinelle de Maurice/The Mauritius Watchman* with the famed Rémy Ollier, resigned from his post in mid-1844 and departed Mauritius for New Holland (Australia) only months later.<sup>36</sup>

**Figure 6.1 Here**

The refugees brought fluency in Malagasy to the LMS and the ability to move freely, in social and linguistic terms, in and out of ex-apprentice homes. “They render themselves eminently useful, in the neighbourhood by holding private meetings...among the natives of Madagascar,” explained one missionary. “Andrianado, Rafaral[ah]y & Mary [Rafaravavy] are actively employed in doing good at Moka among their country men,” Le Brun senior observed in 1844. “David [Ratsarahomba], and Ramiadana are equally working in the Mountains of Port Louis in holding prayer meetings and teaching the people to read,” he explained.

Ramiadana, Andrianado, & their wives, & Rafaralahy (Caleb’s brother) go about from house to house testifying unto old & young, the bible in their hands, “repentance toward God, & faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,” accompanied with the singing of hymns & prayer, & the teaching the people to read whilst I have taken upon myself the whole charge of the school, & devote my evenings to teaching the Refugees the English language & to hearing the reports of their labours of the day, which is followed by

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<sup>36</sup> J. J. Le Brun to LMS Directors, Mauritius, no date (c. October 1844), LMS ILMAU 3 3 A, 2–3 (bilingual preaching); J. J. Le Brun to Revd. Arthur Tidman, Moka, 7 December 1847, LMS ILMAU 3 3 D, 3 (in which we go through). Baker’s foundational role at *La Sentinelle de Maurice* as its printer and only English-language writer for the first thirteen months (the French text was jointly produced by Ollier and a number of correspondents) has been largely lost in the twentieth-century making of Ollier as a larger-than-life figure in Mauritius Creole history. At least in its English section, the paper paid careful attention to developments in Madagascar. Coming from Grand Port, Ollier may have been of Malagasy ancestry on his mother’s side, but this cannot be ascertained with certainty. See Baker’s letters in the LMS archive and A. F. Fokeer, *A Biographical Sketch of the Life, Work and Character of Rémy Ollier* (Mauritius: The General Printing & Stationery Co. Ltd., 1917), v, 18, 21, 23, 25.

edifying spiritual conversation, tending to encourage them as well as to render them [words illegible] for greater usefulness among the people.<sup>37</sup>

Although they were studying English, refugee evangelists worked mainly in the Malagasy tongue, together with some French creole. Most of them had learned some French and English at Mauritius and in Madagascar, but none showed particularly strong literate competence in either language, even those who sometimes wrote in them. The exception was David Ratsarahomba, who could write English quite well, though not with native fluency, and even he preferred to compose in Malagasy rather than in English. When in 1848 refugee evangelist Rafaralahy abruptly departed Mauritius on a ship bound for New Holland, “the only reason he assigned for going was that he wished to learn English.” In any case, few of the apprentices who evangelists were attempting to bring into the Christian fold knew much English.<sup>38</sup>

In the thinking of both Nonconformist missionaries on the ground and the LMS Directors back in London, Malagasy Christian refugees would “be imminently useful as Evangelists in their native Island Madagascar” should Ranavalona’s kingdom be reopened to public Christian evangelism, and for this reason they were to maintain and hone their native language skills in the multilingual environment of colonial Mauritius. And the refugees’ linguistic skills were sometimes broadened from Malagasy through matrimonial choices. Not long before his death at Mauritius in 1849, Ramiadana, “married...a young Malgash creol, she is a pious person too, knows how to write and read fluently in the Bible.” The unnamed “Malgash creole’s” languages of literate competence are not specified, but she likely read and wrote French and probably also spoke Malagasy – why else would she be a *Malgash* creole – proving of great value to the

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<sup>37</sup> J. Le Brun to Revd. Messrs. Freeman & Tidman, Port Louis, 15 August 1844, LMS ILMAU 3 3 A, 2 (render themselves); John Le Brun to J. J. Freeman, Port Louis, 26 November 1844, LMS ILMAU 3 3 A, 2 (actively employed); J. J. Le Brun to Revd A. Tidman, La Chapelle, Moka, 20 March 1847, LMS ILMAU 3 3 D, 4 (block quotation).

<sup>38</sup> J. J. Le Brun to LMS Directors, Moka, 5 November 1848, LMS ILMAU 3 4 B, 4 (Rafaralahy). For the evangelists’ poor grasp of European languages see Elias Ramiandrasina’s letter in French and David Johns Andrianado’s in English in the LMS archives. Andrianado had even spent some time learning English at Walthamstow, England. E. Ramiandrasina to Monsieur Revd. J. Le Brun, Port Louis, 6 June 1846, LMS ILMAU 3 3 C; David Johns Andrianado to Revd. J. J. Le Brun and Revd. J. Le Brun, Moka, 23 November 1849, LMS ILMAU 4 1 A. See also Ratsarahomba, “Brief journal.” Many English-language letters from the refugees in the LMS archives are translations effected by missionaries out of Malagasy originals.

LMS during the short time she and Ramiadana removed from Moka to a nearby community of Malagasy at Nouvelle Découverte.<sup>39</sup>

Little in the archive allows us to know with the precision and subtlety we might desire about the tenor of the relationship between the two branches of the Malagasy diaspora in Mauritius: ex-slaves and recently arrived Christian refugees. But that these were sometimes close and predicated on what was believed to be shared language, cultural origin, and mutual interest in vernacular literacy is demonstrated in the story of the Malagasy settlement at Nouvelle Découverte, whose families regularly attended vernacular Sunday worship at Moka but begged of Le Brun, junior, to send them a resident refugee evangelist. He demurred at first, but they persisted. “A few weeks after” their first request, Le Brun wrote,

they came again, and brought with them their books. Some began to spell out a few versets of the New Testament, while others read pretty fluently, all exclaimed most earnestly “can you now, sir, let us have a teacher? oh! do let us have a teacher, not only that he may teach us to read the word of God, but that we might be made to understand it as well.”

As is typical of many such passages in Le Brun’s letters, the language of literate competence in question is not specified. The historian might bet it was French, but as we will see below, the LMS distributed much Malagasy vernacular sacred literature in Mauritius, including spelling books and reading primers in Malagasy. Le Brun continued.

But desiring to visit the place before proceeding further, I accordingly went and found on the summit of a hill a beautiful Malagasy village. In the plain below, a mile and a half from the place, I distinguished three other Malagasy encampments. To the left, at a greater distance was another village whose inhabitants had also expressed a wish to have a teacher in their neighbourhood, and on the right, at the base of a hill called Mont Thérèse, but considerably nearer, stands another village, several of whose inhabitants have already been baptized by my father, while the others are living in a state bordering on heathenism.

Encouraged by his findings, Le Brun rented a house at Nouvelle Découverte for three dollars a month and agreed to send Ramiadana and his wife there.

The day was then fixed upon to their great joy when they should possess their “dear teacher,” as they already call Ramiadana. On the appointed day, many of them came

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<sup>39</sup> J. Le Brun to Revd. Messrs. Freeman & Tidman, Port Louis, 15 August 1844, LMS ILMAU 3 3 A, 2 (imminently useful); J. Le Brun to J. J. Freeman, Port Louis, 1 July 1846, LMS ILMAU 3 3 C, 3 (Ramiadana’s marriage).

with carts and donkeys to fetch their teacher and his wife with their luggage, and took them away with hearts filled with triumphant joy. The work then, I am happy to report, is going on nicely. Every Sunday about 60 or 70 people meet together for public worship from the several places mentioned above. Several adults & some children learn to read, but all are instructed by means of Catechisms in the first principles of our blessed Religion. I occasionally visit them and have baptized from 20 to 30 persons. May they be baptized from on high.<sup>40</sup>

The LMS's preaching and literacy work at Nouvelle Découverte flourished as a bilingual effort supported by both those born in Madagascar and on Mauritius. "The ground and wood" for a chapel "were given by Mr. & Mrs. Thomy (ex-apprentices), whilst the other members of the congregation, besides subscribing for nails, locks, hinges &c &c the sum of £1.10s, they have directed three days in the week to the erection of the Chapel, the three others being employed in the cultivation of their own gardens." Mrs. Thomy, we know from another source, was "a young creole woman." The Malagasy identity of the villages and the chapel at Nouvelle Découverte existed together with an emerging youthful population born on the island and also identifying as creole. Some of these young creoles, like the Thomys, were key to construction of both chapel and vernacular community. And like the Thomys, some ex-apprentices born on Mauritius were retaining their creole names, yet embracing teachers and evangelists from Madagascar whose primary language of competence, and whose names, were Malagasy. Both first and second generation Malagasy immigrants to Mauritius in the post-emancipation period cultivated Malagasy identities, in addition to sharing the Malagasy tongue. At the same time they all sought greater competence in spoken and written French, and, at least for some, literate competence in Malagasy. Vernacularization in post-emancipation Mauritius was solidly imbricated in créolité, and Malagasy identity became part of the heterogeneous creole-cultural landscape. When not so long after the chapel at Nouvelle Découverte was completed (early in 1849) Ramiadana "died by a disease of the lungs," David Johns Andrianado, once an aide de camp of the Ambaniandro (or Hova) governor of Diego Suarez, in Madagascar, was appointed in

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<sup>40</sup> All quotations in this and the preceding paragraph are from J. J. Le Brun to Revd. Arthur Tidman, Moka, 7 December 1847, LMS ILMAU 3 3 D, 5.

his stead. Neither Ramiadana nor Andrianado were particularly competent in either English or French, though both had studied the two languages.<sup>41</sup>

The responsibilities of the Malagasy refugee evangelists stretched well beyond preaching on Sundays and the provision of literacy education in Malagasy and French. “The people require to be constantly visited, and taught from house to house,” reported J. J. Freeman during his visit in 1850 of the frequent and familiar contact between refugee teachers and ex-apprentice householders of Mauritius.

They must be met in their several districts, where prayer meetings are held, (4 in each week, besides the services on 2 evenings at the chapel) and where Divine truth is communicated in a more simple & conversational form, adapted to the state of their intelligence, as they become personally and individually known to the Pastor.

The “simple and conversational form” of these meetings transpired mostly in the native tongue of the refugees and their parishioners. In one of his vernacular letters, refugee Simeon Andrianomanana described the laborious work of teaching and evangelizing among the Malagasy of Mauritius, requesting financial help from the LMS in keeping his household in order during busy times

There are very many who want to learn here in Mauritius today [he wrote in his native Malagasy] and there are not enough materials to teach them. On one day we go to some and on another day we go to others, alternating like this in teaching them all. They want us to come into their houses because they each have their work and they are not very free and then they have housework. When we arrive they set aside what they are doing. That is what those we teach are like, and for this reason there is not enough time, so you are informed of this sir so that you hear what it is like here in Mauritius. And if it is acceptable to you sir, I would like to have a servant live with me to help me with things in the house. His salary would be about 3 dollars every month.

Misy maro maro hiany izay tia mianatra aty Mauritius ankehitrany izao...ka dia tsiampy aza izay hampianarana azy satria fa amy ny andro iray miankany amy sasany ary amy ny andro iray izay mahazo dia hankany amy ny sasany indray ka dia mifandimby toy izany no atao amy ny fampianarana azy rehetra fa any antranony isany izy rehetra no hatenina fa samy manana ny raharahany avokoa izy ka tsiafaka loatra sady manao ny raharahany any antranony ka nony avy aho hampianatra dia avelany angaloha ny raharahany izay ataony ahy toy izany no toetrany izy izay mianatra ka dia izany notsimahampy ny andro ka dia lazaina amy nareo tompo ko lahy mba ho renareo ny toetrany aty Mauritius ka raha tia nareo tompo ko lahy mba hahazo panompo anankiray hiaramitoetra amy ko mba hanampy ahy amy ny raharaha ko ao antrano ko tokony tree 3 dollars no tamby ny every month.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> John Joseph Le Brun to LMS Directors, Moka, 29 December 1848, LMS ILMAU 3 4 B, 2 (ground and wood); J. Le Brun to LMS Directors, Moka, 5 November 1848, LMS ILMAU 3 4 B, 3–4 (young creole woman); J. Le Brun to Rev. A. Tidman, Port Louis, 26 April 1849, LMS ILMAU 4 1 A, 1–2 (died by a disease).

<sup>42</sup> Simeon Andrianomanana to J. J. Freeman, Port Louis, 4 September 1850, LMS ILMAU 4 1 A, 2; J. J. Freeman to Revd. Dr. Tidman, Colombo, Ceylon, 11 October 1850, LMS AO 2 5 C, 3 (the people require).

## Reading the Vernacular Word

Among the instructional materials distributed by itinerant evangelists were sacred works and scriptures in the Malagasy language, most of them printed in London from editions previously issued by the LMS press in Antananarivo. “Eight cases of Malagasy Testaments were sent out by the Bible Society in June last,” reported the Mauritius missionaries in 1837. Nearly a decade later, in 1846, the LMS mission in Mauritius had “a good supply of Madagassy Books” on hand, excepting hymn books, which had been destroyed by termites. A number of Malagasy language books arrived at Mauritius in late 1848 and were mostly distributed there, while some were sent on to the Christians of Madagascar. The arriving books included 330 Copies of J. J. Freeman’s tract on the resurrection of Christ entitled *Ny amy ny Hitsanganany ny Maty*, but also a number of other Malagasy language works such as those in the following list drawn up by Le Brun, senior:

N. Testaments	1,110
Ps	1,894
Gen & Prov	527
Lev & Acts	580
Spelling Books	4,678
Pilgrim Progress	536
Ressusion [sic]	57

“What we are most in need of,” concluded Le Brun, “is Malagasy Hymn Books & Bibles.” Hymn books were dispatched later that year (1848), including the fifth edition of the LMS’s Malagasy language hymnal published by the Religious Tract Society in London. When J. J. Freeman visited Mauritius in 1850, he reported that about two-thirds of the Malagasy books had been distributed. Some of these vernacular works departed the island with Malagasy sailors who staffed boats plying the western Indian Ocean trade. David Ratsarahomba explains

I have frequently seen those who have studied and come on Sunday to the Malagasy congregation, the young men, go and work on the boats. Sometimes there are seven, sometimes eight, three, or four who go, and they bring the sacred scriptures along with them. They have been baptized, and they ask for prayer for themselves before they leave.

izaho efa nahita matetikia ny olona izay efa nianatra sy mandeha amy ny Alahady, amy ny fiangonany Malagasy, ny lehilahy tanora, mandeha miasa amy ny sambo, indray indray misy 7, misy 8, 3, 4, no mandeha, ka mitondra ny soratra Masina miaraka amy ny izy. Ary efa natao Batisa izy, ary mangataka fivavahana izy amy ny rehetra, vao mandeha.

Along with Malagasy speaking sailors, the vernacular sacred scriptures of Madagascar traveled the eastern seas. The renaissance of Malagasy letters was not restricted to Mauritius alone.<sup>43</sup>

In their evening adult classes and home visitations on Mauritius, meanwhile, David Ratsarahomba, Mary Rafaravavy, and their refugee colleagues were involved in teaching Malagasy to read their native language. Among the vernacular books at Mauritius, it was the Malagasy “Spelling Book” or primer which circulated with the greatest frequency. “Yesterday I was asked by a woman to teach her to read her Testament and Psalms and her alphabet (abd),” wrote Ratsarahomba in his mother tongue in September 1848 using the letters designating the Malagasy alphabet (which has no c), “for she had received a testament.” When Ratsarahomba met the woman, she recounted to him how a Catholic priest had recently asked to borrow her testament and returned it to her saying “please give the book to me for it is very good (*aoka hoanay ity bokinao ity fa tsara indrindra*)” and begged of her also a Malagasy dictionary to use on his upcoming visit to the Big Island.<sup>44</sup>

One of the dilemmas facing the LMS in Mauritius was whether to charge for the sacred books in the Malagasy tongue it distributed among ex-apprentices. The directors sought the advice of David Ratsarahomba on this matter. “Here is my opinion, Sir,” he answered

I think that the Malagasy hymn books can be sold as they were in Madagascar [mostly exchanged for cash, but given to the very poor for free], and there are many people here in Mauritius who would like to purchase the hymn book to help the Society, but they must all be sold to evangelize everyone. You can write the names of the people who sell them and **then [they can] give you an account for it**. For it is not just those in the Malagasy congregation who assemble every Sunday, but there are many men who go to work on the ships when they know how [and who would like to purchase a copy from a small merchant, not in the church].

Ny Fihirana Malagasy raha tahakiny hevitra azo amidy tahakiny manaovanareo azy tany Madagascar, koa ny olona ato Morosy hiany fa maro hiany ny olona no tia hivity mba hanampy ny Society, ka nefa tsy maitsy amidy avokoa mba hitory izy rehetra fa tsy misy hangarana ka dia azo nao soratana ny anarany olona izay hivarotra azy **then give you an account for it**. Fa satria tsy ny ao amy ny trano fiangonany Malagasy hiany izay miangona isanala Alahady, fa maro hiany ny lehilahy mandeha miasa amy ny Sambo rehefa mahay izy.

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<sup>43</sup> David Ratsarahomba to J. J. Freeman, Port Louis, 10 June 1847, LMS AO 2 3 A, 3–4 (block quotation); David Johns to Theo. Wilson Esqr., Port Louis, 25 November 1837, LMS ILMAU 2 2 D, 3 (8 cases); J. Le Brun to Revd. A. Tidman, Port Louis, 18 October 1846, LMS ILMAU 3 3 C, 2 (a good supply), and 3; J. Le Brun to J. J. Freeman, Port Louis, 3 October 1848, LMS ILMAU 3 4 B, 1 (list of books); J. J. Freeman, Notebook from deputation visit to South Africa and Mauritius, c. 1850, LMS AO 2 (loose, not in a folder), not paginated (data showing two-thirds of the books had been distributed).

<sup>44</sup> David Ratsarahomba to Unknown (probably J. J. Freeman), Port Louis, 23 September 1848, LMS ILMAU 3 4 B, 3.

Ratsarahomba also reported that parishioners often requested spelling books in the Malagasy language, enabling them and perhaps their children to commence reading sacred literature in their mother tongue: “And the people often ask spelling books and so,” he explained in halting English, “to be in their houses that their companions may come in good number if they see they...have book[s] to learn and so forth.” Vincent Ryan, Anglican Bishop of Mauritius, described visiting residents of “Malegache extraction” in the Morne Brabant region of southwest Mauritius in December 1855. The “Malagasy Christians” of the area, he wrote, were “very earnest for Malegache books and for a catechist to come regularly every Sunday.” As in highland Madagascar, Malagasy at the Mascarenes hoped to create and affirm social networks and new identities through knowledge of vernacular letters. Spelling books and primers came to mark out the contours of Malagasy identity in the domestic spaces of post-emancipation Mauritius.<sup>45</sup>

Former Madagascar missionaries in Britain raised money for printing Malagasy language books in London to be forwarded on to Mauritius, especially “spelling books” (primers) and translated copies of Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, which they proofread in the production process. When in early 1849 they learned that such works of vernacular sacred literature would be arriving in Mauritius, David Ratsarahomba and his wife expressed their pleasure to J. J. Freeman, then Foreign Secretary of the LMS

We are exceedingly happy to hear about the printing of the *Pilgrim’s Progress* and the spelling book, but especially about the hymn book, for there are very few [Malagasy hymn books] here among us and they are torn: and as for selling them we will do according to your word and I will pay attention to those who are particularly poor and cannot afford to purchase them and will give them copies for free, just as you gave them testaments according to your discernment and not merely through purchase [at some time past]. So may God bless you and also those who are having these works printed for the poor.

Ary izahay dia faly indrindra amy ny fandrenesana ny fanaovana ny *Pilgrim’s progress* sy ny Abd. Indrindra fa ny Fihirana, fa satria vitsindrindra sady efa rovitra ny aty amy nay: ary ny amy ny fivarotana azy dia hatao ko izahay kio arakiny teny sy hotandremako izay malahelo tokoa ka tsy mahazo mividy mba hahazo maimaimpoana, taha kiny nanomeza nareo azy ny filazantsara azy ny tamy ny fiantra nareo fa tsy tamy ny fividiany: Ka dia ho tahin’Andriamanitra anie hianareo arey sy izay mampanao azy ho any ny malahelo.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 4 (block quotation), 5 (and the people); Vincent William Ryan, *Mauritius and Madagascar: Journals of an Eight Years’ Residence* (London: Seeley Jackson and Halliday, 1864), 28 (extracton), 29 (earnest).

<sup>46</sup> J. J. Freeman to David Ratsarahomba, aboard the ship “Lady Flora” close to Deal, England, 30 November 1848, LMS AO 2 3 A, 2–3 (raising money); David Ratsarahomba mivady to J. J. Freeman, Port Louis, 26 March 1849, LMS AO 2 3 B, 2 (block quotation).

All of the above mentioned books circulated by the LMS in Mauritius were printed in the tongue of highland Madagascar. Colportage of vernacular books spread them about the Malagasy communities of the island. Anglican Bishop Ryan, for example, reported encountering “a Malegache employed in selling Bibles” in the eastern part of Mauritius as late as 1861. But other books circulated in the French language, complementing the multilingual nature of the Society’s work. In 1850, Le Brun senior informed J. J. Freeman that “I gave to my son Peter [Pierre] a catechism & an alphabet in French to be printed either at the Cape or England. They are much in want for the people are now learning to read in great number & with great progress both young and Old.” But it is the Malagasy vernacular printed materials – not the French – which are most frequently mentioned in the Protestant archive. “The Christians both of Mauritius & Madagascar are very anxious to receive Bibles in the Madagassy language,” wrote the creole-speaking Le Brun two years later.

If the Directors could send here 50 Bibles we might send half of them to Madagascar. As for N.T. we have a large supply, as well as other Religious books & spelling books. As I was writing, David Johns & Simeon both [refugee] Evangelists called on me, & having mentioned what I was requesting from the Directors about the Madagassy Bibles, they told me, that they had given a list to our late consulted brother Freeman for 150 Bibles in Madagassy Language & had agreed to pay 2 s. for each copy.

Bishop Ryan described one Sarradié [probably Tsaradia, “Good Path”] of Vacoas who had long worked for the Anglican mission and was described as “a Malegache, who had been a soldier in Madagascar, and is now a soldier of Christ,” apparently a refugee rather than an ex-slave. Sarradié spoke the island creole, but he could not read French. For personal edification he studied a Malagasy language bible procured from the LMS. He habitually carried a French bible with him, however, and when speaking in the island creole with those who could read French, Ryan reported, “he gives them a French Bible, and then [mentions] the text he wishes them to read from the Malegache Testament.”<sup>47</sup>

Vernacular preaching, reading, and writing within the polyglot Malagasy Protestant communities of Mauritius remained a preoccupation into the middle decades of the century.

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<sup>47</sup> J. Le Brun to J. J. Freeman, Port Louis, 12 February 1850, LMS ILMAU 4 1 A, 4 (French alphabet and catechism); J. Le Brun to Revd. Dr. Tidman, Port Louis, 6 October 1852, LMS ILMAU 4 1 A, 1 (block quotation); Ryan, *Mauritius and Madagascar*, 22 (soldier), 82 (French and Malagasy bibles), 164 (selling bibles).

When the LMS's Foreign Secretary and former Madagascar missionary J. J. Freeman visited Mauritius in 1850 he reported that

A good work is going forward here among the natives of Madagascar; among those who have arrived within the last few years, since the persecution [of Christians at Imerina] commenced & those who were originally imported as Slaves. I found myself able to preach to them without any difficulty *in their own language* & the congregations are excellent & encouraging, say 250 here in Town. At Moka where I spent last Sunday I had 130 in the Mission & nearly 100 in the countryside at an outstation 7 miles distant, [called] "Nouvelle Decouverte."

After Freeman's departure the Malagasy Christians of Moka wrote to the LMS directors in London praising the visit. They noted that Freeman "exhorted people to learn to read the Sacred Scriptures, and distributed spectacles among the *old people* who were desirous of learning to read the word which maketh happy (*nitory tamy ny olona mba hianatra hamakitsara ny soratra masina. Ary dia nizara ny solomaso koa ny olonantitra izay tia mianatra ny teny mahafaly*)." While children typically learned to read French, Malagasy bibles were favored among Adults.<sup>48</sup>

In April 1855 Simeon Andrianomanana wrote to former LMS handyman James Cameron in Cape Town about the continuing work of evangelization and literacy among Malagasy communities in Mauritius. "I continue to teach those who want to learn to read in Malagasy or French," he explained

and I teach the catechism every day in the morning before breakfast in my house. And after I have eaten in the morning I teach from house to house among those who want to learn Malagasy or Creole, and in the evening I talk about the word of God again in my house. And every week I travel to Port Louis, to the house of Rev. Mr. Le Brun to teach the ways of worship (praying) to those I can, who request it. And on Monday and Thursday and on Saturday in the evening those of us here at Mekan [Moka] assemble to hear from Mr. Peter Le Brun the reasons for our belief in God, from the sacred

Dia mampianatra izay tia mianatra Malagasy na Francais amy ny famakia teny sy manaolo catechisme amy ny isanandro amy ny maraina alohany fisakafoana mampianantra ao antrano aho ary rehefa mihinana amy ny maraina mandeha mampianantra mitety trano amy ny izay rehetra tiamianatra ny Malagasy na greoly ary amy ny hariva indray miresaka ny teny ny Andriamanitra ao antranoko ary amy ny isa kery nandro mankany Port Louis hianantra ny fombany ny fivavahana amy ny izay mety hatao amy ny fangatahana manaraky ny teny ny Andriamanitra amy ny Rev. Mr. Le Brun ary amy

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<sup>48</sup> J. J. Freeman to Revd. Dr. Tidman, Port Louis, 20 August 1850, LMS AO 2 5 B, 2 (emphasis added); The Malagasy Christians of Moka to the Directors of the London Missionary Society, Moka Johnstown [Mauritius], 19 September 1850, LMS ILM 5 3 C, 1, emphasis added. The second of these letters was signed by nearly one hundred families forming the Malagasy congregations of Moka and Nouvelle Découverte. I quote from a slightly modified version of the English translation in the archive that accompanied the Malagasy original.

scriptures. And all those times that I go visiting, I meet with friends I know in our assemblies here in Mauritius. I take fifteen days to visit our friends in their various residences like Larimitazy [L'Hérmitage], Lariviera [Petite Rivière], Covera [Nouvelle Découverte], and Mentain Long [Montagne Longue], i Biby [Biby in the Pailles valley], those are the names of some of the residences I go to from time to time.

ny Alatsineiny sy Alakamisy sy aminy Asambotsy amy ny hariva izahay izay ety mekan manao fiagonana hilazany Rev Mr. Petar Le Brun ny amy ny Antony ny finoana ny Andria amy ny soratra masina ary amy ny fitoana rehetra amy ny izay alehako dia mamangy ny sakaiza izay fantatro amy ny fiangonantsikia izay aty Mauritius ary isany 15 dimy ambinifolo Andro izaho mandeha mamangy ny sakaiza amy ny fitoerana hafa itoro Larimitazy, Lariviera, Covera ary Mentain Long, i Biby izany no nanarany ny fitoerana hafa izay anlehako amy ny andro sasany.

One of the interesting features of this passage about itinerant evangelism among Malagasy speaking congregations is its use of Malagasy-ized (i.e. euphonicly Malagasy) terms for the French place names of Mauritius, demonstrating how Malagasy speakers of the mid-nineteenth century espied the creole island through their native tongue, pushing and pulling at the French language to fit it to Malagasy sensibilities as well as phonetics.<sup>49</sup>

Whether born in Madagascar or in Mauritius of Malagasy parentage, many ex-slaves in the decades following emancipation structured their socialization, residence, language use, religious affiliation, and cultural practices with respect to revived Big Island origins. Books in the Malagasy tongue distributed by refugees and displayed prominently in homes or carried aboard sailing vessels came to symbolize renewed personal choices for Big Island identification. Vernacular volumes in Queen Ranavalona's speech variety were commoditized symbols of affiliation with the Malagasy renaissance of the island and emblematic of the newfound freedoms that allowed ex-slaves to pursue the practices of Protestant literacy. Each of these inclinations were powerful statements for ex-slaves in post-emancipation Mauritius, and they dovetailed with British imperialism in the island with its support for Protestant missionaries and bible reading in a standardized language. The Indian Ocean's vernacular imperialism was marked as much by the actions of ex-slaves as it was by those of Christian missionaries.

## Names and Identities

An uncommonly revealing list of nearly one hundred names of active parishioners of the Malagasy congregation (*fiagonana amy ny Malagasy*) at Moka and its outstations appended

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<sup>49</sup> Simon Andrianomanana to James Cameron, Mekan [Mauritius], 25 April 1855, ACCL SC SGGL GMS 91, 50–51.

to a vernacular language letter addressed to the directors of the LMS in September 1850 bears evidence of the diversity of individuals who elected Malagasy affiliation through reading and confession after 1839. The “signatories” (the names are listed in a single hand, they are not signatures) were probably all Malagasy speakers, including the children, although some were undoubtedly more fluent in the tongue of the Big Island than others. Names are listed by family under the head of household, usually a man but in some cases a woman, with accompanying number of children indicated, or as individuals in the case of single persons. The names are of great variety, suggesting a multiplicity of experiences and regional origins among the self-identifying Malagasy Christians of Mauritius.<sup>50</sup>

Many of the names appear entirely in Malagasy. From their diversity, one can assume that parishioners derived from different regions of the Big Island. The purely Malagasy names are all given ones, not surnames, a pattern consistent with naming practices in Madagascar. A sample of these (with the originals to the right and my translations to the left) includes:

Radalo, wife and 4 children	Radalo mivady sy ny zan 4
Voangy and wife	Voangy mivady
Botomena	Botomena
Rasorangy, wife and 1 child	Rasorangy mivady zana 1
Old Tsiamba	Rangahy Tsiamba
Rakoto, wife and 3 children	Rakoto mivady sy zana 3
Andrianjafy	Andrianjafy
Andrianaina, wife and 11 children	Andrianaina mivady zana 11
Ramasy, wife and 4 children	Ramasy mivady zanany 4
Ikena, wife and 6 children	Ikena mivady zanany 6
Fanandaza, wife and 4 children	Fanandaza mivady zana 4
Razaby and 3 children	Razaby sy zanany 3
Lolo, wife and 3 children	Lolo mivady zana 3
Isamata Tamatave	Isamata Tamatave

**Figure 6.2 Here**

A variation on the Malagasy names are those mixed with European elements of some sort, including either surnames or given ones. In some cases, the European portion of the name has been modified in spelling to conform euphonicly with Malagasy pronunciation (observe the original, untranslated names in the right column; see also Figure 6.3).

<sup>50</sup> The letter in question: The Malagasy Christians of Moka to the Directors of the London Missionary Society, Moka Johnstown [Mauritius], 19 September 1850, LMS ILM 5 3 C.

David Johns Andrianado, wife and 1 child	D.J. Andrianado mivady sy za 1
Old Félix	Rangahy Felisy
Lahi-Désiré and wife	Laydizire mivady
Sarana Le Gros and wife	Sarana Le Gros mivady
Pierre Rabodo and wife	Piera Rabodo mivady
Zaka Désiré, wife and 1 child	Zakadizire mivady za 1
Denise Tarimona	Donisy Tarimona
Old Paul and wife	Rangahy Paoly mivady

The list contains also a subset of names of purely European (mainly French) origin modified in spelling to create a version easier on the Malagasy tongue. These Malagasy-ized

European names include the following:

Gustave, wife and 3 children	Gisitavy mivady sy zana 3
Françoise woman, and 4 children	Faraintsoejy vavy zanany 4
Nelson, wife and 5 children	Nalison mivady zana 5
Victor and wife	Vikitoro mivady
Alexander, wife and 10 children	Alikiasandrina mivady za 10
Mr. Tom and wife	M. Taomy mivady
Sylvain and wife	Solovaina mivady
Mr. Jacques	Mr. Jaka
François, wife and 3 children	Frantsojy mivady zan 3
Francis, wife and 2 children	Frantsisy mivady za 2

Another group of names are of biblical origin:

Samuel, wife and 4 children	Samoela mivady zan 4
Jacob	Jakoba
Peter and wife	Pitara mivady
Elias, wife and 5 children	Elisy mivady zana 5

The list also incorporates a few French names spelled as they typically are in standard French.

These include:

Pierre and 4 children	Pierre sy zanany 4
Justin and wife	Justin mivady
Madame Tasé and 8 children	Madam Tase, zanany 8
Mahé, wife and 6 children	Mahe mivady zanany 6

Another set of European forenames were associated with the servile history of the island and were probably given by erstwhile masters. First names in this category, most of which were modified in spelling to approximate Malagasy pronunciation, include

La Fortune and wife	Lafarotine mivady
Frontin and 3 children	Frontin zanany 3
Jolicoeur, wife and 5 children	Jolikera mivady zanany 5
Zephyr	Zefira
Izidore, wife and child	Ijidaro mivady sy zana
Lindor, wife and 2 children	Lindora mivady zana 2

Names of this sort are known to have been widely employed in the Mascarenes and elsewhere in the French empire as slave names. Mauritian censuses of the mid-1820s, for example, list French names exclusively for Malagasy bondmen and women. A minority of ex-slaves who signed the letter of 1850 chose to retain these often stereotypical names in freedom for their own reasons. Most of the ex-slave “signatories” had probably shed similar appellations for the wide variety of names actually displayed in the list, identities they likely retained during their enslavement and employed with family, friends, and other Malagasy. After emancipation, they were free to employ their Malagasy names publicly.<sup>51</sup>

A final group of names seem neither of Malagasy nor of European origin. It may be that some individuals who were not of Malagasy parentage had chosen to become part of the Malagasy Protestant communities of Moka, or perhaps some Malagasy speaking parishioners bore the names of their non-Malagasy fathers. The names in question are all those of married males. It is also possible that while men bearing these names were not themselves of Malagasy origin, their wives were.

Barakabaraka and wife  
Mesily and wife

Barakabaraka mivady  
Mesily mivady

This fascinating parade of names appended to a letter despatched overseas, together with details of the Malagasy renaissance offered up in this chapter, present fresh challenges to cultural histories of the Mascarenes. Mirroring the broad assortment of names, the persons who bore them hailed from diverse personal trajectories and cultural backgrounds. Yet all associated themselves with the Malagasy identifying Protestant communities of post-emancipation Mauritius. At the same time, the blending of Malagasy and European forms of naming manifested in many of the signatures implies that creolization-as-mixing was indeed among the cultural forces that influenced ex-slaves’ lives in Mauritius. That certain individuals bore European or mixed names did not, however, prevent them from associating with those who retained Malagasy ones, or participating in a renewal of Malagasy language and identity. The island’s creoles often threw their lot in with – even became leaders of – congregations and communities at the center of the renaissance of Malagasy identity. Certain colony born persons

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<sup>51</sup> Armstrong, “Analyzing ‘Malagasy’ Slave Names,” esp. 192–194.

sought to enhance their colonial status by identifying with an old country and promoting its language.

This chapter has explored a resurgence of Malagasy identity at the end of slavery among both the Madagascar and the Mauritius born, one closely associated with vernacular letters and Protestant evangelism, and tied in fundamental ways to political developments in neighboring Madagascar and British free-labor imperialism. The self-identifying Malagasy of mid-nineteenth century Mauritius were far from uniform in their origins and experience, and they were ecumenical in their cultural tastes. The important point is that they *had* and *exercised* choices about affiliation and language use more than a century after many Indian Ocean creolists have claimed that the Malagasy language disappeared from the islands. How they applied the options before them was structured by their predilections, difficult economic circumstances, and the range of choices they encountered. As in earlier periods, the type of cultural mixing associated with creolization-as-hybridity and represented in both blended names and competence in the French creole tongue was not incompatible with the retention, even promotion, of Malagasy language and self-identification. The same Protestant evangelical mission that brought vernacular literacy in the tongue of Madagascar to the island, for example, also taught standard French and the French creole to children in its schools. Even the preponderance of men in the foreign-born population of pre- and post-emancipation Mauritius did not presage a speedy loss of mother tongue or an end to Big Island cultural affiliations, as is often assumed. Madagascar's tongue faded away only after the sex ratio among ex-apprentices had evened out after 1850.

It was in the creole island of Mauritius, then, that an affiliation with Madagascar and proto-Malagasy nationalism among persons of a range of Malagasy ethnicities found its strongest development. The renaissance in Malagasy identity emerged out of *créolité* and had among its ranks many Mauritius-born creoles. In the Mascarene colonies, where *Malgache* were lumped together as a particular subaltern category by their masters, persons born on and identifying with the Big Island formed a new – we might even say creolized because of its many contributing elements – Malagasy identity of larger scale than they or their forebears had espoused in Madagascar. Challenging our notions about an early and mostly unilinear

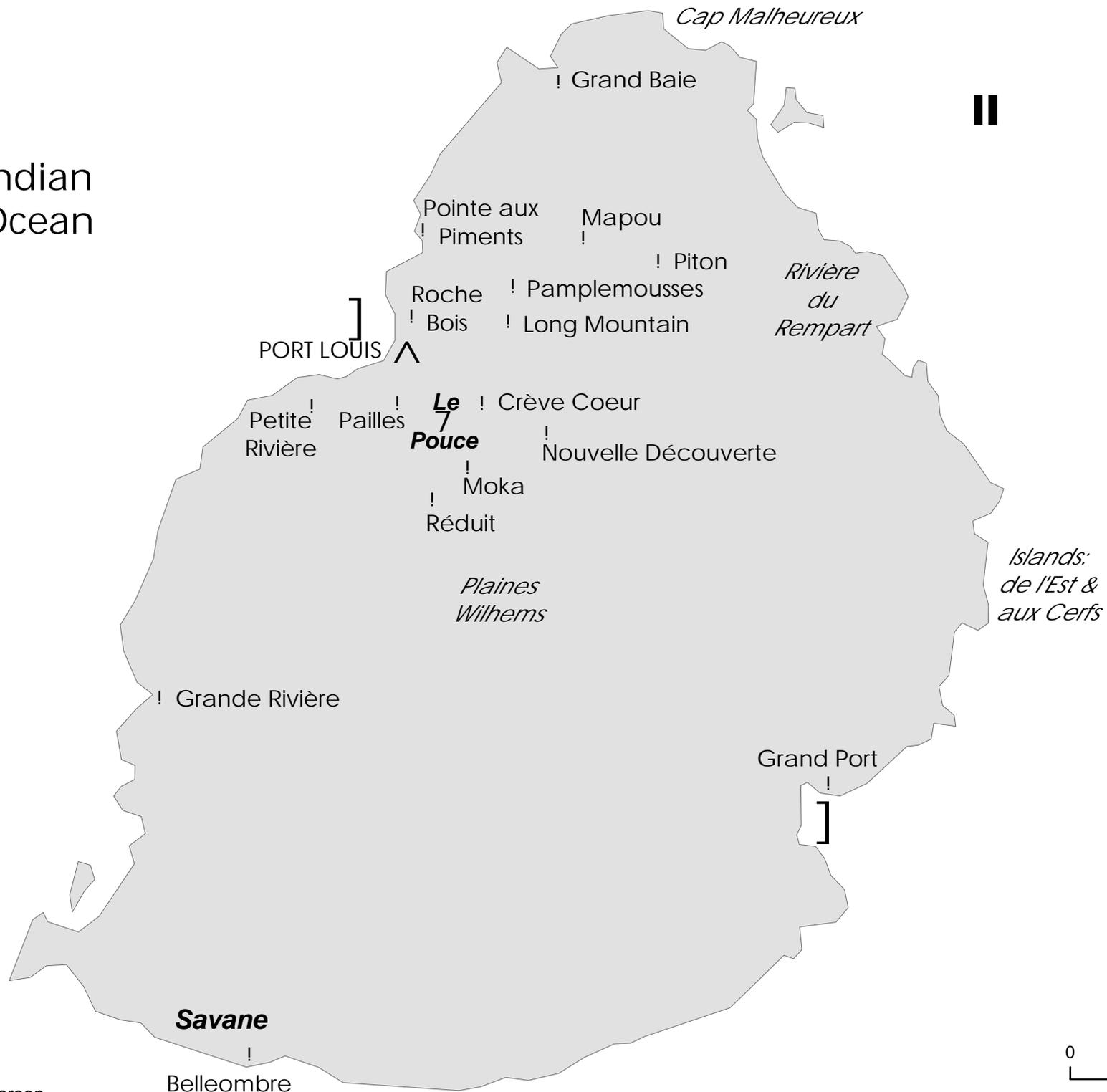
development of Francophone creole identification to the detriment of old country affiliations, the making of an inchoate Malagasy national identity in post-emancipation Mauritius was completely entangled in creolization and the creole communities of the island. Indeed, it is convincing to see the renaissance of Malagasy identity as a manifestation of Mauritian créolité itself. Conceptualized in this way, the twinned processes of creolization and vernacular distinction in post-emancipation Mauritius produced, as they had in earlier times, a colonial landscape of linguistic and cultural diversity.

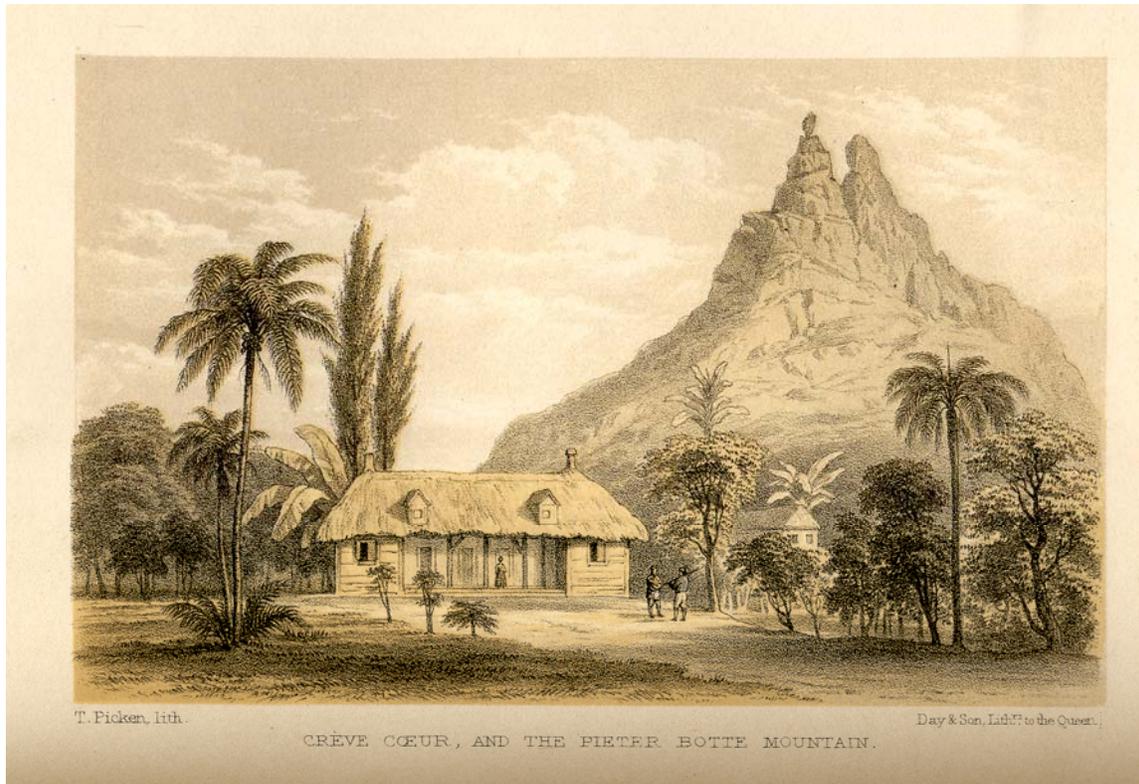
The imagining of a proto-Malagasy nation at Mauritius conforms in some ways to the predictions of Benedict Anderson about the impact of “the revolutionary vernacularizing thrust of capitalism” on the consciousness of a language community through vernacular print-literacy, modern education, and oceanic travel. What Anderson did not envision was that the revolution might emerge in such a counterintuitive fashion from within an ex-slave community buffeted by the sometimes cross-blowing, sometimes reinforcing, forces of creolization-as-mixing and cultural distinction. On the other hand, some persons from the Malagasy villages and those who chose not to join Protestant settlements of old-country language and ethnicity were living lives more difficult for scholars to access and no doubt exercising other choices about affiliation. A subset of these latter individuals were associating with the emergent Catholic and Anglican missions targeting Mauritius’s ex-slaves from about 1840 (the *Missions des noirs*). It was choices such as these latter ones, moving Malagasy speakers away from linguistic-identity milieus emphasizing the Malagasy tongue and cultural background in post-1850 Mauritius, that began to erode Big Island identities in the Mascarenes and led to the eventual disappearance of Malagasy speech varieties in favor of the French creole in both home and street. It was not creolization-as-mixing in itself, then, that generated language loss, but rather confessional and affiliational choices exercised by ex-slaves in post-emancipation society.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991), quotation on 39.

Indian Ocean





**Figure 6.1:** Anglican School for Ex-Apprentices at Crève Coeur, Mauritius, c. 1860. This Protestant school was not affiliated with the London Missionary Society and was probably better built and funded than chapels for Malagasy ex-apprentices in the area, including at Crève Coeur itself. But its creole style and thatched roof were likely typical of chapels serving Malagasy ex-apprentices. Ryan, *Mauritius and Madagascar*, 1864.

Radalo. hivady syzana 1	Laforotine hivady
D. f. Andrianada hivady syzana 1	Danis
Gilitavy hivady syzana 3	tarimona
Sijary. hivady syzana 1	Mariskily
Fidoro hivady syzana 2	Ramazy. hivady zanany 4
Vikitoro	gusten hivady
Rangaby Felisy	jan loy
Batisy. hivady zanany 1	Ikena. hivady zanany 6
Forotine. syzanany 1	Pierabrabodo. hivady
Faraitsoefy. vavy zanany 4	gran Pipitaro. hivady
Vikitoro	f. Piora. hivady zana 1
Nalison. hivady zana 5	Lindi. hivady zana 2
Maryliandina. zanany 2	Laivary. hivady
Samoela. hivady zana 4	Nadon tate. zanany 8
Pierre. syzanany 4	Feradena. hivady
Poangy. hivady	Frontin. zanany 3
Batomena	Atikia. samirina. hivady za 10
Jaen. sijary	Paniry. hivady
Ramaro. jama	Ogis. syzanany 2
Jose. hivady zanany 3	Rangaby loy
Natorangy. hivady zana 1	Berne.
Rangaby. tsiamba	Franantaza. hivady zana 4
Paoto. hivady syzana 3	Jakoba
Peraniade. hivady	Zorosy. hivady zana 10
Amrianjafy	Mabe. hivady zanany 6
Aza. hivady zanany 2	Jolikera. hivady zanany 5
Lafnizire. hivady	Rangaby atisy. hivady
Andriamaina. hivady zana 11	Petara. hivady
Lafilera	Laforotine. hivady
Vikitoro. hivady	Solovaina. hivady
Laivary	Rangaby Paoly. hivady
Jaen loy. hivady	Azania
Sarana le Gros. hivady	Razaby. syzanany 3
Sarilo. hivady zanany 5	

**Figure 6.2:** The first of two pages of names from a letter dated 19 September 1850 addressed by the Malagasy Christians of Moka, Mauritius, to the Directors of the London Missionary Society. In a single hand, the list on this page illustrates that the names of Malagasy identifying Christians in Mauritius were typically either Malagasy or euphonicly modified French names. LMS ILM 5 3 C.