Constructing history, culture and inequality: the Betsileo in the extreme Southern Highlands of Madagascar
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Chapter six

The Fate of the Andevo

Despite the strategy of Rafidy Andriana and Randriamahalasa to expel the andevo from Marovato, most of them continued to live in or within close proximity of the village. Those who did leave generally relocated either to the town of Ambalavao or to the socialist cooperative of Sahanala Zomandao. This chapter will describe the lives of the andevo who remained despite the attempted “eviction”, and examine their perceptions of events.

6.1 Andevo households

June 20, 1996. As I approach the hut of Velo and Zafindravola, located to the Northwest of the village centre, three girls are playing naked in front of the porch. Upon spotting me, the oldest of the three runs inside the house, followed in quick succession by her two sisters. Zafindravola emerges from the house, carrying a grass mat, which she lays out on the ground, motioning me to sit down.

Zafindravola: “My husband told me you would be coming. He is not here today. But I can speak to you. He also told me you wanted to know how we are. Things are difficult. When you were here before, we still had some land. My sister Tsara came here because she was looking for a husband. She did get a little boy, Iano, but the father did not want to marry her. He was not from this side of the village. You see, they like to have pleasure with us at night, but in the morning they ignore us. Tsara and Iano could no longer stay with us when Rafidy Andriana stopped leasing us his land. So she went to Ambalavao with her son. I hope that you can visit her. I have not heard from her since she left. She is a strong girl. I am sure she is doing fine there. Rafidy Andriana also wanted us to leave. But where would we go? You see,
we have migrated so often. I do not even remember anymore.”

SE: “How are the children? I only see your three daughters.”

Zafindravola: “Yes, they are the only ones left. Our youngest daughter and son died. We could not give them enough food. It all happened during the year after the land was taken from us. Suddenly, we had nothing. My husband asked Rafidy Andriana for work as a mpikarama. Have you seen? There are many of them now. But he refused. My husband asked each tompon-tany. Nobody wanted us. People do not like us. They say that we are olona maloto ... so I guess that is what we are.” Finally my husband asked Ravo. He only came to Marovato recently, but his wife is tompon-tany. We could both work for him. We do not get money, but some rice or manioc every day. That really helped us. But it was too late for my two children. I never got pregnant again.”

SE: “But, does Ravo give you enough to live on?”

Zafindravola: “That is just the problem. We begged him for a small piece of land. To cultivate some manioc for ourselves. Last year he said yes, but he got in trouble for that. Rafidy Andriana did not like it. He still wants us to leave. I am sure that he will be upset with you when he hears that you visit me. Please go. I will also go to help my husband in the field.”

Kazy and Vavy no longer live in Marovato. Kazy now dwells in Fenoarivo, a village located about two kilometres from Marovato. I visit her early in the morning, on July 2. She lives with her son Sambo, who has also moved away from Marovato. She comes out of her house to greet me, before I reach the door.

SE: “Good morning, how did you see me coming?”

Kazy: “That is easy. There are so many holes in the house. I do not have to go outside to see what is happening. Come in.”

SE: “Why did you leave Marovato?”

Kazy: “The tompon-tany just decided we could no longer cultivate their land. What will we live from? My daughter Vavy and her children were still with me then. I decided to move to Fenoarivo, with my son Sambo. He moved here just before me. He will be able to tell you all about it. He also arranged a husband for Vavy. Sambo is a good son. He always knows how to get money. That is how he got her a husband. People say that we are the bad people and olona maloto. Even people like us do not wish to marry their own kind. They are always trying to marry people with tombs. Vavy did not get somebody with a tomb. So why should he feel better than us? I think he did not really like Vavy. But when Sambo gave him some money, he was glad to marry her. She now lives with him; she took the children. It is far from here. I hope I will

miscarriages since leaving Marovato. She rents a little room near the market square. People say that she is a prostitute.

7 Try tse'ny olona izahay. La'any fa olona maloto izahay ... ka brensaka, fa izany tokoa izahay.

8 La'any fa olona razy sady olona maloto izahay. Maitika ny olona tahatsaka any Dio manmary ny hampiasan'ny olona olona manana fanana.
be able to visit them before I die.”

Kazy concludes the conversation with an extended monologue describing her physical ailments.

Ratsimbazafy and Lalao also live in Fenoarivo. Lalao had been accused of stealing *lamba* in the early part of the year. This may explain why my earlier attempts at renewing contact had met with evasive responses, cancellations and excuses. Finally, she and her husband agreed to my coming on August 17. As I approach their house, I am quite impressed by its appearance. It is tiny, but seems solid from the outside. However, upon entering, I realise that the outside is little more than a facade. I assume that work is still very much in progress, since sand and stones are strewn everywhere. Ratsimbazafy and Lalao are seated on the floor, surrounded by a bevy of young children. Both smile, Lalao’s mouth flashing an impressive line-up of golden teeth, whereas Ratsimbazafy’s grin reveals nothing more than a solitary eyetooth perched in the right front corner of his mouth.

SE: “There are so many of you. Who is living here now?”

Ratsimbazafy: “Yes, we are still many. But, I am very pleased that at least two of my daughters are now married. Zana, my third daughter, lives far away. But, surely you have seen Raozy in Marovato. She married a very important person there. Our other children still live with us. Only Francois is gone. I think he still lives in Ambalavao. Maybe you can give us some news when you see him. We also have six grandchildren now. They all live here with us. That is how it goes. Children still come even though my daughters are not yet married. I hope they soon will though. It is too crowded here.

Lalao: “And I also got another baby. We called him Folofeno. He is the tenth and that is enough.”

SE: “Why did you leave Marovato?”

Ratsimbazafy: “People treated us very badly there. You know how they treat people like us? When the *tompon-tany* took our land, it seemed better to come here. But we still have the house in Marovato and we will go back there one day. We had made some money when we left. We offered most of it to the *tompon-tany* of Fenoarivo and they were glad to accept us. You see, money makes everything possible. We may be the bad people but when money is involved they can live with us. We also live in the West here. But we do not care anymore. People are the same everywhere. We paid the *tompon-tany* so much that we even have some leased land. I think we do well.”

SE: “How were you able to make so much money?”

Lalao: “I was in the *lamba* business. I would buy them one place and then sell them somewhere else. I made a lot of money. But then the people of Marovato got jealous.

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9 For more information on Raozy, see *infra*.

10 Folofeno means full with ten.

11 *Tsy raha tena* ny olona izahay. Fantatrao *fomba aloana* ny hanaovany ny olona tabaka anaj?

12 Mety ho olona ratsy izahay nefa noney mizay ny vola dia fikafa mira-montina amingy thany ry zaveo.
and told people that I had stolen them. Which was not true. Sure, I took a few extra now and then. But I always paid more than they were worth anyway. You know Mademoiselle, if people treat me badly, why should I treat them differently? People think we are doing evil things. I think they are afraid of us. That is also why they wanted us to leave Marovato."

The remainder of our discussion will be referred to in chapter eight.

I arrive at the home of Maka and Poeta on July 3, in the pre-dawn, as they leave the village every day just before sunrise. Maka is outside when I arrive. He invites me in. I can hardly see anything when I step inside their hut, as Poeta is cooking food over an open fire. The hut is thick with smoke, but the emulsions seemingly have no effect on the parents, or their children, who are placidly seated in a row against the right wall, waiting for breakfast to be served.

SE: "I am pleased to be here. I haven’t seen you for a long time."

Maka: "We are pleased as well. We did not think that we would interest you. We are just the poor people... the olona maloto."

I am very surprised to see that Maka qualifies himself as "impure person".

SE: "Why do you say you are olona maloto?"

Maka: "You know that we are, everybody can tell you that. I will explain things to you some time later when there is more time."

I resist the urge to pursue this point, one of the very questions I wish answered.

SE: "How have you been doing since I last came?"

Maka: "Not so well. You must have heard that we were almost forced out of the village. Since Randriamahalasa came, things have become really bad. Everybody thinks he is a very generous man. Maybe, but not to us. From one day to the next, our land was taken. I am sure he was behind it. Everybody wants us out now. We still sleep here, but are gone by the time people get up. Then, we come back after they are asleep. Every day, we have to search for food. At harvest time, we mostly work for a tonfon-tany in Berono. When I can, I try to fish at the river. But I hardly catch anything."

Poeta continues: "You know, Mademoiselle, we did not have much to eat before. But now it is harder. I am not ashamed to say that I sometimes just take some manioc from somebody’s land. I cannot let my children die."

At hearing this, Maka shortly interrupts her: "Mademoiselle, we are very pleased that you came to visit us. But, unfortunately, we have to say goodbye now, we really have..."

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13 Fantatrao Mademoisely, ary beverikofa raha tsy miraharaha ahy ny olona, nahana movo no fomba hafa no ifandraisaka aminty?

14 Ty nohoeriny fa habakana anarro sy momba amzy. Izahy manatry olona mahantra... olona maloto.

15 Fantatrao ty za marina izahy, ny olona rehetra mety bo nilaza avao an'izany.

16 Berono is a village located approximately five kilometres from Marovato.
to leave."

He walks to the door and waves me to follow. I am disappointed but follow his instructions.

Tovo still resides in Western Marovato, although he has changed huts. To ensure I find my way, he comes to meet me at my hut early morning, March 28. Tovo is walking with great difficulty. He is wearing the same red shirt he had on his back in 1992, but it is faded and in tatters. He has lost all of his teeth, save the two front ones.

Tovo: "Good morning Mademoiselle. Are you coming?"

SE: "Yes, let us go. How are things with you?"

Tovo: "I live somewhere else now. In my hut, it would rain just as hard inside as out during the rainy season. That made me sick. So, when my neighbour left, I just took his. Do you know that I live very close to an important man now? Rafidy Andriana. In this part, many things are different now. He tried to get me out of Marovato altogether. My land was taken. It is very sad."

We arrive at another rundown hut. As we enter, I ask him: "But how then, are you making your living?"

Tovo: "That is what I asked myself when the land was gone. Do you know that Rafidy Andriana forbade all people like me to cross the sand path over there?"

He steps outside and points out to a sand path that separates the huts from Rafidy Andriana’s mansions.

Tovo continues: "I crossed it quite a bit though. In the middle of the night. I took food and other things I saw lying around. But one night, I got caught by one of his sons. I felt terrible and told him I had to eat. So, Rafidy Andriana proposed that I help one of his sons on his land. In return, I would get a little manioc every day. I work very hard. But you see, with my back, it is not always easy... I think Rafidy Andriana accepts me now. I think I can stay... as long as I do not cross the sand path again."

Tovo and I speak at length on other issues that will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Nirina and Soa no longer are together. Nirina has moved away from Marovato and now dwells in Ambalavao. He took the two children from the marriage with him. Soa is at riverside, washing her laundry. I set my own basket on the ground and take a place next to her.

SE: "How are you?"

Soa: "I am well... actually, not so well. My husband left me and took the two girls with him. At first, I refused and said I wanted to keep the youngest. She must have been only four months old. But he insisted. Just a few weeks ago, I heard that she died. I knew this would happen. She just had to be with me. After my husband left,"
I took care of a girl whose parents had both died. One after the other. It all went very quick. Nobody took care of her. And now, there is him..."

She nods towards an infant wrapped in a *lamba* strapped to her back.

SE: "How old is he?"

Soa: "About a month. I am not married anymore. So I can do what I want. You know there are many men from Marovato who like to make babies with us. They treat us badly during the daytime, but when the night falls, they look for us at riverside. In the night, they do not worry about becoming *maloto*. But they will never marry us. It is fear. But, I am very happy with my little boy. I know that many people speak bad about us. I do not care. I have him. Is that clear to you?"

She nods again at the baby, who has fallen asleep.

SE: Yes I think so. But what do you mean when you speak about us, who are they?"

Soa: "You know, the *olona maloto*. The *andevo*. That is what we are. Because we do not have tombs. We are the bad people. That is what we are. You know that we have to work for *andriana*, and because we are *andevo* we do not get paid. That is how things go with me as well. Until some years ago, we still had some land. That is over now. That is how the *tompon-tany* decided it. From one day to the next, all people in Western Marovato lost their land. There was no more food. I still have to work for Andriabe now and then. He never gives me anything. His wife gives me something now and then. I do not think he knows. I am just alone. To feed the children, I take anything ripe I see in the fields. When nobody is watching me. So, I am done now. You still have a lot of work to do. Maybe we can wash together again, some other time."

Bia still dwells in the same hut in Western Marovato. I meet her at the market in Ankaramena, eleven kilometres from Marovato. I am surprised to see her, as it is the first time I have come across an *andevo* at the Ankaramena market.

SE: "Good morning, how are you?"

Bia: "Good morning, *Makemavely*. I am fine and how are you?"

After a few ritual courtesies, I propose we walk back to Marovato together. She consents and after completing her purchases, we set off.

SE: "I didn't know that you went to the market."

Bia: "There are so many things that I have to tell you. You see, I am *andriana* again."
SE: “I thought you never stopped being one.”

Bia: “That is true. But nobody believed me. They called me andro. But now they do believe!”

Her tone and look are triumphant.

SE: “How did that happen?”

Bia: “The last years have been very hard on me. I have been sick. My son and daughter had to take care of me. But they got tired of being treated as andro. They just wanted to get married, which was impossible in Marovato. Back home they are used to being treated with respect. Here, they were regarded as all the other olona maloto. I sent them both back home. For a few months, I was all alone. I thought that I would join the ancestors soon. But then my second daughter, Raclarise, came with her three youngest children. Her husband had left her and she felt like spending some time with me. Then Raboba saw her, Rafidy Andriana’s son. You see, he made a baby with her. Rafidy Andriana was so angry. But you know Raboba. He does all the things his father does not like. He even invited Raclarise to live in his house. She went there about a month ago.”

SE: “But why do people think now that you are andriana?”

Bia: “That is what I do not understand either. I think that Rafidy Andriana got tired of fighting with his son. Raclarise told me one day that she had spoken to Rafidy Andriana. He told her that he learned we really do have a tomb in Ambositra and that we are from an important andriana family there. Afterwards, Raclarise made sure that everybody knew. She told many people. Now, I do the andriana things. I go to the market and speak to everybody I meet there. Now, I can walk around the whole village. I do this at least once a week. So people can see that I am olona madio. But what I really wanted to ask you about is my illness. You might know what it is.”

Bia explains the symptoms of her malaise in detail. I try to change the subject, but this turns out to be a lost cause.

6.2 Mixed couples

Rakoto and Voahangy. It is August 17, and I am walking back to Marovato from Fenoarivo, where I have just visited the parents of Voahangy who have taken up quarters there. Further up the road, approaching me, is a woman with a bundle on her head. As we near each other, I recognise Voahangy. Fresh blood from a wound just above her eye, is still trickling down her face. She is maintaining herself upright with great difficulty. At my insistence, she attempts to take a seat, and loses her footing nearly falling as she does so. She removes the bundle off her head. When she bends over I notice a baby tied to her back.

Voahangy: “This time I am not going back.”

21 Hitana fa rebasa mikarta an-kafy-tranoa izy ireo dia voahaja indray. Eto dia beverina bo tohy olona maloto rehetra izy ireo.

22 Ary manao ny zavatra andriana alo izao.
She removes a patch of cloth from the bundle and roughly dabs at the still unclotted blood.

SE: “What do you mean?”

Voahangy: “It is Rakoto. He treats me badly. He is with other women all the time but he is angry with me. I do not even know why. And if I ask him, he says that I should not complain and that I am just andevo. I go to my parents when he gets too angry. Sometimes I remember how nice he was in the beginning and go back. But then it starts all over again. It is because people speak about us. It is because I am just andevo.”

SE: “What do you mean, just andevo?”

Voahangy: “It must be clear to you. You know so much about us. You speak to us like you speak to the olona madio. But you know that we are different... I am not going back. But I feel bad for Pascaline, our daughter. I could not take her.”

SE: “But you did take the baby.”

Voahangy: “Yes, this is my baby! It happened when I was with my parents. Rakoto took another woman home again. I was sad, so I went to the river at night. I just made a baby with somebody else. Rakoto did not like that when he discovered it. He got angry again. I better go.”

SE: “Would you like me to walk with you?”

Voahangy panics at the thought of me accompanying her: “No, I want to go by myself. My parents will be angry with me.”

She picks up the bundle, puts it back on her head, and continues on her way.

Rakazy and Tsija live together in the same house where is last visited them in 1992. Tsija has given birth to two more children during my departure. When I visit them in the early morning on July 16, they and their four children are huddled around a nearly extinguished fire.

Rakazy: “Come in. How are you?”

SE: “Thank you I am fine and how are you?”

Rakazy: “Difficult. You must know about my conflict with Rafidy Andriana. You always know everything... That is very difficult. I promised Rafidy Andriana that I would send Tsija back home. She is not like us. But, I didn’t send her back. And now, there are more children. She wants to stay. What can I do? I do not know. Rafidy Andriana does not understand this. It is difficult that Rafidy Andriana is upset.

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23 Ary rehtoa amantao tsy dia lazany fa takavey fa hitarina satria andevo aho.

24 Fantatrao fa isany fa tsy izany.

25 Nanjy amary fan'izany fan'andalana fan'olona madio amin'izany tsy mila satria.
with me.”

SE: “What can you fear from him?”

Rakazy: “He says that I do not respect him. That is dangerous. You know about the *fanøjy gay.* I do not want to speak of this anymore. It is bad.”

Tsija: “It is also because my three brothers came to live with us. None has married yet. Rafaly is 19, Fara 20 and Patrick 21. They have no work and my family has no land. So they can work for my husband on his land.”

Rakazy: “That reminds me. We really have to go now and help them. The sun is already out for a long time.”

The conversation comes to an abrupt end, and they depart for the fields.

I also learn that Soja and Tina still live in Eastern Marovato. Soja is rarely home, while Tina cares for six children. On June 2, in the morning, I find Tina at her hut dressing the hair of one of the girls.

SE: “Good morning Tina. How are you.”

Tina: “I am fine but my children are not. They all have diarrhoea. It just does not stop.”

SE: “Maybe I can help you out. I have some “water” (dehydration remedy) that might help. Are all these children yours?”

Tina smiles. “No they are not. Three are my sister’s. She is not married and already has six other children. She cannot feed all of them. They came when my brother decided to come to Marovato. He wants to find work and a wife here. I told him that it would be difficult. But he would not listen. He came over a year ago. He has nothing so far. And no wife. For people like us, it is difficult to get married.” I am married now but I also had to wait for a long time. And even if we marry, we are treated badly. My husband is never there. I do not know where he goes. He just leaves me behind with the children. I can only feed them manioc. I cannot tell you how I get it. I am sorry.”

SE: “You do not need to tell me.”

Tina: “Because you know already. You know about people like us. Can I now get the water for the children? They feel so ill.”

SE: “Yes naturally. You need to make a fire though and cook some water very well. Then I will come with the medicine.”

Tina: “But I do not have water, nor wood to make a fire.”

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26 Rakazy expresses here the fear of poisoning and sorcery (cf. chapter eight).

27 *Ho an'ny olona tahaka anay dia sanitra ny malitra very.*
SE: “Come with me. I still have some wood.”

We spend the rest of the morning fetching water and making the fire.

I was unable to set up an appointment to visit Masy and Soavita at their house, but eventually managed to speak with them separately. Soavita is the first to visit me at home on August 28.

Soavita: “I am sorry to disturb you Mademoiselle, but I am so worried about my throat. Somebody performed fangofy gay (sorcery) on me and now it is all swollen.”

SE: “I can see that something is wrong. I can give you some vitamins but they will not help much. You really need to see a doctor.” ... After discussing a range of issues, which will be dealt with in chapter eight, the conversation turns to her family and the marital problems.

Soavita: “You know the two children of Masy. From a woman before me. And two children of his brother, who died, also lived with us. They were all around twenty and still had not married. Two boys and two girls. They blamed it all on me. You see, they say that I am olona maloto and because they lived with us, they were mocked in the village. All four left. They live with other family of my husband now.”

SE: “What did you think when they all left?”

Soavita: “I was a little happy because they called me bad things all the time. But my husband was so angry with me. He said I should be the one leaving. Then, he said he would keep the children. We have two. I just cannot go and leave them behind. My husband does not like me anymore. He bought a second cow. When it died, he also said it was because of me. I am not sure. I think I bring bad luck. What do you think?”

SE: “I do not think that you bring him bad luck. Look at the two beautiful children you gave him.”

Soavita: “Yes, you are right. I will stay for them. Even if my husband prefers other women and gets angry with me. I will stay. I have to stay. I will go home now. Thank you for the vitamins, Mademoiselle.”

Masy is often away, tending to his cow. When I do cross his path, he is generally drunk. One evening, as I am hurrying back from the river, I hear a shout from behind me.

“Mademoiselle, wait for me.”

I turn around, and see Masy lurching up behind me. As he approaches, I pick up a heavy smell of alcohol.

Masy: “You have given my wife some medicine.”

The statement sounds like a threat.

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28 Ty azoka antoka. Raty tintana angamba any.
SE: "Yes just some vitamins to make her feel better."

Masy: "What did she tell you?"

SE: "Just that she was not feeling well."

Masy: "I am sure that she has been complaining to you. She still does not realise that she is just an andev and I can do whatever I want. If I want other women, I take them. And if she doesn't listen to me I will make her. Do not speak to her again. She is just an andev. Goodnight Mademoisely."

He turns abruptly around and staggers away, leaving me to ponder the possible consequences of his threat.

Sambo and Ratsara have separated. Ratsara still lives in Marovato, near her brother Niaina. She remarried to Rasely. He is a friend of her brother and comes from a village near Fianarantsoa. Sambo remarried. He now lives in a small hut in Fenoarivo with his new wife, her four children and his mother. Sambo often comes to Marovato. He is the only andev who dares to circulate freely within the village and pays little heed to the opinion or dictates of the tonpon-tany. In 1992, he eyed me with suspicion and avoided speaking with me. Now he even visits me, and when he does, he openly speaks his mind. On May 3, he finds me in front of my hut where I am attempting to chop some wood.

"Oh Mademoisely, it looks like you are going to hurt yourself. Please let me help."

With some relief, I hand him the axe. I sit down next to him while he performs the work.

SE: "I hear that you and your mother do not live in Marovato anymore."

Sambo: "That is right. I still get angry when I think about it. Many bad things happened in my family. They took the land from us. They wanted us out of Marovato. They always treat us badly, the tonpon-tany. It seemed better to go. I burned down my house and that of my mother. And that was the end of it."

SE: "How are Vita, Jana and Mamy? Are they already married?"

Sambo: "You do not know about them? ... The bad things started not long after you left. Mamy died. I know who did it. She was pregnant with a baby from somebody outside Western Marovato. You know, they always feel better than us. When his father found out, they arranged for Mamy to die. They poisoned her. It was terrible. Then her sister was always afraid afterwards. You see, she also got pregnant. I think it was the same situation. She wanted to leave Marovato. I brought her to a friend. I was in prison with him. A good man. That is where she lives now. It is a one-day walk from here. And for my daughter Vita, I did find a

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29 Tsy azony an-tsaina mbisy fa andev any aty izy ka asaka manao izay tsaka rehetra ano.

30 Vita is Sambo's daughter from a former relationship. Jana and Mamy are his stepsisters. All three of them lived with him in 1992. He had tried to arrange marriages for them without success.

31 Hainao, milistre ny lo tsara kokoa noho izahay ny zaro.
husband. Somebody from Antsirabe. He lived in Ambalavao. But people laughed at him. They said that he was stupid to marry an andiro. He did not know and I did not tell him. Then he got angry and sent her away. But she stayed in Ambalavao. She lives with two of her brothers there. They take care of each other. Maybe you can visit her some day.”

SE: “I surely will. I am sorry to hear all these bad things. How is Ratsara?”

Sambo: “I see that I will have to talk with you. You do not know anything anymore. She got sick one day and never got better. Her brother Dezy said that it was all because of me. That I had made her sick. One night, I still remember, he came. He was drunk. He called me bad names and took his sister away from me. He also took our daughter Zoly and Vaha, who also lived with us. That was it. She never came back.”

SE: “When did this happen?”

Sambo: “I do not remember. But it made me already very angry. So when the tompon-tany took their land back, all I could think of was to burn the place down and leave.”

SE: “Is it clear to you why the tompon-tany took their land back from you?”

Sambo: “Randriamahalasa. He is the man putting all these funny ideas in the heads of the tompon-tany. He came with all these mpikarama. He is a rich man and has many cows. That is what the tompon-tany want. So they also wanted the mpikarama. Then they did not need us anymore to do their work.”

SE: “Are the mpikarama and the people that did the work before the same?”

Sambo: “You mean the andiro?”

SE: “Yes.”

Sambo: “No it is all very different. We are different. The mpikarama are the same as the tompon-tany.”

SE: “I don’t understand.”

Sambo: “They are all family. They are all ahoana maio. You can see how they are treated. They get money for their work. They get land and a house in the end and when they get married, the tompon-tany ra anan-drenj² pay for the bride price. We are not family and are not paid when we work for them. That is just because of what we are. They do not like us. They feel better than us.”

SE: “But do the people who live in Western Marovato still work for the andriana in the village?”

Sambo: “Some do. But, only little jobs. They still do not get money but they hope

² Sambo is referring to the tompon-tany family leaders.
to get some manioc. The tompon-tany do not want people like us anymore. We do not even like each other. You noticed, didn’t you? We all take care of ourselves."  

Sambo: “First, I found me a new wife. You can visit us. I saw her on the road one day. Then I gave her father some money. And then she was mine. She never had been married before. She came with four children. I think that she is a good wife. She is pregnant now... So this is done. You can cook again. Come to visit us. I am going now.”

SE: “I will. Thank you.”

Since my arrival, I have experienced great difficulty in initiating conversations with Andrianasolo and Pelamainty. When we cross each other’s path, it is not by design. Their greetings are usually quickly followed by adieux within the same sentence. However, just after dusk on June 21, I am surprised by Andrianasolo knocking on my door. He is wild-eyed. Before I can react, he is dragging me out of my hut:

“You must come with me.”

Andrianasolo breaks into a run, and I follow him through the hard sand until we arrive at his hut. Inside, a faint light from a burning candle barely outlines the silhouette of a boy who looks to be about four years old. He is prostrate in the far corner of the hut, his head tilting sideways at an unnatural angle.

Andrianasolo: “He is dead.”

Andrianasolo stares at me, and begins a rambling staccato lament: “Again, somebody has died. You need to help us. He needs to go home. He needs to go in the tomb. He is my wife’s brother.”

Andrianasolo’s wife, Pelamainty, is seated against the East wall of the hut, her eyes cast downwards.

SE: “First, tell me what happened.”

Andrianasolo: “Many bad things happened. Do you remember Mpinona, my wife’s brother? He lived with us. With his daughter. She also died. Then, Mpinona was afraid and left. My wife got sick very often and I did not know what was wrong with her. She got very angry and cried all the time. I asked her sister to come. That is her.”

Andrianasolo sits down against the South wall, then gestures towards a skinny girl of about twenty, seated next to Pelamainty. His tone has become slightly less

33 Ne/a beveriko fa tsy mila ny olona tahaka aney inteny ny tompon-tany. Tsy misan-kari marinao sy izany? Tsy maintsy tikaraka ny inteny izahay.

34 Sambo is talking about the wood chopping he has just completed.

35 This is remarkable since andrao never touched me. They did not even shake hands with me.
frantic: “Her name is Fanja. She arrived with her brother. And now he is dead. I am worried now for my own brother. He only came last week. Will he also die?”

Pelamainty starts crying, at first silently, but soon, she is throwing her arms skyward and screaming. Fanja attempts to calm her.

Andrianasolo: “This is what she is like all the time. She never got pregnant.”

I sit down next to Pelamainty and reassure her that I will make sure that her brother can go back to his ancestral land so that he can be buried in the family tomb. She looks up at me and responds: “Thank you. It is important to go in the tomb.”

I ask Andrianasolo to join me outside so I can discuss logistics of the operation with him. Pelamainty’s family comes from a village near Fianarantsoa, ninety kilometres Northeast to Marovato. It takes me two days to convince a nurse in Ambalavao to drive the boy home in her car.

Maly and Nana have moved from their hut in Northwest Marovato to the Southwestern quarter. It is March 14, prior to dusk, when I meet up with Maly just before we enter Marovato. We both had been collecting some branches for cooking.

SE: “How are you doing? I was at your house a few times but you were never there.”

Maly: “You can come now if you want. I think my wife is home.”

Several minutes later, I am seated in front of Maly and Nana.

SE: “I see that you have moved. Why is that?”

Nana: “This is the third house we lived in since you left. Some time ago, all the land was taken from the andro. We are not andro, but the tompon-tany took back our land as well. Afterwards, I thought of a place we could go. You see, in the direction of the river, there is some land of a tompon-tany who lives in Ambalavao now. Nobody uses the land. So we just went there. Made a little house and started with manioc, tomatoes and onions. We did very well. We even bought a cow. Soon after, everything went wrong. Somebody stole the cow and the things we use for cooking. We never heard anything. We were sleeping. Then the fire came. I smelled it and woke up my husband and the children. We just got out. Everything was lost.”

SE: “How did this come about?”

Maly: “I think I know who did it. People think that I am olona maloto. Tompon-tany think that we are bad people. And that we deserve to be poor. They do not like it when we get things. That is why everything was destroyed just after the cow came...”

Nana interrupts her husband: “No, that is not it. I think that people just got jealous... Everything was lost. I went back to Marovato to ask people for help. Finally, Raboba

36 Zava-delribe ny miditra ao am-pasana.
37 Ary izany no mahatonga any hafastra.
helped me. Rafidy Andriana's son. He lives in a big house now and gave us a room that we could use. He said we could work his land. He gave us a bucket and a pan.”

Maly: “But Rafidy Andriana did not agree. He got very upset with Raboba. We had to come here. Now we still work for Raboba now and then. The land that we had when we left Marovato is now cultivated by mpikarama. We do not have much now. That is why my son Miandry left. We are six. Us, our children and Vola, she is family. She ran away from her husband. I do not know how long she will stay... We are poor...I do not think that will ever change.”

Nana: “We still have manioc for tonight. I have to cook it. Thank you for coming Mademarely.”

Raozy is the daughter of Ratsimbazafy and Lalao. In 1992, I lived with Raozy and her younger sister Fara. Raozy had informed me at the time that she had already picked her future groom. Her eye had fallen on Lahy, a son of Rafidy Andriana’s third marriage. In 1993, she gave birth to a boy, whom she called Sambatra, “the happy one”. In the early stages, she raised the child with her parents, but about a year later, she convinced Lahy that he was the father of the baby. Several months afterwards, they moved in together. They could stay in a little room of Raboba’s house, Lahy’s stepbrother. In the beginning of 1996, Raozy gave birth to a baby girl named Soa. As soon as I hear that Raozy has given birth, I visit her. When I arrive, she is alone.

SE: “Good morning Raozy, I heard about your baby and I come to see her.”

Raozy is a beautiful girl. Like her mother she has replaced her natural teeth with “golden” ones. With a happy smile she hands Soa to me. The baby stares at me but does not cry.

Raozy: “I have to tell you many things. I am married to Lahy know. Just like I told you.”

SE: “That is right. I am happy for you. But where is Sambatra?”

Raozy: “Oh you do not know. He died. That made me cry. It was just after I married Lahy. Lahy’s father did not agree and even now says that we are not really married because my father never arranged the bride price. I do not care. I think that I am married to him. Lahy liked Sambatra. That is why he had to die.”

SE: “What do you mean?”

Raozy: “Rafidy Andriana does not like people like me. He got really angry with Lahy. He said that Lahy could not have any babies with me. But then Sambatra was already there. After that Sambatra got very sick and died.”

SE: “I am so sorry to hear that.”

Raozy: “My husband thinks that his father has something to do with it. I do not know. You should ask him about it.”

SE: “I have not seen your husband for a long time. Where is he?”
Raozy: “He works for Randriamahalasa now. He takes the cows from Ihosy to Ambalavao. He only is here when the cows pass through Marovato. I do not see him very often. I am happy that I have Soa now.”

Conversations with Raozy became a regular routine for the two of us. Among other things, she described Sambatra’s illness and death in considerable detail, which proved to be a rich source of information concerning issues detailed in the following chapters.

6.3 A brief comparative overview of 1992 and 1996

In 1992, I detected the presence of a specific group of migrants living in Western Marovato, labelled andevo and olona maloto (“impure” or “dirty people”) by the tompon-tany, so designated as they allegedly had no tombs. The andevo consisted of an economic grouping of labourers who toiled for little or no remuneration. They had no social contact with free descent villagers, and curiously, little communication with other andevo in the village. In fact, most of them denied that they even were andevo. Although they refused their label, the andevo displayed behaviour consistent with being an economic undergrouping and having awareness of their “impure” and inferior status, such as self-exclusion, not shaking hands and genuflection.

In 1996, upon my return, I learned of the arrival of the mpikana and corresponding decline of the andevo as an economic grouping. At the same time, I observed open acceptance by most andevo of their ascribed status. Furthermore, based on my numerous conversations with andevo and other villagers, I concluded that they retained their importance as a cultural category. Firstly, as a tombless and “impure” people. Secondly, as a negative reference group for tompon-tany cultural values. And most importantly, I observed that the andevo were somehow connected with infertility, illness, death and other misfortune.

6.4 The methodological implications of the andevo stories

Two phenomena, rooted in the andevo themselves, were to raise a myriad of questions. Firstly, why would the andevo accept the underpinnings of the system and even assume their role as the principal actors in its perpetuation? Put simply, why would the andevo accept that they were “different”? Secondly, why, even after being effectively replaced as an economic grouping, would the andevo continue to occupy such a central place in tompon-tany discourse, fomba gasy and mythology?

I decided to temporarily set aside my socio-economic analysis in order to focus on the meaning of the andevo as a cultural category, and on how the villagers viewed specific cultural aspects of their life.38 As I moved deeper in this direction, so did my methodology. I developed my own set of questions which I would use when participating in events having a cultural import. I felt the answers lay within an interactive triangle that seemed to govern and permeate every aspect of Marovato life: the living, the dead and tombs. The questions addressed the following issues and how villagers perceived them: What are the origins of infertility, illness and death? What is the nature of impurity and “andeveness”? In what ontological ways are the andevo different from the other groups in the village. What is

38 For the purpose of this thesis, I will use Keesing’s definition of culture (1981: 364-365, 509), as an ideational system. Cultures in this sense comprise systems of shared ideas, systems of concepts and rules and meanings that underlie and are expressed in the ways that humans live.
the cultural meaning of tombs and ancestors? What happens to people once they die? And how does the process of “ancestralisation” evolve?

In order to find the answers to these questions, I participated in funerals, which were very frequent during 1996. I had previously attended funerals in 1992, but the elders had ordered me to help the women with fetching water, cooking and other menial tasks which fully occupied me during the four-day time span of a full-fledged funeral. In 1996, the elders allowed me to converse with guests and even sit with them for extended periods. To my pleasant surprise, they were now willing to answer my questions in detail. Since I had learned to “behave like a Betsileo”, I could escape the drudgery of the kitchen and, more importantly, was deemed ready to hear about and discuss more complex cultural themes.

I had often heard Rafidy Andriana repeat that I would not be ready to hear certain things until I “behaved like a Betsileo”. However, ironically, it was the arrival of the mpikaratna, under the stewardship of Randriamahalasa, which triggered my understanding of the deeper implications of the phrase.

Randriamahalasa was the quintessential businessman. He imported workers and revised the socio-economic system. But Randriamahalasa’s first significant act upon integrating into Marovato life was to create a blood bond with Rafidy Andriana. His second was to build a new family tomb, even prior to building his own house. Randriamahalasa’s ultimate aims may have been socio-economic, but the entry through which he had to pass in order to attain them was cultural. As Rafidy Andriana stated to me: “Randriamahalasa behaved like a Betsileo”.

I now realised that Rafidy Andriana’s strong suggestion that I “behave like a Betsileo”, contained both a challenge and its solution. Behaving like a Betsileo would not only prove that I was worthy to receive the answers I sought, but would also condition me to more fully understand them once received. Rafidy Andriana would eventually send me a very clear message which indicated that I was finally behaving like a Betsileo. Approximately two months after my 1996 return, the first of a parade of Rafidy-designated suitors showed up at my door, one of whom just happened to be Randriamahalasa in person. In short, “behaving like a Betsileo” meant, in my case, behaving like a Betsileo woman of free descent. I realised that everything that I had presumed to be in the higher cause of anthropology had in fact been preparation for marriage.

I recalled the words of Rafidy Andriana on that fateful early evening during my 1992 field work when I had burned the rice in front of the gathered assembly of seventy plus family members (cf. chapter one):

“When you first came I wondered why you were not yet married and do not have children. Now I know. You do not know anything. You behave like a va^aho (‘foreigner’). We will learn you how to behave like a Betsileo.”

In fact, my “behaving like a Betsileo” enabled me to identify the importance of cultural issues, which would have been impossible using a purely socio-economic approach. However, paradoxically and conversely, behaving like a Betsileo would prove to be equally insufficient in gaining some perspective on these cultural issues. In order to do that, I had to “behave like an anthropologist”.

This, of course, implied my eventual departure from Marovato, as nothing less would allow
me to absorb events and move on to a more objective perspective. But prior to that, I felt it crucial to counterbalance the *tompon-tany* vision of “Malagasy customs” with that of the andro. The deepening of my understanding of the role of the andro, a tombless people, proved most fruitful in deciphering the triangle of the living, the dead and tombs (see chapter seven and eight). This incurred, however, the considerable displeasure of Rafidy Andriana, who obviously had other plans for me.