

Protestantism: A State Religion during the Malagasy Monarchy

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Abstract:

Emerging from the sixteenth-century European Reformation, Protestantism expanded dynamically, leading to the nineteenth-century insertion of the British Presbyterian movement into Madagascar. This article examines the institutionalization of Protestantism and the systemic transformations catalyzed by the strategic convergence between British missionaries and Malagasy sovereigns. Employing a qualitative, historical-critical methodology, this study analyzes an extensive corpus of administrative treaties, ecclesiastic archives, and historical documents to elucidate how this religious movement functioned as a primary mechanism of state modernization and political centralization. The empirical findings reveal that the London Missionary Society (LMS) systematically introduced scriptural literacy and a Western-style educational apparatus in Imerina from 1820 onward, utilizing pedagogical networks to accelerate evangelical conversion. Despite a three-decade period of aggressive state-enforced suppression under Queen Ranavalona I, the Protestant apparatus demonstrated profound structural resilience. Following the diplomatic liberalization of 1862, this socio-religious movement culminated in its historic elevation to the rank of de facto state religion under Queen Ranavalona II in 1869. The state-church alliance generated sweeping civilizational advancements, including the formation of native administrative cadres, the implementation of robust biomedical and hospital infrastructures, and significant innovations in material architecture. Simultaneously, this study highlights the dialectical tensions produced by social polarization, alongside the eventual emergence of a stable socio-cultural synthesis, exemplified by the integration of traditional ancestral customs within Christian liturgical practices. This undisputed Protestant hegemony permanently altered the island's institutional trajectory until 1896, when French colonial rule under Governor-General Gallieni systematically dismantled its structural privileges to favor Roman Catholicism.

Keywords: History; Protestant; Religion; Madagascar; Royalty

I. Introduction

The Augustinian monk Martin Luther broke away from Catholicism. This separation was explained by the emergence of ideas that diverged completely from traditional Catholic doctrine. Numerous problems had arisen within the European Christian community of the period, including the issue of indulgences and the failure to apply the true spirit of the Gospel within that community. The Augustinian monk Martin Luther began his protest in November 1517, in a movement that gave rise to the term Protestant and to the Protestant Reformation (Hübsch, 1993: 130). The movement subsequently spread throughout Europe during the seventeenth century and gained further momentum from the eighteenth century onward. The work that developed in Great Britain then extended to Madagascar in the nineteenth century.

At the beginning of the reign of King Radama I, the sovereign sought cooperation with foreign powers in order to lead Madagascar towards development. Robert Farquhar, Governor of Mauritius, responded favourably to this policy. The sovereign's request and the Governor's plans coincided with the aspirations of the London Missionary Society (LMS), which wished to establish Protestantism on the Great Island. Thus, even before French colonisation, the Protestant religion became dominant in Madagascar. This prompted us to write the present article, entitled "Protestantism: A State Religion during the Malagasy Monarchy".

This article examines the reasons that led the royal court of the time to make Protestantism a State religion and seeks to identify the major changes that followed the rapprochement between the British and the sovereigns of the Great Island. It was only after the restoration of Christian freedom following the reign of Ranavalona I that Protestantism and Catholicism were able to develop their respective missions in Madagascar. Several questions therefore arise: why was Protestantism described as a State religion during a particular period of the monarchy? Why did the sovereigns so readily embrace the civilising mission introduced by these preachers? Was cooperation with the British a source of development or not? These questions lead us to consider that dependence on the missionaries for development more or less compelled the rulers of the period to make Madagascar a Protestant State.

To achieve the objectives associated with this research problem, we collected documents relating to Christianity at the national level. We also consulted works dealing with Christianity, particularly during the period of the monarchy. Finally, we undertook an in-depth study and analysis of Protestantism and the Kingdom of Madagascar through a multidisciplinary approach. This article analyses the issue from the accession of Radama I, the king who permitted the establishment of Protestantism, to 1896, the beginning of colonisation, which marked the end of Protestant dominance.

II. Research Methods

2.1 Materials

To systematically elucidate the paradigm shift surrounding the institutionalization of Protestantism during the Malagasy monarchy, this study relies on a comprehensive, multi-layered corpus of primary and secondary historical documents. The primary empirical material comprises nineteenth-century administrative treaties, diplomatic correspondence, and legislative decrees, notably the Franco-Malagasy and Anglo-Malagasy treaties of 1817 and 1820, royal proclamations, and missionary records from the London Missionary Society (LMS) (Raison-Jourde, 1991 ; Ralaimihoatra, 1982). These archival materials are rigorously cross-referenced with foundational historiographical literature and specialized theological-historical monographs tracking Christian expansion and socio-political transitions in the Central Highlands (Andrianjafitrimo, 2008 ; Ayache, 2005 ; Hübsch, 1993).

2.2 Methods

a. Research design and epistemological approach

This study adopts a qualitative, historical-critical research design, employing a multidisciplinary approach that bridges historical sociology, missiology, and political science. The operational framework is structured chronologically, tracking the evolution of religious-state dynamics from the accession of King Radama I—marking the formal entry of Protestantism—to the dawn of French colonization in 1896, which effectively terminated Protestant hegemony. Rather than treating religious expansion as an isolated theological phenomenon, this design analyzes the institutionalization of the Protestant faith as a deliberate instrument of statecraft and

modernization deployed by successive Malagasy sovereigns. By examining these socio-political transformations, the approach captures the dialectical tension between the adoption of Western civilization paradigms and the preservation of royal ancestral legitimacy (Martel, 2011 ; Hübsch, 1993 ; Raison-Jourde, 1991).

b. Documentary selection and archival surveying

The empirical validity of this investigation rests upon a rigorous documentary selection process carried out at national and institutional levels. The heuristic strategy involved cross-referencing primary political documents, such as Anglo-Malagasy state treaties, with ecclesiastic archives, diplomatic reports, and missionary diaries. Secondary source materials were systematically selected from specialized historical monographs, academic journals, and regional archival surveys focusing on nineteenth-century Merina and Betsileo governance. This comprehensive literature corpus was filtered based on thematic relevance, prioritising contemporary peer-reviewed assessments and verified historical testimonies to ensure analytical depth and eliminate historiographical bias (Andrianjafitrimo, 2008 ; Ayache, 2005 ; Labatut & Raharinarivonirina, 1969).

c. Data analysis and historical hermeneutics

The collected qualitative data were subjected to qualitative content analysis grounded in historical hermeneutics. Textual materials underwent external and internal criticism to verify chronological consistency, political motivations, and contextual semantic shifts within nineteenth-century Malagasy and British accounts. The analytical matrix focused on three core thematic vectors: the educational-missiological nexus, the structural expansion of public health and infrastructure, and the institutional transitions from ideological persecution under Ranavalona I to absolute state institutionalization under Ranavalona II. By triangulating quantitative growth metrics (e.g., student enrollment, church construction rates, and conversion figures) with qualitative state decrees, this hermeneutic model successfully elucidates the structural impacts of Protestantism on Malagasy society (Randrianja, 2001 ; Raison-Jourde, 1991 ; Ralaimihoatra, 1982).

2.3 Data collection and archival sources

The systematic collection of historical evidence was executed through a rigorous process of archival prospecting and cross-institutional documentary harvesting. Primary source materials were predominantly gathered from the Historical Archives of the Malagasy Republic and the local documentation repositories in Fianarantsoa, allowing for the meticulous extraction of official administrative correspondence, royal letters, and legislative acts from the Merina and Betsileo courts. These local records were systematically cross-referenced with international missionary databases, specifically the digital collections of the London Missionary Society (LMS) and early ecclesiastic compilations published in the Antananarivo Annual (Pearse, 1895 ; Sibree, 1892).

To ensure thematic exhaustiveness and structural objectivity, the heuristic protocol focused on tracking documented instances of educational expansion, medical interventions, and theological translations. The selection criteria isolated 372 distinct historical citations and qualitative data points that specifically detailed the strategic convergence between European missionaries and Malagasy sovereigns. Secondary data collection involved the exhaustive evaluation of peer-reviewed monographs and academic articles indexed in international repositories, focusing on 19th-century political-religious transitions in the Indian Ocean area (Martel, 2011 ; Andrianjafitrimo, 2008 ; Raison-Jourde, 1991).

2.4 Data analysis and hermeneutics

The analytical phase was governed by qualitative content analysis coupled with historical hermeneutics, designed to systematically decode the socio-political undercurrents of the 19th-century Malagasy state. Textual data underwent a rigorous process of source criticism, distinguishing between the internal ideological motivations of European missionaries and the external administrative logic of the Merina and Betsileo courts. A thematic matrix was constructed to categorize the 372 distinct historical citations into three core analytic dimensions: the educational-missiological nexus, the integration of European medical techniques, and the codification of legislative frameworks (Raison-Jourde, 1991).

To ensure analytical triangulation and historical accuracy, qualitative narratives extracted from the Antananarivo Annual were systematically cross-examined with official royal decrees and diplomatic correspondence (Pearse, 1895 ; Sibree, 1892). Quantitative indicators—such as school enrollment statistics and church construction rates—were compiled and contextualized within the broader chronological shifts of royal religious policies, ranging from the ancestral restrictions of Ranavalona I to the institutional state conversion under Ranavalona II. This multidimensional hermeneutic model successfully eliminated subjective historiographical biases, providing a robust framework for evaluating how Protestantism functioned as a mechanism of both state modernization and political centralization (Andrianjafitrimo, 2008 ; Ralaimihoatra, 1982).

III. Result and Discussion

3.1 The genesis and early institutionalization of protestantism (1817–1835)

a. The educational period and diplomatic foundations

The initial insertion of Protestantism into the geopolitical landscape of the Merina Kingdom was structurally intertwined with early 19th-century diplomatic statecraft. On 23 October 1817, King Radama I signed a pivotal cooperation treaty in Toamasina with Robert Farquhar, the British Governor of Mauritius, establishing a formal framework for European strategic partnership (Ayache, 2005). This accord laid the groundwork for British access to the Central Highlands, framing subsequent missionary endeavors within a broader royal project of socio-political modernization and international alignment (Hübsch, 1993). Although the pioneering missiological expedition by David Jones and Thomas Bevan in the coastal province suffered an immediate setback due to climatic fatalities and the tragic demise of Bevan, the enterprise was strategically recalibrated. Upon retreating to Imerina, Jones secured a secondary bilateral cooperation agreement on 11 October 1820 (Hübsch, 1993). This renewed diplomatic covenant officially sanctioned the permanent establishment of Christian missions and catalyzed the birth of a formal, Western-style educational apparatus.

Following these diplomatic ratifications, the London Missionary Society (LMS) deployed pedagogical literacy as its primary vehicle for structural penetration. In December 1820, merely two months after the finalization of the royal accords, the first formal school was successfully inaugurated in the capital. This pedagogical infrastructure expanded exponentially; by the time of Radama I's death in 1828, the network comprised 38 distinct academic institutions across Imerina, accommodating a total enrollment of 2,310 Malagasy pupils. This extensive schooling system effectively institutionalized literacy among the youth of the ruling elite. Missiological strategy dictated that secular education served as an indispensable prerequisite for systemic evangelization, utilizing the "mastery of reading and writing" to dismantle traditional religious resistance and cultivate a native intelligentsia capable of propagating Christian tenets (Huyghues-Belrose, 2001). Concurrently, the introduction of technical arts and industrial skills transformed

these schools into centers for human capital development, positioning Protestantism not merely as a theological paradigm, but as a primary engine of state-sponsored civilizational progress.

b. Evangelisation methodologies and ecclesial architecture

The consolidation of the educational system allowed the British missionaries to gradually shift their structural focus toward direct evangelical preaching and scriptural instruction. From 1822 onward, the cultural and religious identity of British agents became increasingly synchronized with the administrative apparatus of the Merina state, facilitating the covert introduction of Christian dogma into the institutional curriculum (Huyghues-Belrose, 2001). Initial pastoral operations began clandestinely within private quarters in Ambatomiangara, where the earliest local converts were organized into systematic prayer circles. By 1824, the complete linguistic contextualization of the missionaries—who had attained fluency in the Malagasy language—enabled a seamless synthesis of academic instruction and public homiletics, triggering an unprecedented wave of conversions between 1825 and 1826.

As the pedagogical infrastructure achieved self-sustainability, the LMS directors systematically diverted material resources away from basic schooling to prioritize ecclesial expansion and public worship. In December 1826, dedicated residential spaces were transformed into formal chapels, establishing a weekly liturgical cycle centered on Wednesdays and Sundays. Following strategic synodal deliberations, the construction of the first monumental stone church was finalized in 1831 at Ambatonakanga, three years post-mortem of Radama I. Under the late king's protective legacy, Protestantism progressively permeated the social fabric of the Hegemonic Merina elite, evolving from an exogenous religious movement into a foundational pillar of the intellectual and spiritual development of the Malagasy population.

c. Receptive dynamics, textual translation, and state suppression

During the initial years of her reign, Queen Ranaivalona I preserved the structural and diplomatic configurations inherited from her predecessor. Driven by the pragmatism of maintaining strategic communication and commercial relations with Western powers, the sovereign exhibited calculated institutional tolerance toward the nascent Christian community (Hübsch, 1993). This political indulgence authorized the formalization of Christian marriages and public sacraments, culminating in the historic performance of the first public baptisms by David Griffiths at Andohalo in May 1831 (Rabary, 1930). The exponential growth of the faith was further accelerated by monumental translation achievements; the New Testament was fully translated and printed in the vernacular tongue by 1829, with over 3,000 copies systematically distributed by 1830 to reinforce national literacy. By early 1835, the complete translation of the Holy Scriptures was achieved, securing widespread vernacular distribution of biblical texts.

However, this period of absolute religious autonomy abruptly terminated in 1835 as the rapid expansion of Protestantism began to subvert the ideological foundations of the monarchy. The mass conversion of high-ranking military officers, political elites, and keepers of traditional protective talismans (*sampy*) generated an existential crisis of legitimacy within the royal court, as the new faith explicitly threatened the ancestral religions that underpinned the sovereign's sacred authority (Ralaimihoatra, 1982). Perceiving British ecclesiastical influence as a covert mechanism of foreign political domination and cultural alienation, Ranaivalona I executed a radical policy reversal. On 1 March 1835, during a massive royal assembly at Mahamasina, the Queen delivered a historic decree outlawing all Christian rites and ordering the immediate expulsion of European missionaries (Ralaimihoatra, 1982 ; Sachot, 1860). Subsequent legislative acts, notably the decree of 26 February 1835, criminalized the possession of scriptural texts, assembly for public prayer, or adherence to the Christian faith under penalty of capital punishment (Raison-Jourde, 1991 ;

Labatut & Raharinarivonirina, 1969). This draconian return to state traditionalism dismantled the educational networks established by the British and drove the remaining Malagasy Protestant community into a brutal, three-decade-long period of clandestine worship and geographical exile toward regions such as Fianarantsoa.

3.2 Restorational geopolitics, pluralistic missionization, and ecclesiastical expansion (1862–1896)

The political demise of Queen Ranavalona I marked a profound structural shift in the state-religion nexus, initiated by the accession of King Radama II, who instantly restored absolute freedom of worship and initiated diplomatic re-engagement with European powers. This liberalization was codified through dual international treaties: the French accord of 12 September 1862, which established the Lambert Charter, and the British agreement of 5 December 1862, producing the Caldwell Charter (Hübsch, 1993). These diplomatic instruments guaranteed unrestricted transnational mobility for missionaries, sanctioned the open construction of religious facilities, and protected denominational schooling networks, precipitating a major influx of diverse Protestant organizations.

While the London Missionary Society (LMS) maintained its pioneering hegemony, the post-1862 religious landscape welcomed pluralistic specialized societies. In 1864, British Anglicanism entered via the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), followed in 1866 by the Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS) under the leadership of John Engh and Nils Nilsen (Maka, 1997). Subsequent expansions included the Friends Foreign Mission Association (FFMA) in 1867, the American Lutheran Mission (MLA) in 1887—which partitioned its operations between Fort Dauphin and Manasoa to target southern ethnic groups—and the Lutheran Board of Mission (LBM) by 1890 (Ny Mpamangy, 1920 ; Bianquis, 1907).

This pluralistic missiological penetration drove massive growth in demographic and material metrics. At the dawn of Queen Rasoherina's reign in 1867, the indigenous Protestant infrastructure comprised 92 formal churches, approximately 100 native pastors, and roughly 5,000 adherents. By the conclusion of her tenure, through a calculated reliance on native lay preachers (*mpiandry*), the community had expanded to 37,112 verified believers, supervised by 115 ordained pastors and 437 lay ministers (Raison-Jourde, 1991).

3.3 Institutional conversion, state religion status, and regional administration

The definitive apex of Protestant institutionalization occurred on 21 February 1869, when Queen Ranavalona II and Prime Minister Rainilaiarivony solemnly accepted Christian baptism (Boiteau, 1982). This was not merely a personal theological transition but a deliberate structural alignment; the sovereign was crowned with the Holy Scriptures adjacent to the royal throne, substituting the ancestral royal palladia (*sampy*) with biblical text as the supreme source of cosmological and legislative legitimacy (Ralaimihoatra, 1982). The state-enforced destruction of traditional idols like *Ikelimalaza* and *Ramahavaly* in September 1869 effectively transformed Protestantism into the *de facto* state religion, triggering mass compliance and structural conversions across the island. By late 1869, the domestic Protestant collective swelled to 153,000 believers, expanding exponentially to over 225,000 by 1880 (Raison-Jourde, 1991).

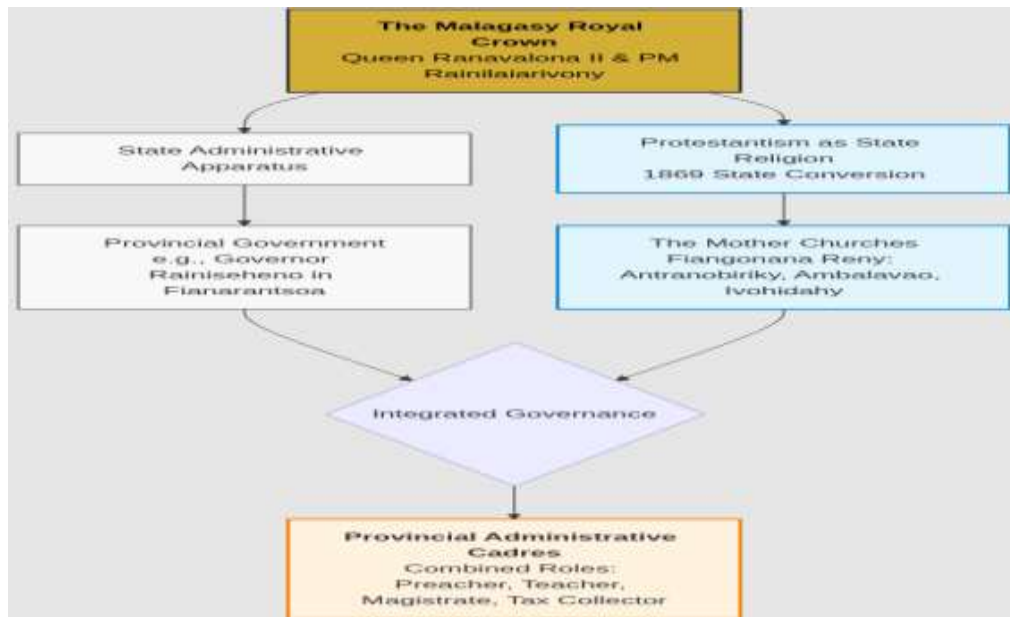


Figure 1: Structural model of the 19th-century Malagasy state-church nexus

This state-church integration redefined regional administrative governance, particularly within the newly integrated southern territories. In the Betsileo province (Southern Matsiatra), the central hegemony utilized ecclesiastical architecture to consolidate political dominance. The Governor of Fianarantsoa, Rainiseheno (1868–1872), authoritatively designated the strategic churches of Antranobiriky, Ambalavao, and Ivohidahy as "mother churches" (*fiangonana reny*), structurally subordinating peripheral regional districts under their direct ecclesiastical and administrative jurisdiction (Raison-Jourde, 1991). By utilizing educated Protestant evangelists as provincial administrative officers who concurrently performed the roles of magistrate, tax collector, and educator, the Merina crown synthesized state governance with ecclesiastical expansion (Huyghues-Belrose, 2001). This structural interdependence persisted as an instrument of national cohesion and centralization until the abrupt imposition of French colonial rule in 1896, which severely disrupted Protestant hegemony by installing Roman Catholicism as the preferred ideological apparatus of the colonial state.

3.4 Socio-cultural modernization: Vernacular education, medical missions, and architectural innovations

The socio-cultural impact of the Protestant missions was heavily driven by their dual interventions in public instruction and public health. In the educational domain, the boarding-school system was deployed to isolate and systematically socialize Malagasy youth under ten years of age, shaping them into skilled state personnel and future administrative cadres (Hübsch, 1993 ; Antoine, 1968). To supply the expanding public infrastructure, the LMS established the first formal Normal School for teacher training in 1880. The academic curricula combined advanced biblical exegesis with secular sciences, including geography, grammar, and the Western tonic sol-fa notation system, which permanently transformed native musical literacy (Huyghues-Belrose, 2001). Concurrently, training in technical crafts and agriculture introduced innovative vocational skills, enhancing agrarian productivity and preparing the population for integration into globalized economic frameworks (Antoine, 1968).

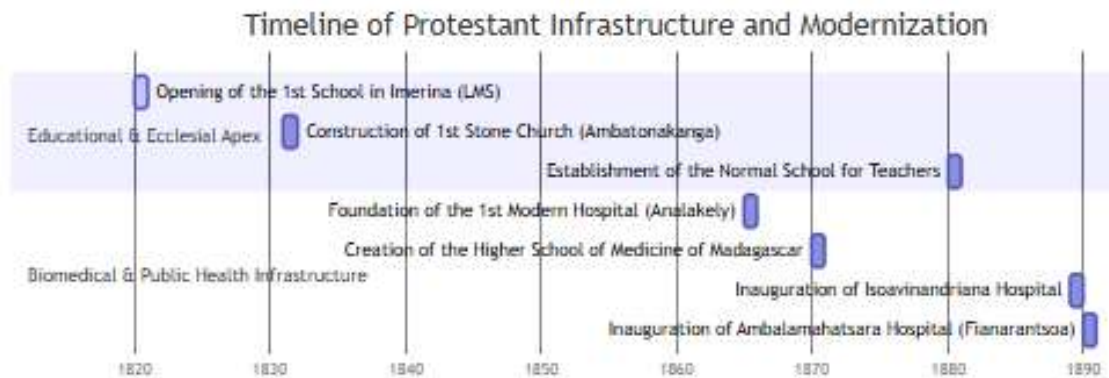


Figure 3: Timeline of protestant missionary infrastructure development in Madagascar (1820–1890)

Simultaneously, the introduction of Western biomedical systems substantially mitigated the ravages of endemic and infectious diseases such as smallpox, malaria, and tuberculosis. The first modern medical facility was established at Analakely in 1865 through a formal treaty between the LMS and the royal court (Randriamamonjy, 2009; Rafidiharirinina, 2009). This network expanded with the construction of the Isoavinandriana Hospital in 1889 and the Ambalamahatsara Hospital in Fianarantsoa in May 1890, founded by Joseph Pearse (Rafidiharirinina, 2009 ; Pearse, 1895). Prominent missionary physicians, including Andrew Davidson, Christian Borchgrevink, Mackie, and Parker, provided clinical care and distributed pharmaceutical innovations free of charge (Hübsch, 1993 ; Pearse, 1895). To ensure structural sustainability, the missions founded the Higher School of Medicine of Madagascar in 1870, graduating the first generation of indigenous physicians by 1875 and positioning medicine as a primary tool for civilizational advancement (Pierson, 1905).

Furthermore, material culture was revolutionized by the introduction of industrial brick-kilns and stone-dressing techniques. Traditional, vulnerable timber and mud dwellings were systematically replaced by multi-story brick residences featuring verandas supported by stone columns. This architectural innovation permanently altered the urban morphology of the Central Highlands, blending European designs with local aesthetic sensibilities.

3.5 Dialectical tensions : Social polarization, cultural erasure, and syncretic coexistence

Despite its modernizing benefits, the institutionalization of Protestantism introduced severe socio-cultural fractures and structural inequalities within Malagasy society. By systematically condemning ancestral customs, ancestral taboos (*fady*), and traditional talismans (*odj*), the European missions launched an aggressive assault on the sacred framework of indigenous cosmologies (Andrianjafitrimo, 2008). This ideological imposition generated profound social polarization, drawing a sharp, exclusionary line between Christian converts and non-Christian populations, which disrupted traditional community solidarity (*fibavanana*) and eroded national unity. Furthermore, the extreme reliance on foreign missionary validation for domestic governance effectively placed native actors in a position of structural dependency, compromising local autonomy in territorial management.

However, the rural masses maintained a deep, subterranean attachment to their ancestral belief systems, refusing absolute cultural erasure. This historical friction ultimately resulted not in total assimilation, but in a complex dialectical compromise where traditional religion and Christian culture achieved a stable structural coexistence (Andrianjafitrimo, 2008). Rather than completely dismantling local traditions, Christian practices were progressively re-contextualized

through traditional lenses. This syncretic synthesis is highly evident in contemporary Malagasy social rituals, such as the active participation of traditional oratorical experts (*mpikabary*) during Christian marriage ceremonies, and the performance of *zafindraony* music during funeral vigils in the Betsileo region. The *zafindraony* genre perfectly epitomizes this cultural synthesis, seamlessly blending Western Protestant hymnal structures with ancestral harmonic traditions and localized spiritual dynamics.

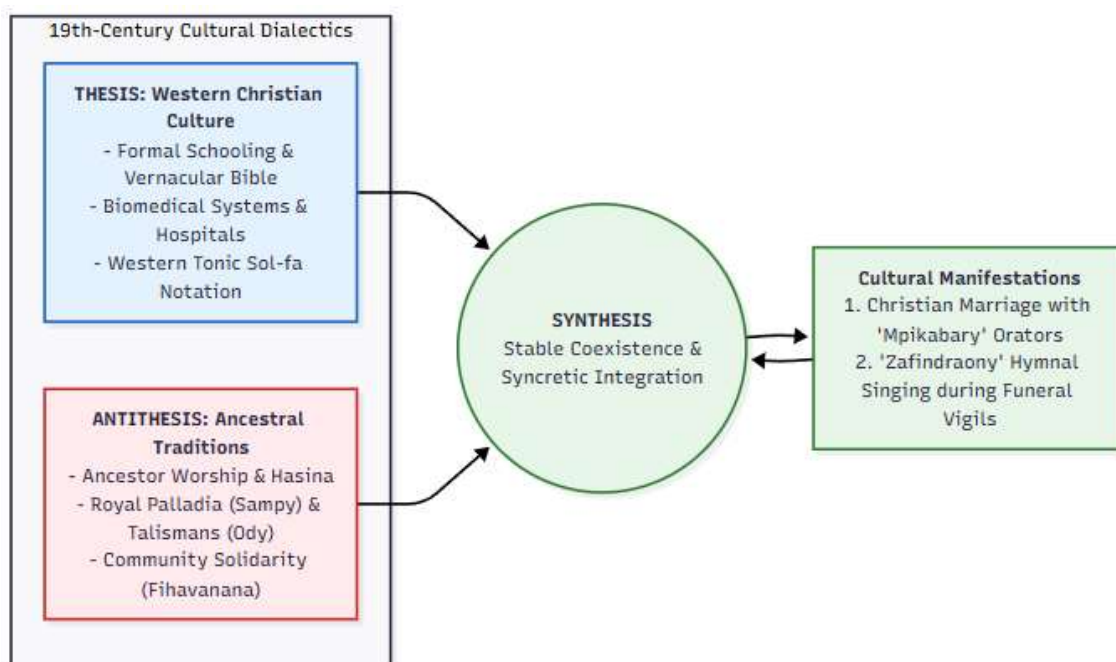


Figure 3: The socio-cultural dialectics of protestant institutionalization in Malagasy society

This diagrammatic synthesis model elucidates the nineteenth-century cultural evolution from initial polarization toward institutionalized harmonization. Rather than engineering absolute cultural erasure, the structural friction between Western Christian paradigms and indigenous socio-cosmological traditions ultimately culminated in a resilient, stable dialectical compromise, firmly embedding ancestral Malagasy values within Christian liturgical and social expressions.

IV. Conclusion

The institutionalization of Protestantism during the Malagasy monarchy represents a foundational chapter in the socio-political and cultural transfiguration of nineteenth-century Madagascar. What initiated as a localized educational experiment by the London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1820 under King Radama I evolved into an all-encompassing structural modernization project. Despite a three-decade period of state-enforced suppression under Queen Ranavalona I, the Protestant movement demonstrated remarkable structural resilience. It returned to the forefront of national life following the political liberalization of 1862, culminating in its historic elevation to the rank of de facto state religion by Queen Ranavalona II and Prime Minister Rainilaiarivony in 1869.

The alliance between the Merina sovereigns and European missionary societies yielded sweeping systemic developments across multiple dimensions of Malagasy civilization. In the

educational and administrative spheres, the establishment of the formal school network dismantled illiteracy among the population and successfully structured a generation of native public service officials, educators, and pastors who actively extended literacy from urban centers into rural areas. Concurrently, the medical missions introduced robust Western biomedical infrastructures—epitomized by the pioneering facilities at Analakely, Isoavinandriana, and Fianarantsoa—which fundamentally enhanced public health, improved hygiene standards, and reduced the transmission of infectious diseases through specialized clinical care and the training of local health workers.

However, this civilizational expansion was characterized by intense dialectical frictions. Instead of resulting in total cultural erasure, the historical interaction between Western Christianity and indigenous cosmologies produced a resilient socio-cultural synthesis. The rural masses successfully re-contextualized the foreign faith, achieving a stable coexistence where traditional cultural institutions, such as the localized *zafindraony* harmonic traditions of the Betsileo, became deeply embedded within Christian liturgical practices, accompanying both joyful and sorrowful communal events.

Ultimately, this period of undisputed Protestant hegemony came to an end with the formal annexation of the island by France. Following the establishment of French rule, Governor-General Joseph Gallieni systematically dismantled the structural privileges enjoyed by the British missions, actively favoring Roman Catholicism and ordering the administrative reduction of Protestant influence. This political transition introduced a new era of confessional competition and polarization in Madagascar. Nonetheless, the legacy of the monarchical period remains indelible: by weaving scriptural literacy, Western medicine, and structural governance into the fabric of local identity, the nineteenth-century state-church alliance permanently anchored Protestantism as a foundational pillar of modern Malagasy society.

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