

Madagascar: 150 Years of Political and Philatelic Turmoil

Bob Mustacich

4/27/2021

What's So Special about Madagascar?

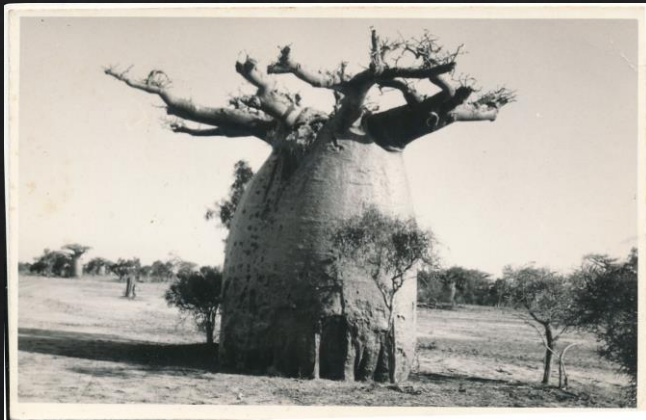
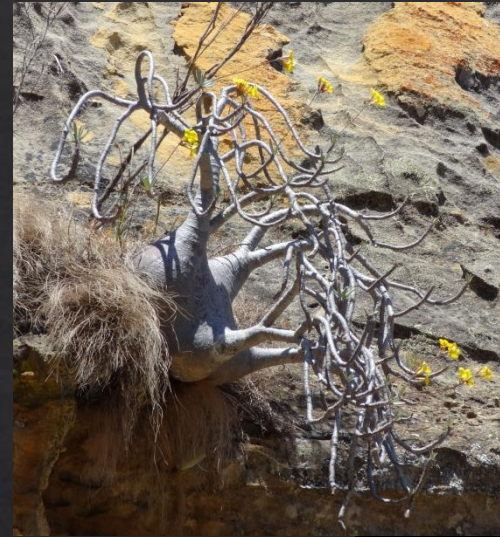
- ◆ Oldest island on earth (65 million years)
- ◆ Considered the hottest Biodiversity Hotspot

Hotspots are only 1% of the earth's surface, yet are home to >50% of world's animals and plants

- ◆ Madagascar and adjacent islands have more than 13,000 species of flowering plants

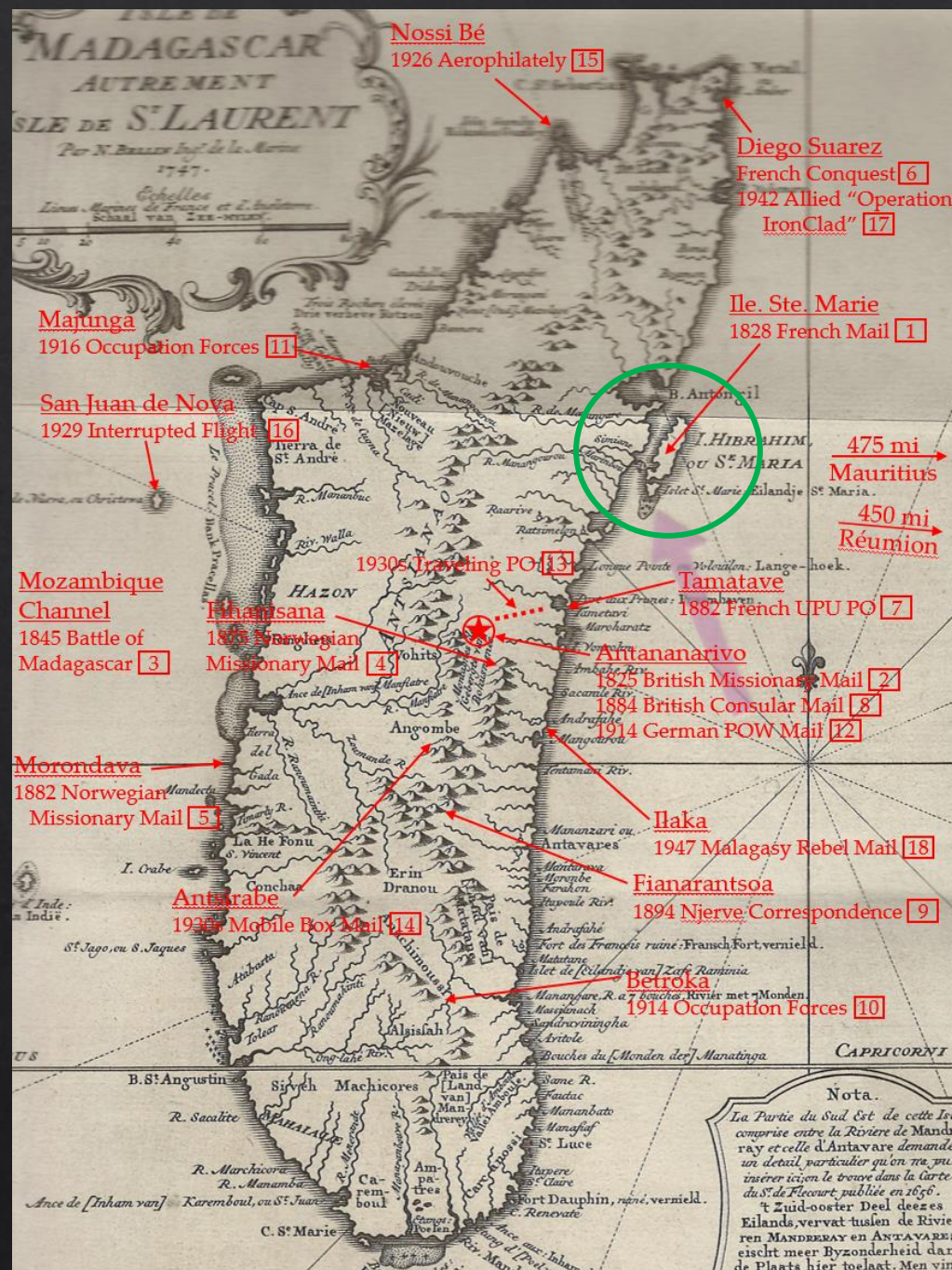
Staggering 89% are endemic

- ◆ One of the last regions of the world colonized by humans



Peculiar Aspects of Madagascar Postal History

- ◆ Remote, difficult, and dangerous
 - ◆ Not much mail, by early 1890s:
 - ◆ < 200 British (half were missionaries)
 - ◆ < 200 non-military French
- ◆ Self-imposed isolation (1830s-50s) stopped postal communication
- ◆ Reopened to the West in 1860s, but wars with France disrupted mail service
 - ◆ Local post services by British Consular Service and Norwegian Missionary Society
 - ◆ Postal history varies with the region reflecting territorial progress of wars
 - ◆ Long history of intermittent postage stamp shortages and various remedies
- ◆ Colonial era problems
 - ◆ Difficult colonization
 - ◆ Remote and poor – repeating shortages
 - ◆ Early air mail was a challenge
 - ◆ The plight of France and Madagascar's strategic global position during World Wars
 - ◆ Later rebel uprising with its own mail system



Original copperplate engraving produced in 1747 by J. Nicolas Belin, Official Hydrographer to the French King.

Early Ile St. Marie Letter

"Overseas countries by Bordeaux" – Gautier Packet *Le Bordeaux*



1828 Letter from French Army Officer Laurent Bellet to his wife Emilie, sent from Ile St. Marie. He represented French interests in a colonization campaign of Madagascar and Bourbon Island (Reunion). Command post was on Ile St. Marie.

N° 12. St. Marie, Madagascar, le 3 octobre 1828.

Ma chère et bonne Emilie, je t'ai écrit le 27 du mois dernier
sous le N° 11; ne voulant perdre aucune occasion, j'étais de nouveau
allé qu'à Jérôme, j'en n'avais que celui de dire massivement
à rendre à Monsieur, j'en ai écrit à elle-ci; je voudrais chaque
jour y en avoir m'entretenir avec toi, ma chère amie, c'est mon unique
bonheur depuis que je suis tenu de toi. Voilà enfin à moi
l'octobre, j'espère que dans quinze ou vingt jours tu recevras
mes premières lettres de Bourbon. Elle, tu recevras ton
infirmité, que j'en suis sûr, sur ton bien possible, au milieu
de l'incertitude on te te trouve, encore, sur l'état de mon
long voyage. Tranquillise-toi, ma bonne, j'espère
maintenant à ma santé parfaitement bien, j'en ai au sage
comme que j'ai adopté les bons, je ne m'écarterai point;
c'est pour en venir les voyageurs et tous les auteurs qui
ont écrit sur Madagascar, la sobriété en tout genre
est de première nécessité pour conserver la santé, et
quoique la santé ne soit pas très saine, l'on s'y porte
bien, l'expérience en a été prouvée.

Chère Emilie, si tu te tardes beaucoup, ainsi qu'à la
bonne Annonciation, de recevoir de mes nouvelles, mon intention
à notre époque en la même, et je t'en ai écrit à elle-ci
j'en ai écrit quelque chose; le jour de mon départ de Bourbon
j'en ai écrit quelque chose, et c'est le 6 août, elle du 22 mars;
je t'en ai écrit encore une le 22 mars, par le capitaine de Royons, en
question de la rivière de Bordeaux; ainsi ta lettre t'en a bien
fait de jours après mon départ; elle me cause un bien vif émotion
ma chère amie, et me cause un véritable plaisir; tu me parles
de toutes les personnes que j'aime, ton frère, de ta bonne
maman, de toi, de nos chers enfants, il n'en faut pas d'autre
pour me t'en parler jusqu'au bout. Chère Emilie, conserve moi
toujours la même bonté, le même attachement, rappelle-toi
qu'il est nécessaire à mon bonheur, et mon existence, et est actuellement
ce qui m'est le plus cher.

Some interesting highlights from 6 page letter:

Long delays and unreliable mail service

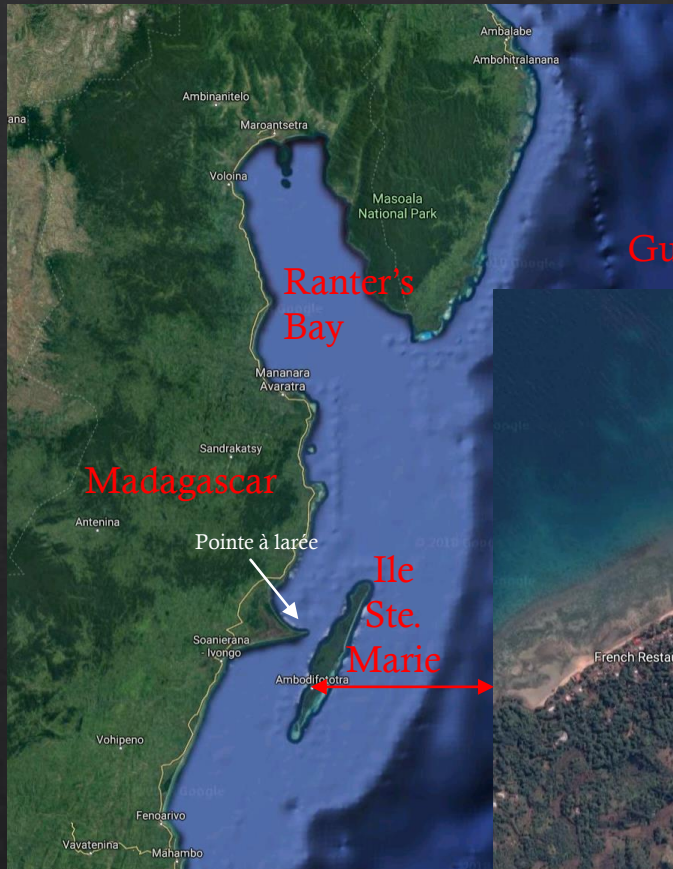
Mail from France only carried by King's ships or those traveling directly to Ile St. Marie, Bourbon, Maurice, or Madagascar

Infrequent boat travel to/from Bourbon means 1 month wait

Tactic for sending letters to Europe – write many and hope for luck; apology for repetition of the letters' contents

Currently taking about 5 months to receive wife's letters from France

"Less unhappy and getting used to this awful place"



Batteries,
Gun powder storage,
Supplies,
Barracks



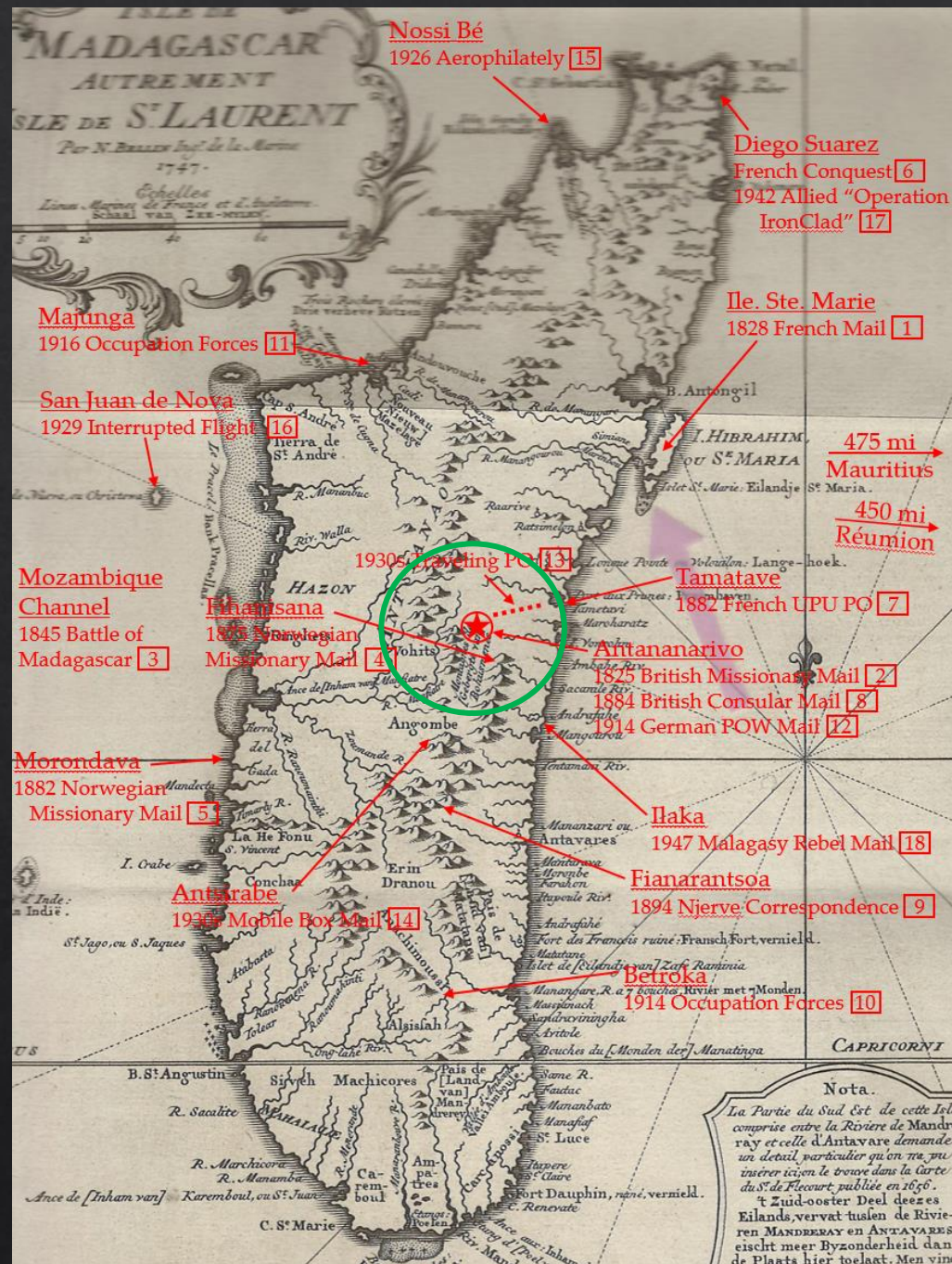
Very unpleasant crossing
in bad weather

Building a house

Ile aux Forbans, was the island
fortress home of infamous
pirates:

Henry Every
William Kidd
Thomas Tew
Olivier Levasseur
Robert Culliford
Abraham Samuel

Had a population of 1500 in 1690, and conducted major trade with
Boston & NYC (Frederick Phillipse)



Early Madagascar

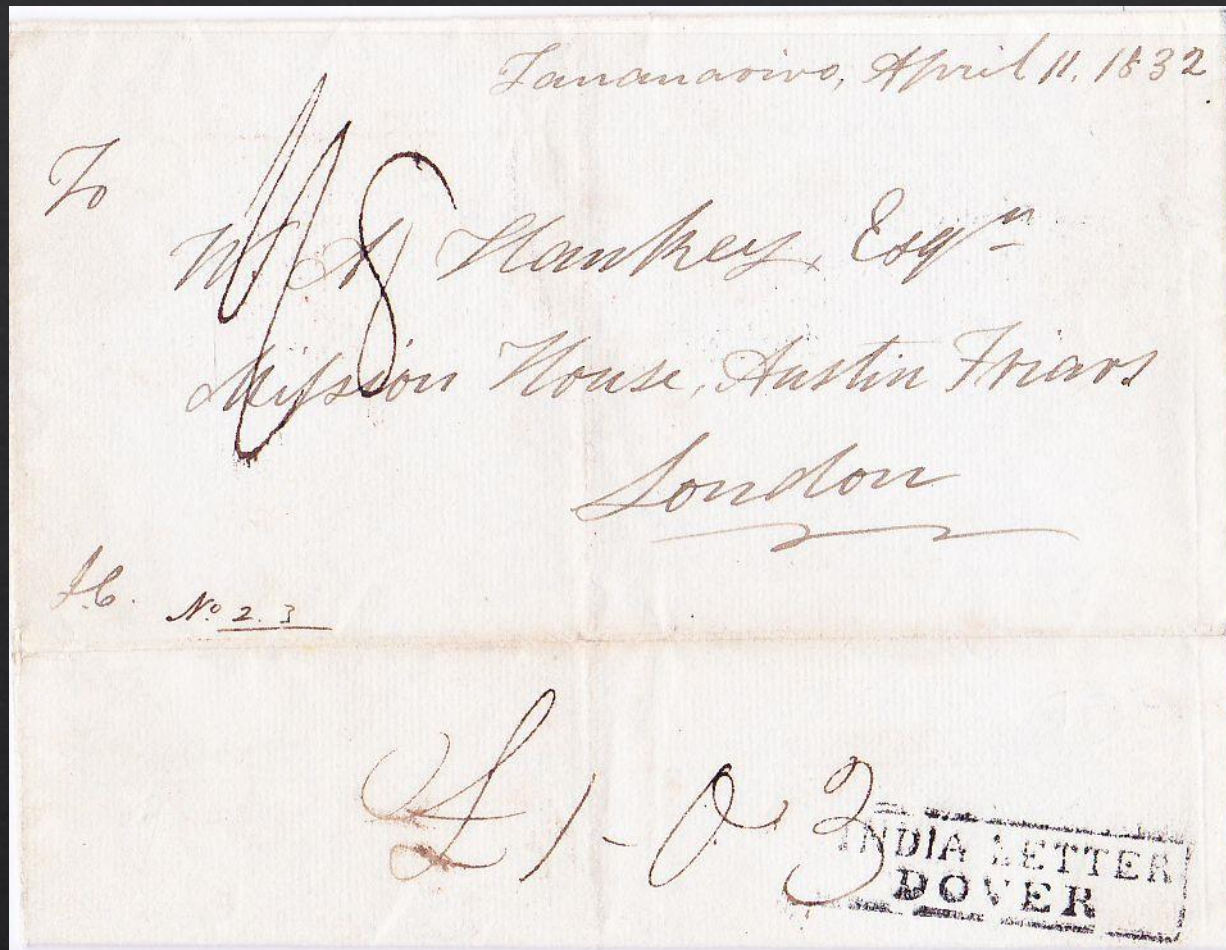
King Radama I (1810-1828) furthered political unification and took an interest in European civilization. He welcomed British missionaries in 1817.



The Rev. David Griffiths arrived in 1821 and was one of the most important early missionaries. Griffiths made a point of telling students "... they will sin against God if they do not honor their king," much to the approval of King Radama I.

This is one of the earliest known missionary letters from Madagascar. This is an 1825 letter from the Rev. David Griffiths to the London Missionary Society. It is dated March 21, 1825, and it was received December 26, 1825 (manuscript receipt dated on reverse side). It was forwarded through Gibraltar on October 21, 1825 (manuscript from the top of the back side, folded up for view, near the seal).

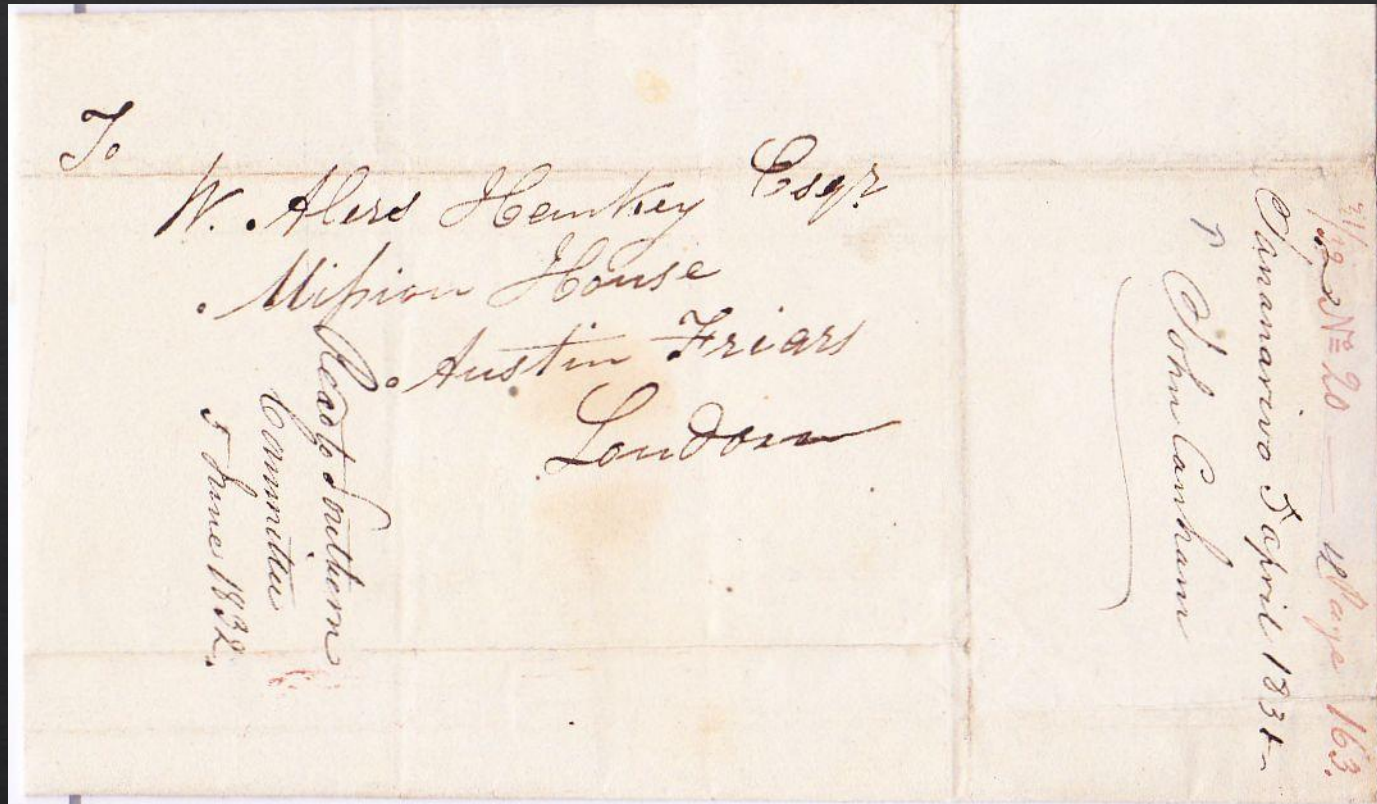
Early Madagascar



This is the only known letter from the missionary James Cameron, the leader of the London Missionary Society artisans. Sent April 11, 1832, the letter was received December 27, 1832 (letter is unfolded at top for view of back stamp).

Cameron was an industrious Scot who could accomplish most any task, whether building a palace, producing gunpowder, ironwork, sulfur, acids, or soap, who was most valued by King Radama I. Cameron was alleged to have taken half the profits from his factories and paid no one causing hardship and complaints. The L.M.S. disapproved of him casting cannon, and would have been upset with his profiteering had they known. He later recontinued his missionary work into the 1870s in Madagascar. At the time of his death in 1875, he was so popular that he was given a state funeral, a rare mark of honor for a non-Malagasy citizen.

Early Madagascar



This is the earliest known letter from missionary John Canham. This letter was sent April 5, 1831, and was received January 13, 1832 (manuscript receipt on back side).

Canham was another artisan brought by the London Missionary Society to satisfy King Radama I's request for more artisans. Canham, a tanner, was initially prevented from tanning by the lack of lime and leather. Initially, he had to find local tree barks to use as a substitute for lime. Also, because there was no domestic skinning industry (the Malagasy ate beef with the hide attached), he had to import hides back from Mauritius from cattle exported from Madagascar. He was invited to stay on the island, but chose to follow his colleagues into exile in 1834.

Madagascar Closes to the World



“Mad Monarch of Madagascar,” Ranavalona I is considered one the cruelest female political leaders in history. Ranavalona I ruled the African island of Madagascar for 33 years that were filled with terror, fear, and violence.

Her reign was a xenophobic isolation of Madagascar from 1828-1861. She led extreme measures to push away European interests and Christianity.

She made extensive use of forced labor in lieu of tax payments under very harsh conditions and high mortality rate.

She maintained social order through the tangena trial by ordeal ritual. Residents of Madagascar could accuse one another of various crimes, including theft, Christianity and especially witchcraft, for which the ordeal of tangena was routinely obligatory.

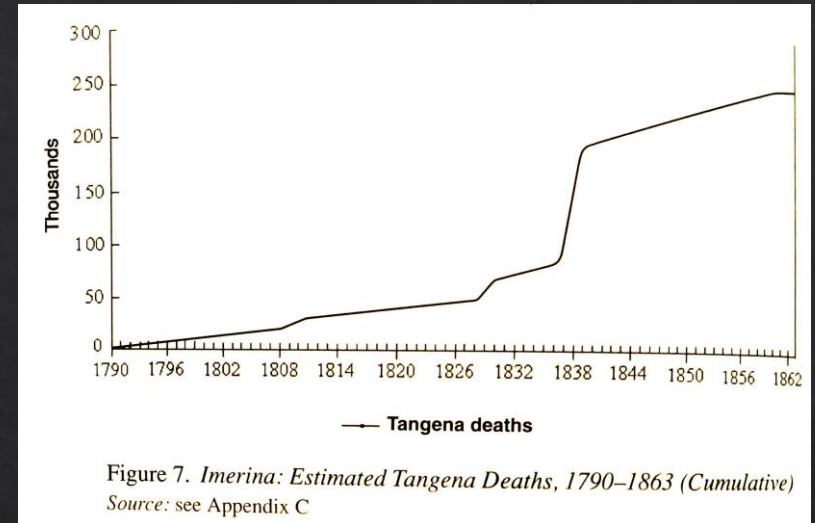
The population of Madagascar declined from 5 million to 2.5 million between 1833 and 1839.

Madagascar Closes to the World

Trial by Ordeal



R. Mustacich, Tangena site outside Antananarivo, 2015



An Economic History of Imperial Madagascar, 1750-1895,
G. Campbell, 2005.

The accused ingests a large dose of the tangena plant (contains a highly toxic cardioglycoside). Death = guilty. An estimated 20 to 50 percent of those who underwent the ordeal died. About 20% of the population underwent the ordeal in 1838 alone.

Isolation during Ranavalona's reign → very little postal history exists from this time period.

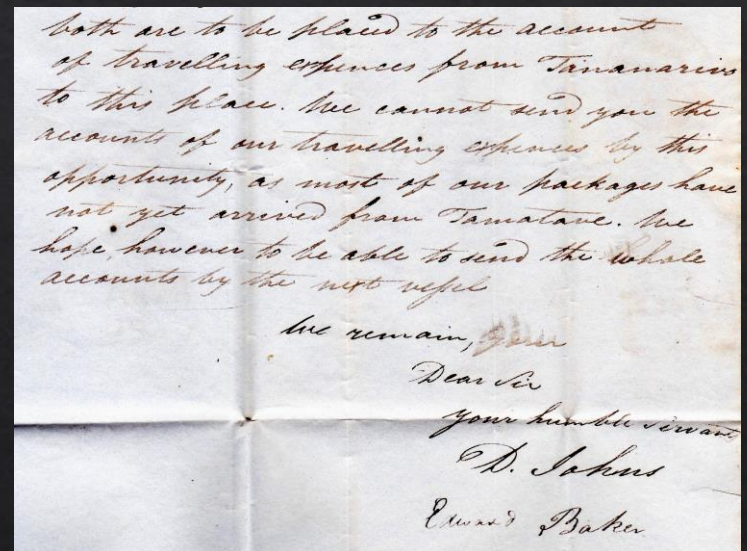
Madagascar Closes to the World

Under Queen Ranavalona I, the practice of Christianity was decreed punishable by death in 1835. The missionaries could no longer interact with her subjects, but were encouraged to stay as artisans. They decided to leave Madagascar.



The letter from the last LMS missionaries to leave, sent upon their arrival in Mauritius (Sept 12, 1836). (The latest letter in the LMS archives from this period is dated July 20 1835.) India Letter/Dover with red "1/" or "16" marking, but 4d and 8d mostly found on Mauritius letters from this period. Ship transport was sometimes erratic and subject to price changes. Arrived in 85 days.

Four of the six LMS (London Missionary Society) missionaries departed in 1835. The two remaining, David Johns and Edward Baker, dismantled the LMS press, buried some 70 Bibles and religious materials, and shuttered the mission once it became too difficult to practice. The departing Baker and Johns arrived in Mauritius from Tamatave in 1836 according to their letter:



... both are to be placed to the account of travelling expenses from Tananarivo to this place. We cannot send you the accounts of our travelling expenses by this opportunity, as most of our packages have not yet arrived from Tamatave. We hope, however, to be able to send the whole accounts by the next vessel.

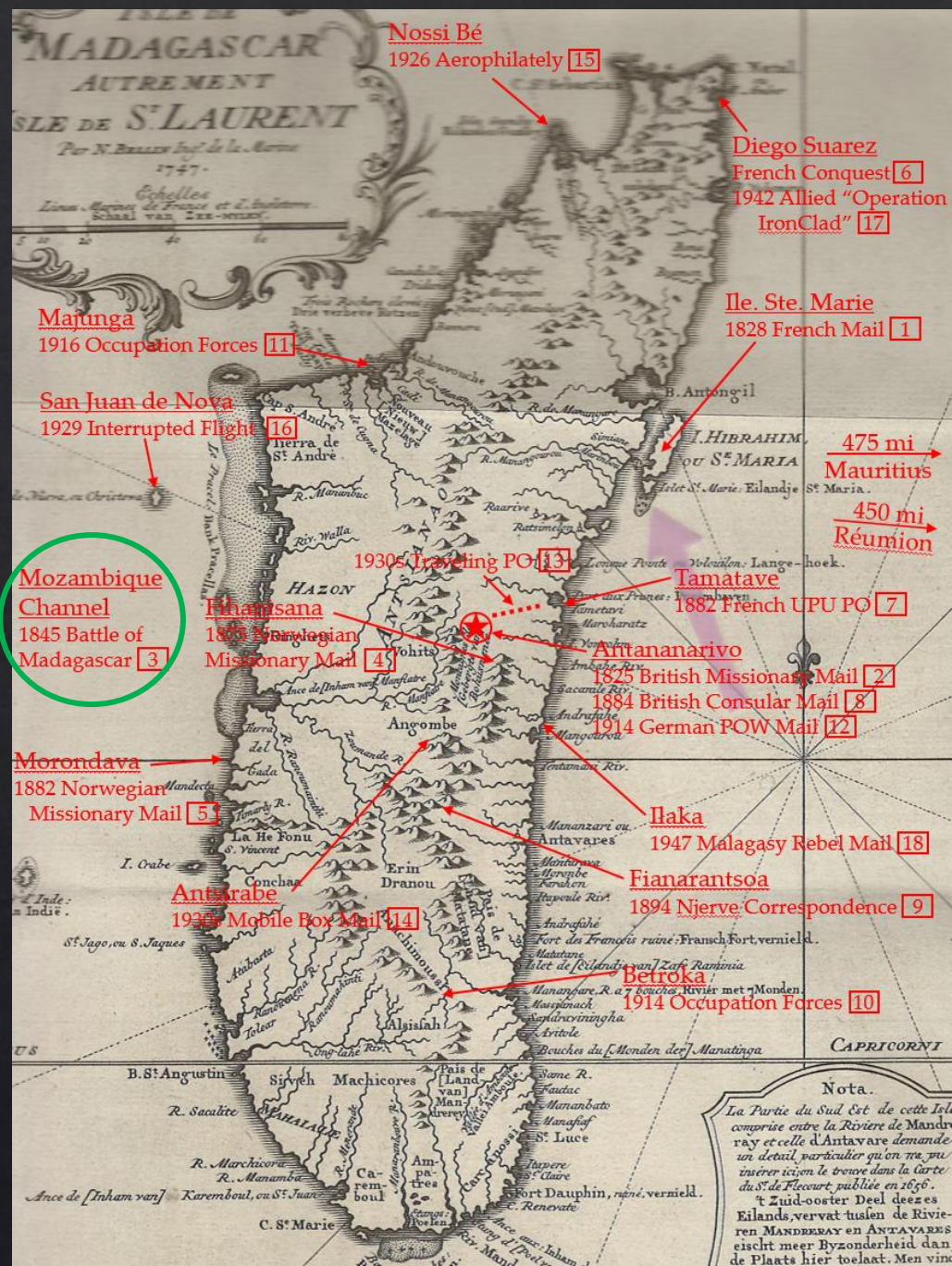
We remain,

Dear Sir

your humble servants

D. Johns

Edward Baker



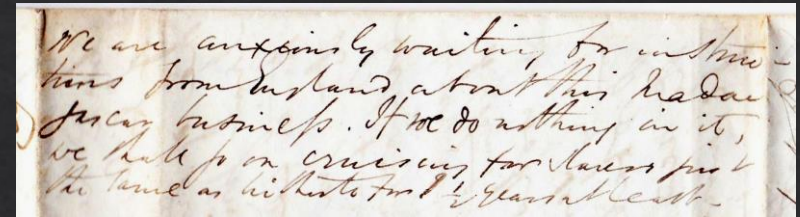
Madagascar Closes to the World

Queen Ranavalona I decreed in 1845 that all Europeans remaining on the island would have to participate in public works, even such as were performed by slaves, at the simple request of authorities. Additionally, they would be subject to the tangena trial by ordeal, and a penalty of life-long slavery for transgressions. In response to the alarm of traders in the ports, the British join the French in a bombardment attack of Tamatave, the main port, on June 15, 1845. This action further estranged Madagascar from the European powers.



Oct 26 letter carried to London by "Emerald Isle" which arrived Table Bay (Cape) Nov 1, departed Nov 4, arrived Gravesend Nov 29. Pre-paid 7d and charged 8d on arrival. All other known letters regarding the 1845 Battle of Madagascar are in the British National Archives.

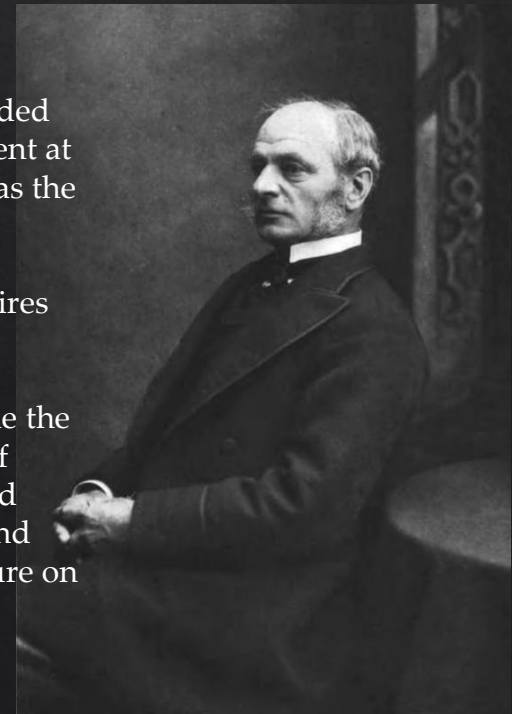
Oct 26 letter from Lt. Montagu Burrows of HMS Sappho to his brother Arthur in Gosport, Hants, care of his father, General Burrows. HMS Sappho is the back-up brig standing at alert in the Mozambique Channel regarding British warfare with Madagascar at Tamatave involving the HMS Conway. HMS Sappho was a brig of over 500 tons on anti-slavery patrol along the Mozambique Channel (main targets were Portuguese and Brazilian slavers).



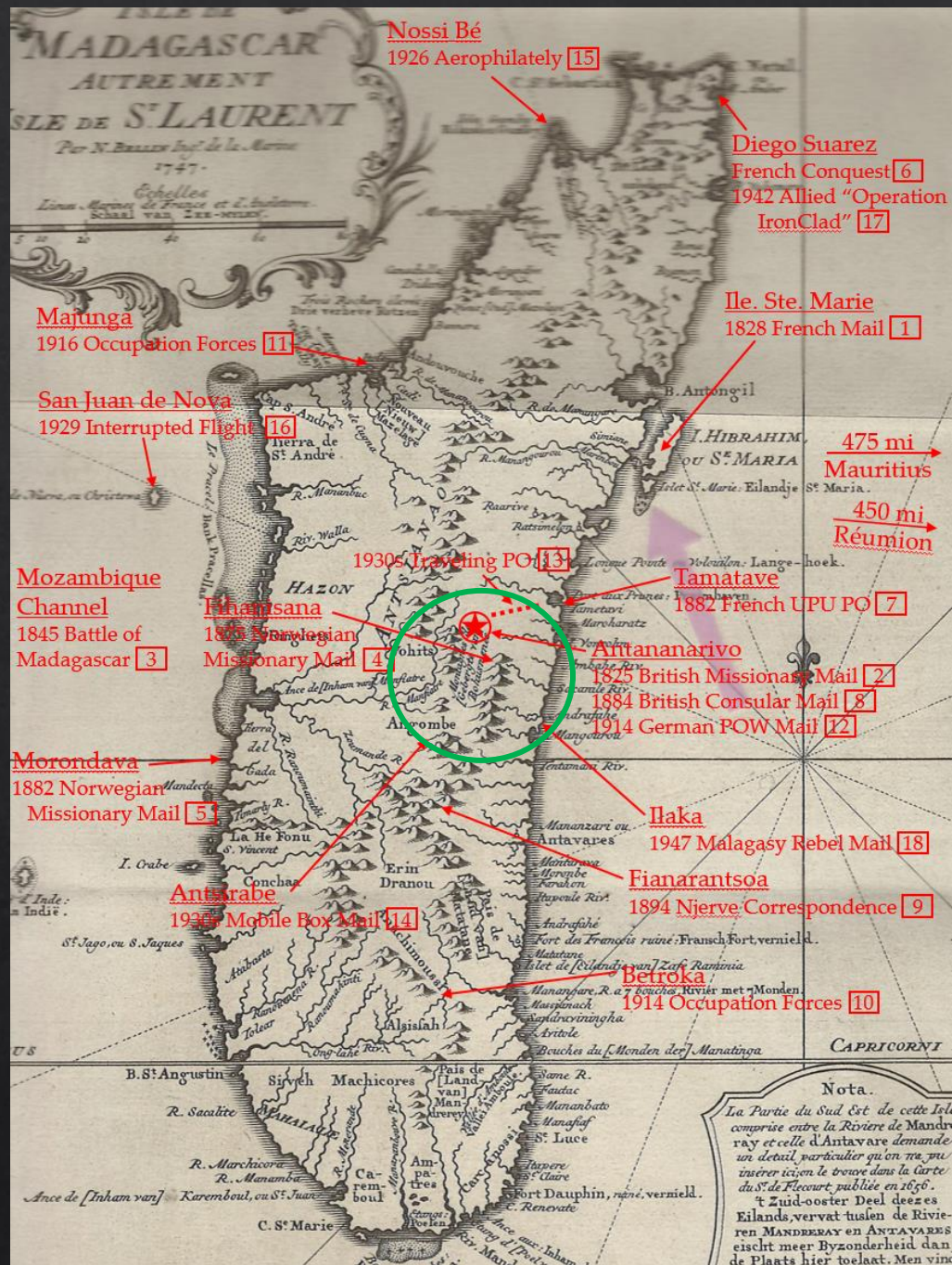
"We are anxiously waiting for instructions from England about this Madagascar business. If we do nothing in it, we shall go on cruising for slaves just the same as hitherto for 1½ years at least."

Burrows, promoted to commander in 1852, decided to instead become a student at Oxford at half-pay. He was the oldest and first person to attain "double firsts" in classes in literae humanoires and Law and History.

Montagu Burrows became the first Chichele Professor of Modern History at Oxford University (1862-1905), and the first academic to lecture on naval history in Britain.





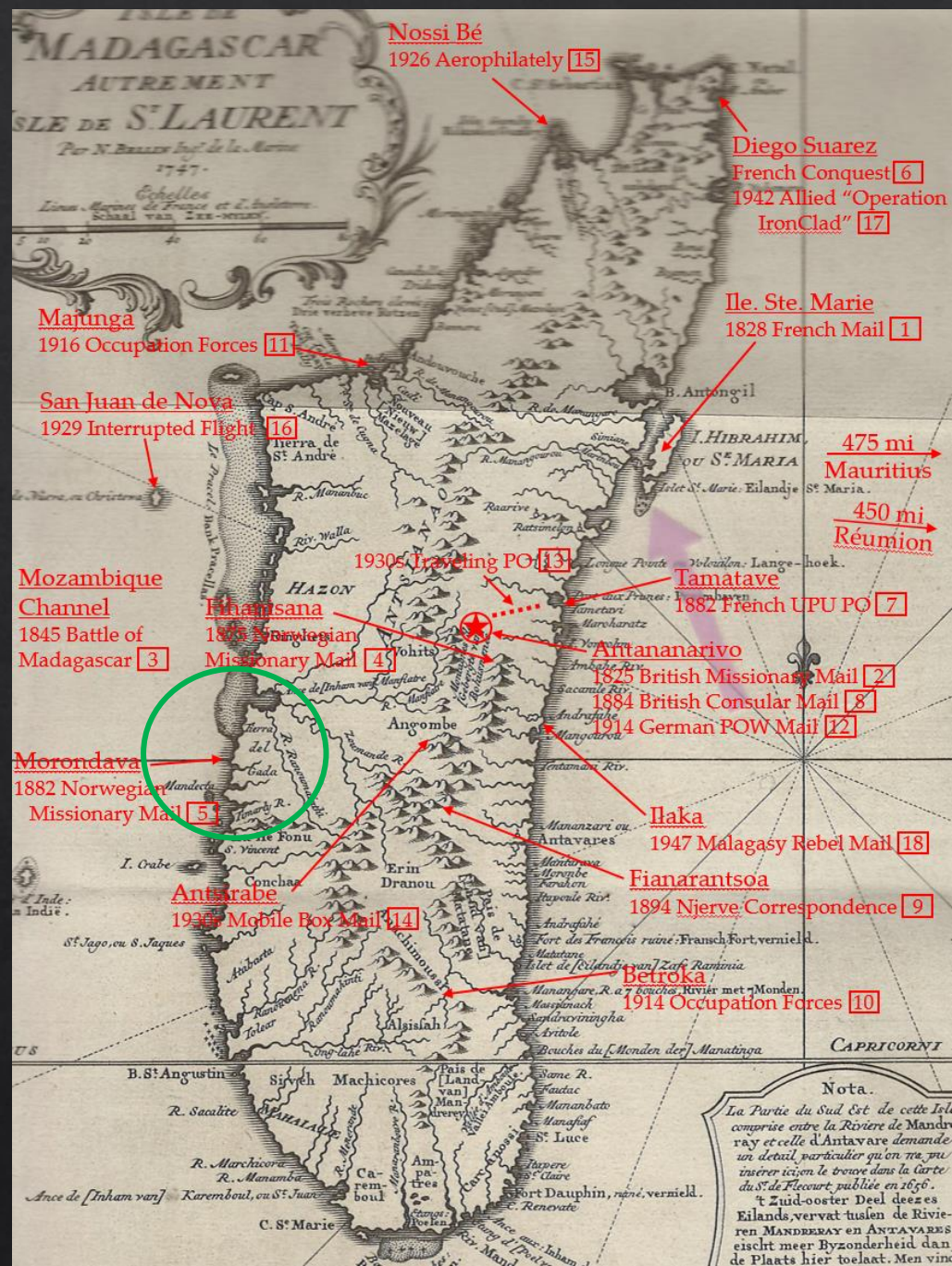


Besides British missionary groups, the Lutherans of the Norwegian Missionary Society (Stavanger, Norway) also started to enter the island about 1870. The NMS built a network of missions over the next decade in different locations on the island.

"This letter is celebrating Christmas day 1875."



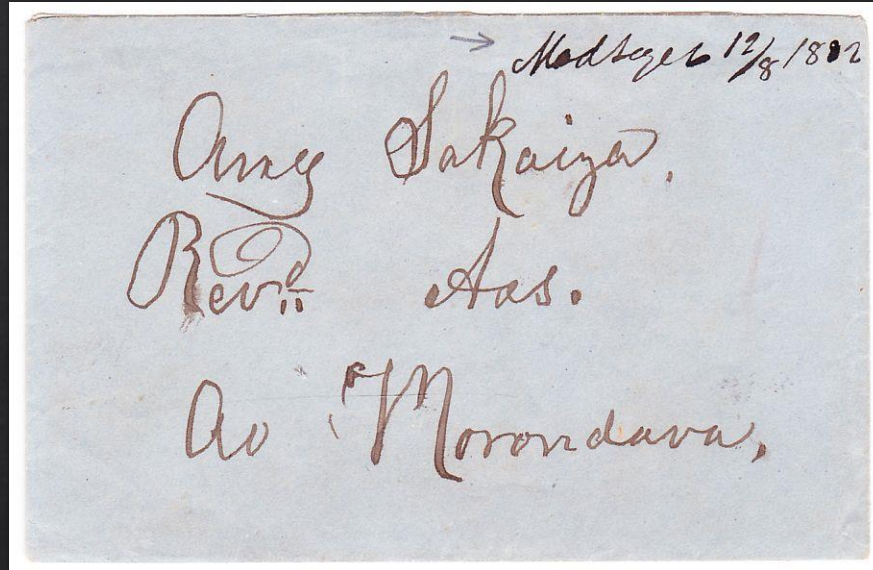
1875 (26 Dec.) Envelope from the Missionary Hasland at Fihasinana (the Highland Mission) addressed to Stavanger in Norway, "Paid" added by British runner service to Tamatave, letter then carried by the ship Elieser to Stavanger. The Norwegian Missionary Society built and owned this ship for the transportation of missionaries. It was launched in Bergen harbor on May 23, 1864. It provided mail service between Madagascar and Norway in its voyages during the 1880s, especially for non-French residents during the 1883-5 war with France. **Rare early Norwegian missionary mail.**



Madagascar Gradually Reopens

Norwegian Missionary Mail

"Received 12/8 1882"



"Dear Friend,
Reverend Aas.
In Morondava"

Letters to Rev. Reinert Larsen Aas, director of the Norwegian Mission in Morondava on the west coast of Madagascar during the years 1882-88, 1892-1900, and 1902-07. He was the supervisor for the Norwegian missions in western Madagascar 1895-97 and 1903-04. His final return to Norway was in 1907, and he received the king's gold medal of honor in 1924.



Rev. Reinert Larson Aas was married in Morondava in 1882 to Ingeborg Olsdatter Fatnes. Ingeborg died in Morondava in 1884. A picture taken from the 1882 wedding is shown on the right.

1880s envelope to Rev. Aas in Bethel (Morondava) – typical aniline ink often used by the Norwegian Mission.



"This letter of mine has gone both nights and days to get to Bethel," a remarkable runner post document.



Sunset Near Morondava



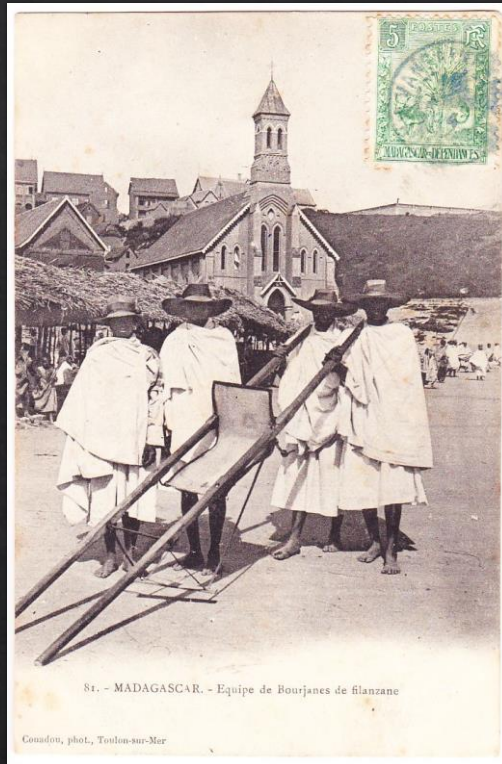
Adansonia grandidieri

Photograph taken October 2015

Getting Around is Difficult

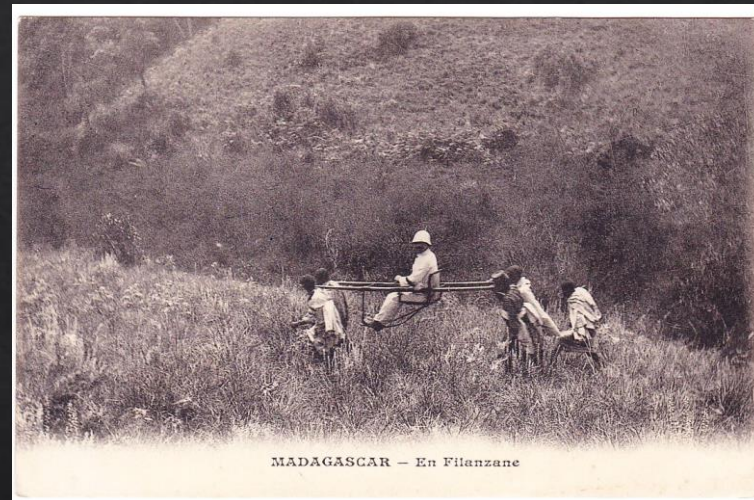


Similar to organized runners who could carry mail across the island, a slave class of nearly 60,000 handled portage. Road construction was not allowed. In the late 19th century, travel was no less arduous than early in the century. Some postcards illustrate the travel by sedan chair (filanzane) of dignitaries, Europeans, and missionaries in these times.



St. - MADAGASCAR. - Equipe de Bourjanes de filanzane

Canadon, phot., Toulon-sur-Mer



MADAGASCAR - En Filanzane

Visitors were smart to treat their porters well. For difficult passengers, or their own amusement, they had a variety of gates:

- rano mandry ("sleeping water") — a smooth ride
- betsimisay — an unequal step that resulted in passenger fatigue
- bakose — an elongate stride for a fast, bumpy ride
- banansandrata — a disagreeable gait resembling a limping animal that gave the impression of an impending crash and fall with each step



West Coast Highway North of Toliara, 2011

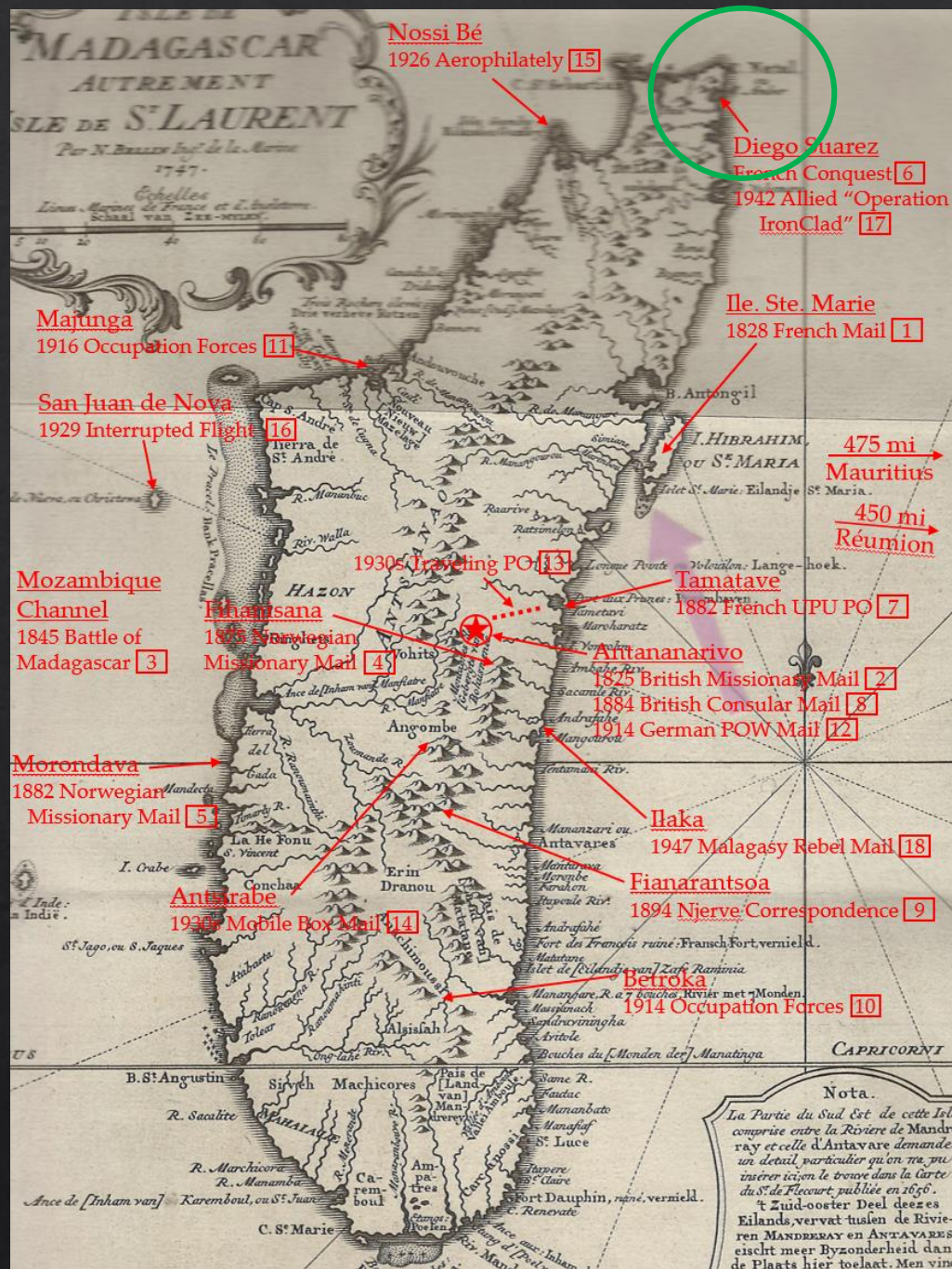




Smallest Primate, the “Mouse” Lemur



R. Mustacich, 2011



- Northern tribes persecuted by Queen Ranavalona I sought protection by France. France used this, and other pretenses, to take territories and gain concession in the north of the island. The French took Nossi-Bé in 1841.
- Queen Ranavalona I's successors in the 1860s welcomed the British back, but not the French because of their aggressions in the north.
- Madagascar's royal adoption of Protestantism in 1869 further antagonized the French.
- In 1882, the UPU (Berne) admitted a French Post Office in Tamatave to the Postal Union. The French regularized postage rates from Madagascar to the rest of the world through a Tamatave-Réunion route.
- Worsening relations with France resulted in blockades, and then the Franco-Malagasy war of 1883-85. Tamatave was captured by France in 1883. This gave France control of the main port, a foothold more central to the island, and control of much the island's mail.

In 1883 the French start the First Franco-Hova war in the north. Diego Suarez was one of the northern territories gained in 1885. France already possessed a number of islands including Ile. St. Marie and Nosi Bé.



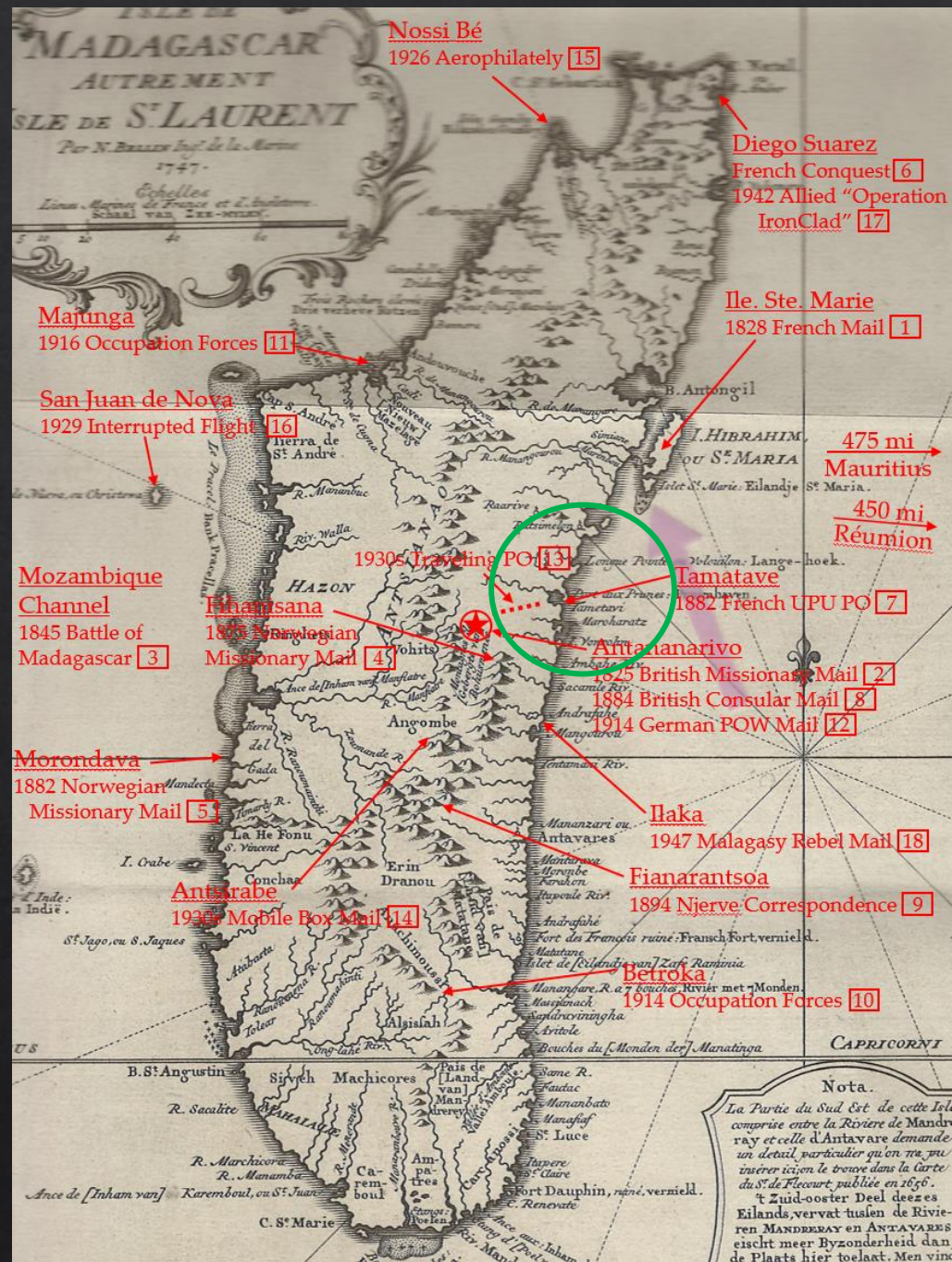
The first stamps of Diego Suarez appeared in 1890 and included value-overprinted French Colony stamps and these typographed stamps.



Stampless French Military Mail Sent to a Country Requiring Postage



An example of stampless French military mail sent to Egypt with the required postage. The postage due markings and the 2 pi postage due stamp were applied.



The UPU (Berne) established French Post Office at Tamatave became the standard route for overseas mail. Its location was made permanent in 1889, and soon French post offices started to spread through Madagascar with permission by French authorities to extend UPU rates to these localities. This postal system was disrupted by hostilities in 1895. The system was subject to frequent stamp shortages, irregularities, and operated effectively as a pseudo-Protectorate for during conquest.

Mail from Antananarivo within the Protectorate

1892 registered cover features two of the first stamps of Madagascar that were not over-printed French Colony stamps.

Shortages of low denomination stamps led to many different overprints. The 55 centimes rate may have exceeded the required postage. Note the unusual notation and tally of stamp denominations in matching ink.



This is a **scarce early cover to naturalists** studying the most unusual flora and fauna of Madagascar. The “Perrot freres” were naturalists from Mauritius who lived in Tamatave during 1890-1897. They extensively collected mosses and insects in central and N.E. Madagascar.

High Denomination Stamp of the Imperforate 1891 Series on Cover



The 1891 series stamp consisted of 5c, 10c, 15c, 25c, 1F, and 5F denominations. The 1F and 5F are little seen on cover. This cover is signed by Calves. There are perhaps three known covers with the 5F stamp.

British Consular Mail: A Response to French-Malagasy Hostilities

Britain was considered a rival, and consequently British mail was often blocked or charged exorbitant rates when reaching Tamatave. In response to pleas to Britain, the London Missionary Society member, Clayton W. Pickersgill, was appointed British Vice-Consul to help British and missionary interests organize more frequent and cheaper mail service. Pickersgill started a local mail service where the consulate would collect mail and fees, affix stamps, courier the mail to the Tamatave consulate, remove the local stamps, and settle postage fees there in the French post office to continue the mail service.



Note the manuscript-corrected printing error on this stamp.



Typical rough condition of used stamps.

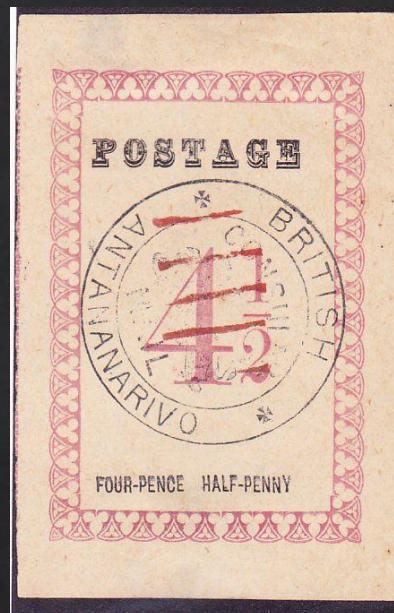


The only first issue stamp printed in red. The red diagonal line is often seen on first issues and is thought to be a form of pre-cancel, possibly for official use.

Stamps were typographed at the press of the London Missionary Society in Antananarivo, and gummed at one corner. On receipt at the Consul's office, the stamp would be torn off for accounting purposes, and mail would be dispatched through the nearby post office after affixing UPU-recognized postage stamps.



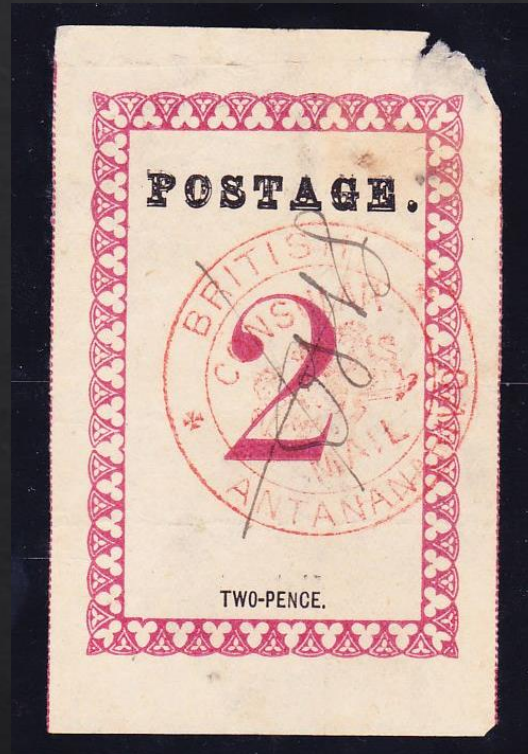
About 90% of used stamps are canceled with a blue crayon. These are two common types of crayon cancels.



A handstamp of parallel bars is a less common cancel variety. A triple combination of bars, red crayon, and Pickersgill's initials is very unusual. The initials are a match to his initialing of a receipt for printed matter in an accounting ledger in England.

These stamps were not complete and had no value without the consular hand stamp. The consular hand stamp was applied in three different colors: black, violet, and on rare occasions, red. Because the stamps were removed before transfer to the French post office in Tamatave, there are no known postal history pieces bearing any of these issues that have been postally used or show evidence of handling through the postal systems.

British Consular Mail
1886 Second Issue Stamped in Red



Three denominations of the second issue are known to be stamped in red. All are very scarce. **This is the discovery item and the only known example of the 2 pence stamped in red. This is one of the rarest stamps of all of the British Colonies.** It was first reported in Robson Lowe Ltd: Philatelist in May of 1966. It is canceled with Pickersgill's initials.

Text from a letter from Pickersgill explaining that stamp collectors put an end to the stamps
(emphasized text is blue):

Her Majesty's Vice-Consulate,

PRIVATE. Antananarivo
May 21st, 1891.

Dear Mr. Scott,

Timbromaniacs are the plague of my life. The ends of the earth seem full of them. They write from the east and they write from the west and the horse-leech's daughter herself cannot beat them for importunity.

But a request from Lancashire College is quite another thing. I cannot, however, send you exactly what you ask for. No stamps have ever been issued by the Malagasy Government. Those in use here at present are, as you will see from the cover hereof, French Colonial stamps. At the time there still exists the British Mail which I started in the year 1884, at the request of all the foreigners then residing here. To facilitate the payment of postage I devised a rough and ready equivalent for chopped dollar. It took the form of a ticket, gummed at one corner only so as to be easily attached to a letter and as easily removed. The name given to this make-shift was "Consular Mail Frank".

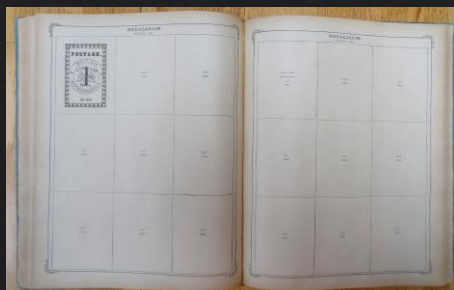
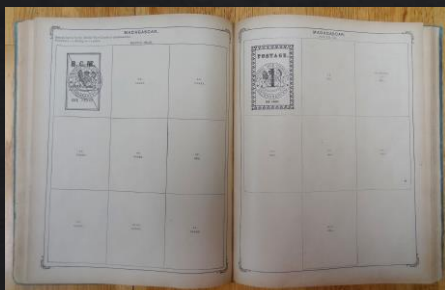
Enclosed herewith you will find a few specimens. I cannot possibly let you have a complete set, for the simple reason that I have not got one. Let me beg you not to put anybody else upon the track of such odd souvenirs as still remain to me.

The defaced specimen will probably be most interesting to you. The others lack the impression of the hand-stamp which gave them value when issued for cash. It is now upwards of 3 years since their use was discontinued. The maniacs made such a flutter about them, that I was obliged to revert to chopped dollars . . .

Yours faithfully,

W. CLAYTON PICKERSGILL

S. Graveson, Philatelist (Robson Lowe Ltd.), 13:46.



Chopped trade dollars were widely used across Asia and east Africa, though often short in supply in Madagascar. Asian merchants applied the chop marks. Like postal history, the chop marks show the flow of the coins between merchants. This is an 1877 U.S. trade dollar.

These stamps found their way quickly into the Scott International album. They were allotted more than 4 pages in the 1888 Scott International Album – this led to strong demand that the embassy could not cope with!

**CONSUL-GENERAL
PICKERSGILL ILL.**

**Suffers From a Recurrence of Madagasc-
car Fever and Is Taken to
a Sanitarium.**

British Consul-General Pickersgill was taken from the Santa Cruz train at Park-street station, Alameda, at 5:15 yesterday evening and conveyed to a sanitarium. Since Wednesday last Pickersgill and his family had been staying at Hotel Rowardennon, in the Santa Cruz mountains. He was taken ill on Friday and Dr. F. W. D'Evelyn and a trained nurse were summoned from San Francisco. Dr. D'Evelyn found the patient to be suffering from a recurrence of Madagascar fever. It was decided to move the patient and accordingly Pickersgill was placed on a stretcher in the baggage car. At Alameda he was met by Mr. Grislain, the Belgian Consul, and British Vice-Consul Wellesly Moore. Pickersgill's condition is not considered critical at present. He has been on this Coast for two years. For twenty-two years previous he had been stationed in Africa. He is married and has four children.


S.F. Chronicle, July 15, 1901

- Ailing the "Madagascar Fever," Pickersgill was reported to San Francisco in 1899. He died 2 years later.
- Pickersgill brought with him a small stash of some sheets.
- His stash went to an unidentified stamp dealer in San Francisco who suffered the 1906 earthquake's flood and fires.
- The small heat and water-fused brick of stamp sheets showing Madagascar on the surface came to the attention of George Holschauer at a Westpex show.
- George later found an art conservator who thought it would be possible to extract and salvage some of the material from the block.
- The block contained only a few scarce denominations, and a few multiples were salvaged.

16

**THE PASSING OF
W. C. PICKERSGILL.**

British Consul-General for the Pacific
States and Territories
Is Dead.



CLAYTON PICKERSGILL, British Britannic Majesty's Consul-General for the States of California, Nevada and Utah, and the Consulate of Australia, the

S.F. Chronicle, July 20, 1901



The stamps were printed in sheets of four at the London Missionary Society in Antananarivo. These were gummed at the top left corner of the back side.

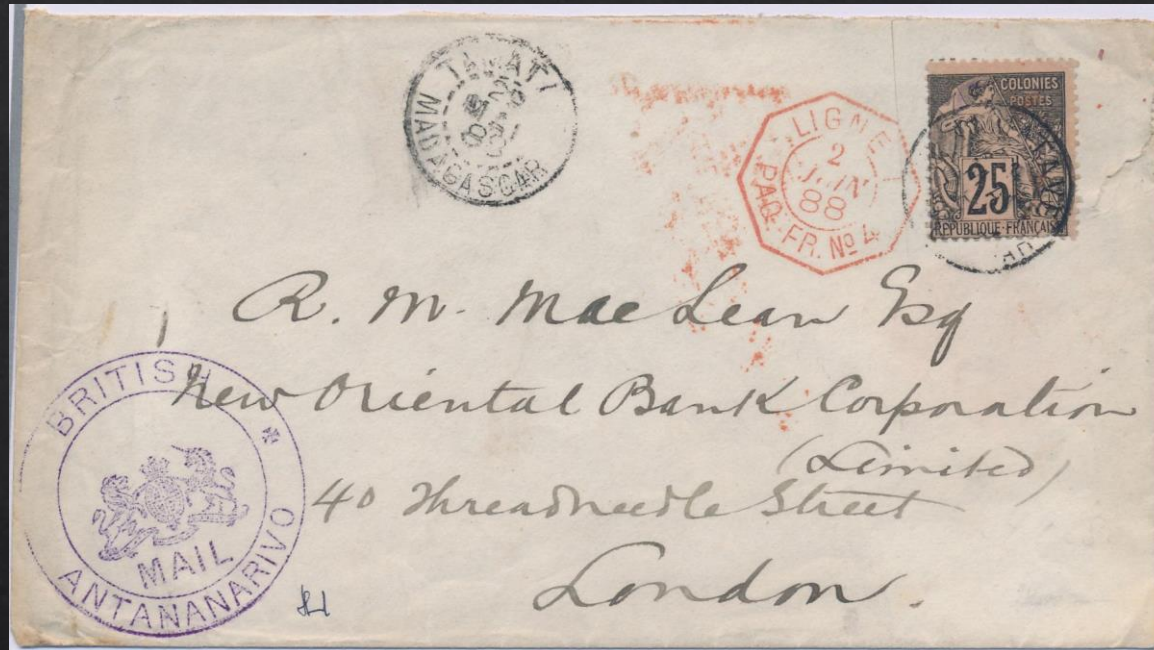


Surviving Multiples from Great 1906 San Francisco Earthquake



British Consular Mail Cachet of 1887-1888

The British Consular Mail hand stamp previously used to complete the Consular Mail stamps was briefly applied directly to envelopes for consular mail service in place of the discontinued adhesive stamps.



25 centimes is the single letter rate (up to 15 g) for international mail from Tamatave, in this case to Lancashire, England.

British Consular Mail Use of a Circular Date Stamp (1888-1891)



British Consular Mail from Antananarivo to Forest Side, Mauritius, posted in Tamatave and routed through Réunion. **Only 3 early (1888) covers known.** French single letter rate of 25 centimes paid in Tamatave for international mail.

Red British Mail Tamatave Receiving Stamp



British Consular Mail from Antananarivo to Paris, posted in Tamatave and routed through Réunion. **Only 4 covers known** with the red Tamatave British Mail circular date stamp. The single letter rate was 25 centimes.

Local Use of the British Consular Mail Service 1888-91



Antananarivo to Tamatave local use cover. Only 4 local use covers known from this period.

1890 Eastern Telegraph Company Telegram to Madagascar



Eastern Telegraph Company was once the largest cable operating company in the world, created in 1872 by amalgamating several cable operators. Ships conveyed telegram envelopes beyond the regions with land and submarine cables. This telegram traveled from Zanzibar via Reunion to Tamatave, the main port having a regular shipping connection with Reunion. The India ½ anna stamp is tied with a 'ZANZIBAR/REG/JU26/90' cds with a superb 'R-in-circle' registered stamp. **Scarce item from this time period.**

Escalating War with France Revives the British Post in 1894

- Because of resistance to the invasion by France, in 1894 the French community left the capitol, and the French overseas mail service at Tamatave and Antananarivo was stopped.
- The Malagasy government consequently entered into an agreement with the British Vice Consul to operate overseas and coastal mail. Stamps for this purpose were printed in Antananarivo. Mail was collected in a pouch at the consulate and dispatched monthly to the port of Vatomandry, 60 miles south of Tamatave. Here it was put on a monthly steamer bound for Natal where an agent had the letters stamped and posted at Durban.
- Between May and September 1895 mail was transported 4 times in this manner. In September 1895 the entire island came under French control when Antananarivo was captured. The British post was immediately suppressed.



Only 8 known covers with the first issue 4p and 2½ p, both single letter rates, and the large hand-stamped British Mail cancel. This May 30, 1895, cover departed Vatomandry on July 14 by the Packet Drummond, arrived Delagoa Bay July 28, was stamped in Durban July 30, arrived Plymouth Aug 25, and is back-stamped Leicester on Aug 26, 1895.



Sheet of the 1d British Inland Mail Stamps



Uncancelled stamps are scarce, and perhaps these are considered "unfinished" productions as in the British Consular Mail stamps.

Mail with Second Issue Pictorials of 1895



Only 5 known covers with the second issue 4p and 2½ p, both single letter rates, and the British Mail small canceller. This July 9, 1895, cover departed Vatomandry on July 14 by the Packet Drummond, arrived Delagoa Bay July 28, was stamped in Durban July 30, arrived Reading Aug 26, and is back-stamped Oxford also on Aug 26, 1895.

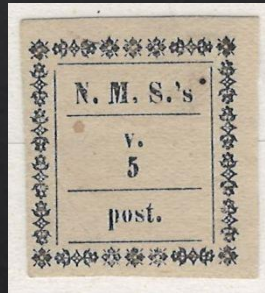
While the 4d stamp is relatively scarce, the other values are little seen on cover.



The Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS) revived their local post as well, but this time with the creation of stamps. The French were not concerned with suppressing this local post with their conquest of the island for two reasons: it was little used and it did access some otherwise difficult areas to reach. A few covers exist, but they are very scarce. Used stamps are scarce. These stamps were typeset using the Bible-printing press at the Norwegian mission, and all are imperforate.



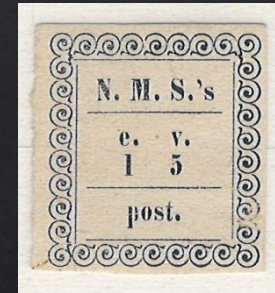
Used $\frac{1}{3}$ öre of the NMS local post First Issue. There was also a 1 öre denomination. **Scarce used**



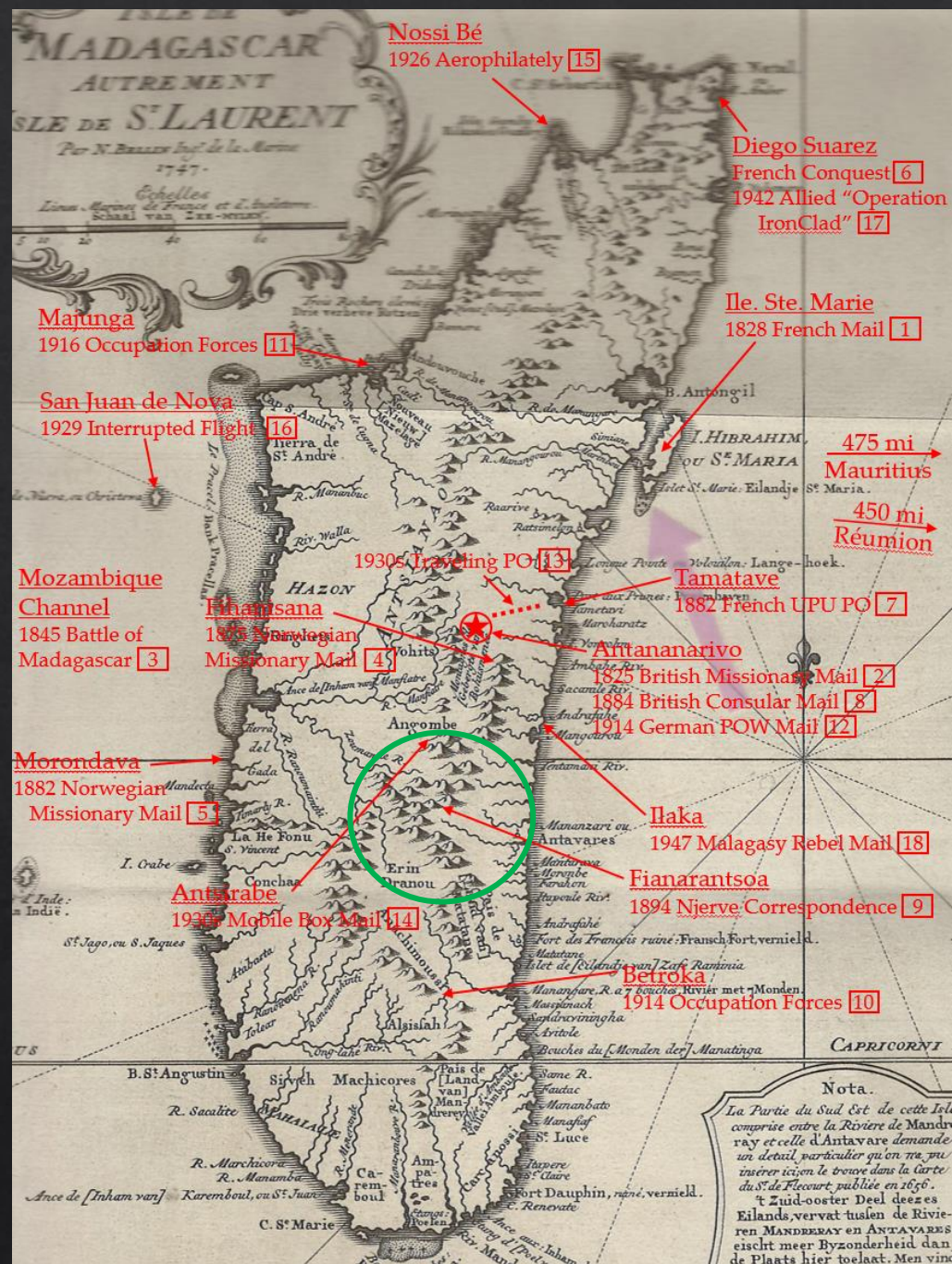
Second Issue 5 vari stamp of the NMS local post. 5 vari was equal to $2\frac{1}{2}$ öre. There was also a 1 öre 5 vari stamp.

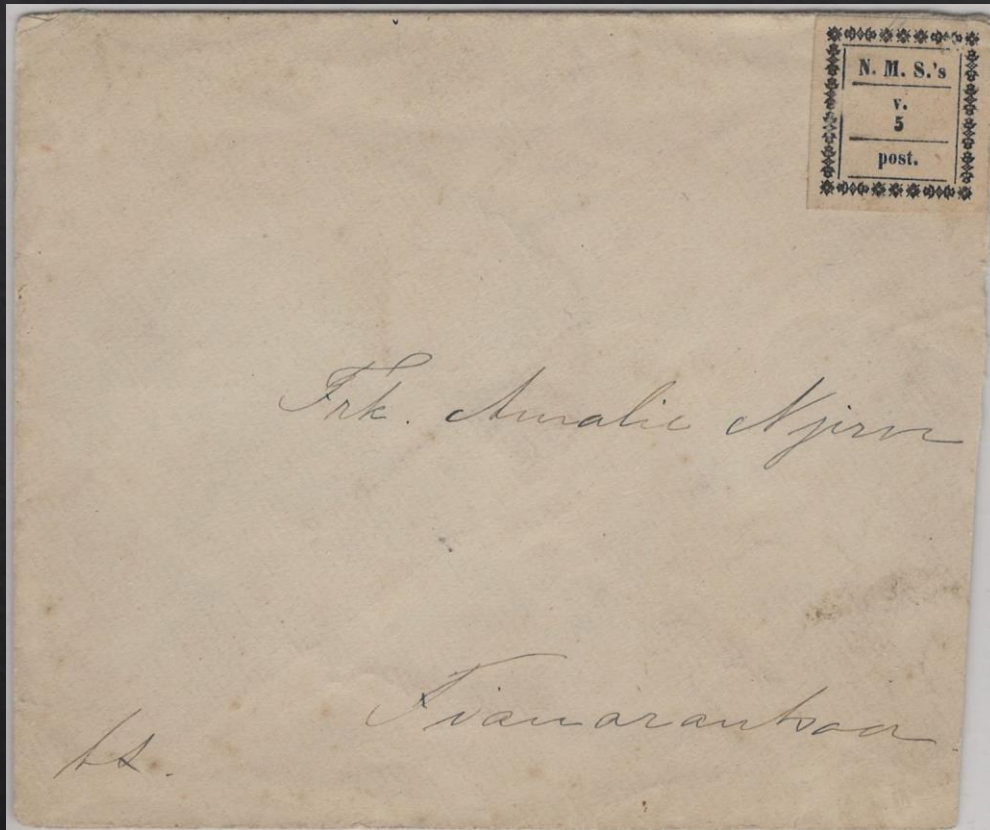


Used Second Issue 5 vari stamp. **Scarce used**



Second Issue 1 öre 5 vari stamp of the NMS local post.





Eight of the 9 known covers with the NMS local stamps bear the second issue 5 vari. Five of the known covers are from surviving correspondence of Miss Amalie Njerve. Miss Njerve was a missionary in Fianarantsoa from 1889-1922. She died in 1948 at the age of 95, a long life for a European having spent many years in Madagascar.

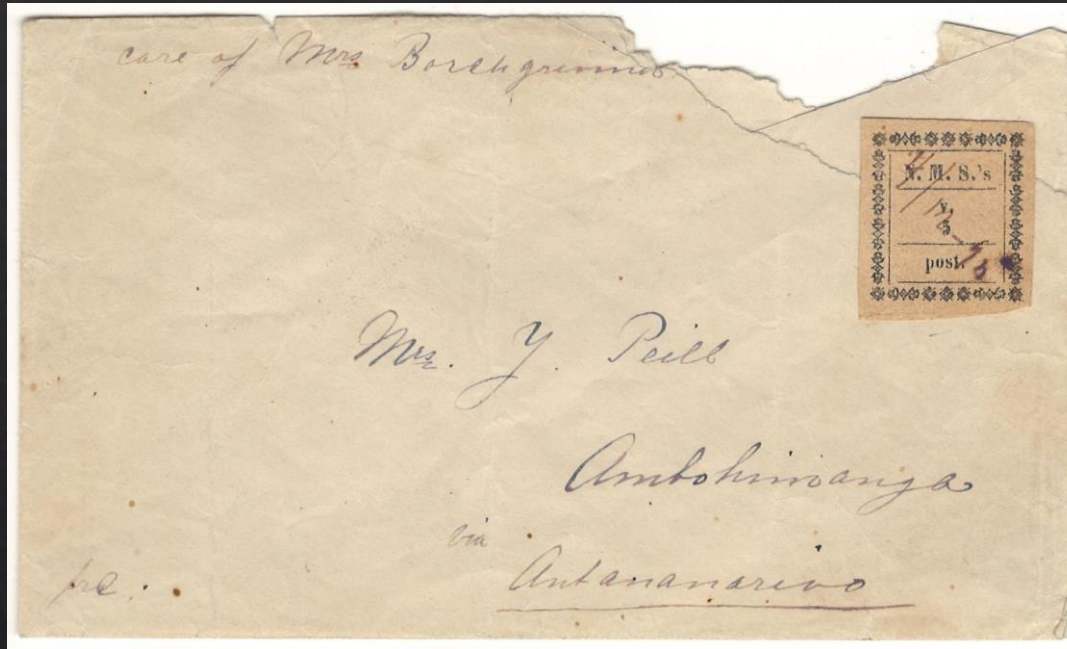


Missionaries gathered outdoors in Fiarantsoa, ca. 1890. Miss Njerve is standing in the back left.



Miss Njerve, standing in the rain, next to Marie Rasmussen, seated, on her way back to Norway in 1900 because of illness. Ms. Rasmussen died that year on board a French steamer near Mayotte where she was buried.

4/12/1894 Letter to Madagascar's Forbidden City, Ambohimanga



Ambohimanga was an early capital that became a sacred compound for rulers once the capital moved to Antananarivo. Access was forbidden to foreigners during most of the 19th century. In 1897 the French colonial administration removed all royal relics to break the spirit of resistance and ethnic identity with the site. **This cover is one of only 4 known covers with NMS local post stamps which are not part of the Njerve correspondence.**



UNESCO World Heritage Site



1905 Photo of NMS Station near Ambohimanga

There was an NMS station at this site in records at least as early as 1905.

Typical Village in Southern “Spiny” Forest



Examples of Overprinting because of Stamp Shortages



5 centime oval overprint of 1896. Only 500 stamps were issued. **This is one of only 3 known covers.** Two of these covers are on identical stationery and addressed to Mr. Inkes of Wellingboro, England.

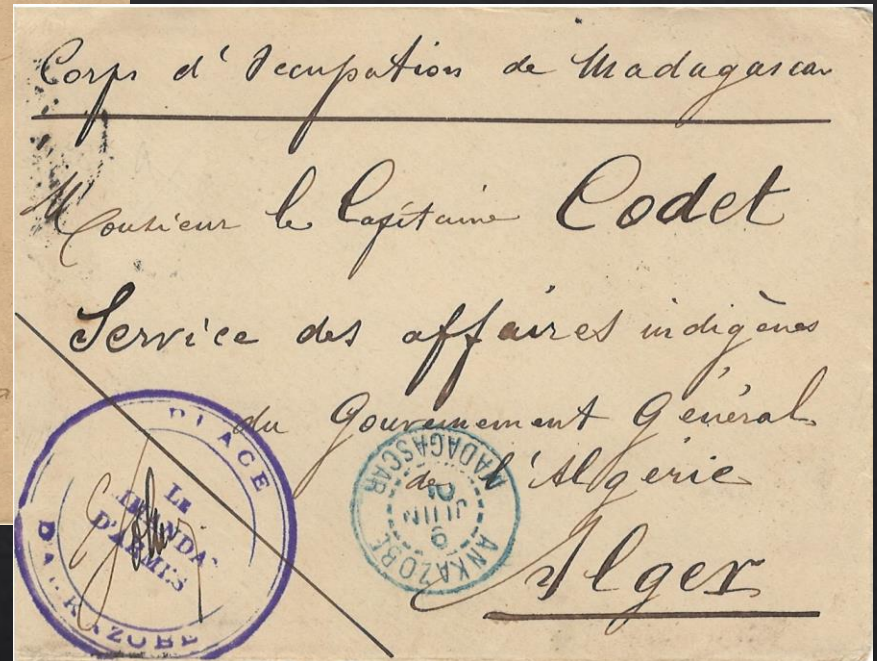


1,000 stamps of this 25 centime oval overprint were also issued in 1896, and this oval overprint is more frequently encountered. Both letters bear Army Post cancellations.

Following the fall of Antananarivo in 1896, it took almost 10 years for the Occupational Forces to subdue all resistance on the island. After January 1899 there was no charge for military mail.



Registered mail of French occupation forces from Fiarantsoa to Manjakandriana between a captain and battalion commander. Cachet of 25th Regiment of Sharpshooters of Madagascar. 1901 backstamp.



Front of envelope from town major at Ankazobe on June 9, 1901, to Algeria.



December 1906 postcard from Diego Suarez "Dangerous Spies Executed During the Last Uprising"

Colonial Period Through WWI

Provisional Datestamps

New colonial post offices starting in 1899 were provided interim datestamps using a numeral until a datestamp was produced with the name of the post office. The numerals ranged from 1-99. These provisional datestamps could be re-used for new locations, but some stayed in the same location for years. No official records of the datestamp allocations are known. Covers with provisional datestamps are uncommon, but they sometimes provide location information. Two types are known: numeral at the top or at the bottom.



Vertical bisects were approved by France for use in colonies experiencing shortages during 1904. However, some questions have been raised whether the Malagasy bisects were philatelic inspirations by the post offices.



Letter from Diego-Suarez to Reunion using bisected 10 and 50 c stamps. A double weight internal letter required a postage of 30 centimes.

Hand stamped in blue:
"Postage exception
(fault of the stamps)"

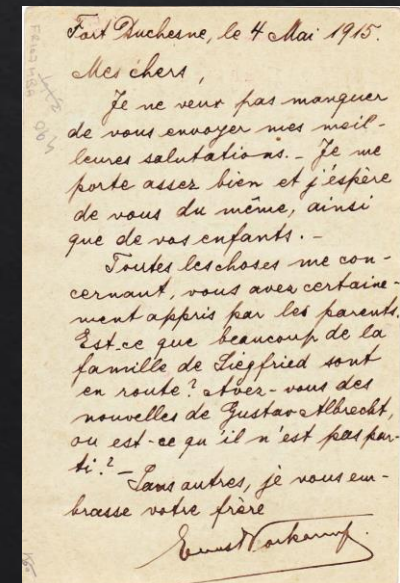
Uncommon overprint used in the town of Vohemar: "Franked but figure faulty." This overprint was used on bisects for a short time during 1904 in only the towns of Vohemar and Antalaha. The bisected 50 c and the 5 c pay the double weight postage of 30 c.



France captured about 350,000 Germans during WWI. France, like Germany, was faced with creating a system of mass captivity for POWs and civilian internees at home, and in its overseas empire. While France did transport many POWs to North Africa, it is not believed to have sent POWs as far as Madagascar. This is a rare example of POW mail from Madagascar thought to be from a civilian internee.



A letter from Ernst Vorkamp, a POW held in Antananarivo, to his sister in Hamburg, Germany. He informs her that he is OK, wishes her family well, and asks if she has other news of the family. Curiously, the letter is in French to a French speaking resident of Hamburg, handled by the office for emigrants in Germany. Vorkamp was possibly a French-speaking German with business in the Madagascar. **WWI POW mail from Madagascar is relatively scarce.**



Top: Care of the Administrator – Tananarive section

Side: Sending Prisoner of War: E. Vorkamp, Tananarive

Hand stamps: Central Information Office for Emigrants, Reich's Commission, Mail from Captive

The postcard rate of 10 centimes for more than 12 words appears to have been used for this POW correspondence.

The governor general approved the purchase of two Blériot airplanes for Madagascar in 1910 for the purpose of postal flights and transportation service. The governor's assistant to civil affairs, Jean Raoult, agreed to obtain a pilot's license and fly the planes. On July 17, 1911, the first flight was successful over the skies of Antananarivo, but the plane was destroyed in a crash landing. Raoult took the second plane to the skies on July 28, 1911, but this flight similarly ended with an accident. This appears to have been the end of Raoult's flying career.



Scarce postcard, stamp missing, sent to Switzerland showing a Raoult flight over Antananarivo, signed by the pilot December 18, 1911.

Early Aerophilately

1926-7 Afrikaflug Mail to Madagascar

The first north-south transversal of Africa was accomplished in 1926 by a Swiss team led by Walter Mittelholzer. Mittelholzer started in Zürich on December 7, 1926, flying via Alexandria and landing in Cape Town on February 21, 1927 (77 days).

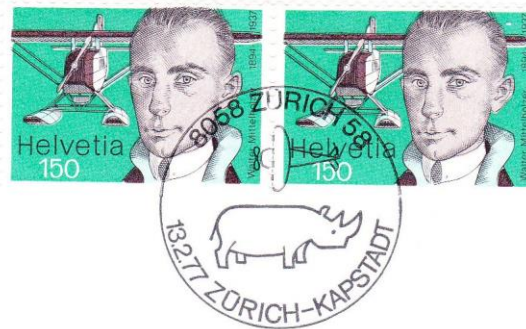


Afrikaflug crew: Rene Gouzy, Arnold Heim, Walter Mittelholzer, and Hilfspilot Hartmann

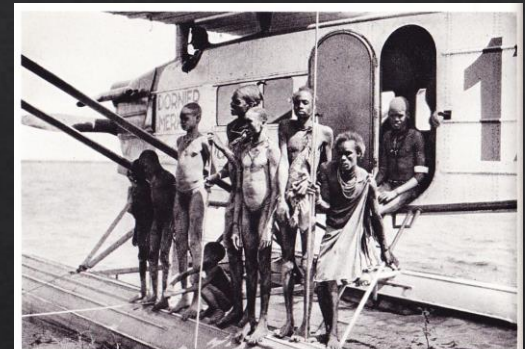
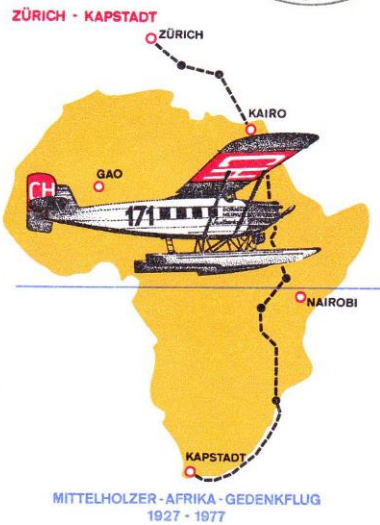


Afrikaflug photo of their traversal of the Alps. Mittelholzer was the director and head pilot of Ad Astra Aero which later became Swissair.

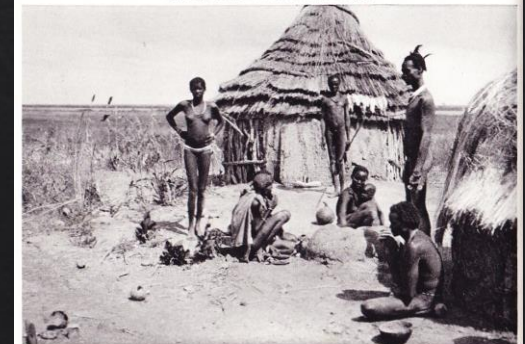
The unusual destination of Madagascar required the mail to be transferred at the Afrikaflug stop in Alexandria to travel by land to Port Said and then by ship to Nossi Bé in northern Madagascar, where it was forwarded to the small village of Anivorano. Postcard postage 0.6F + 0.5F registered mail. **This is the only piece of Madagascar mail known from the Afrikaflug flight.**



Swiss stamps and cover honoring the 50th anniversary of Mitterholzer's completed flight. The cover shows the route traveled.



73. Nach der Landung bei Abwong am Sobatfluf. Die Dinka-Neger haben sich vom ersten Schrecken erholt. 1. Januar 1927



74. Neger-Idyll bei Abwong

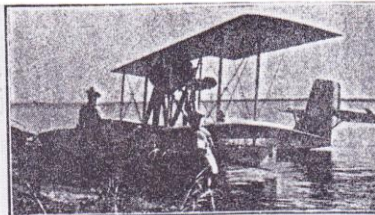
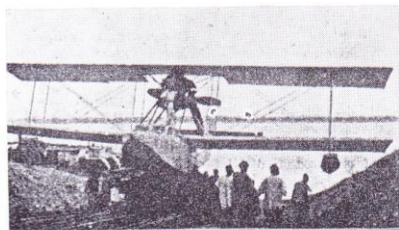
Early Aerophilately

1926 France-Madagascar Flight

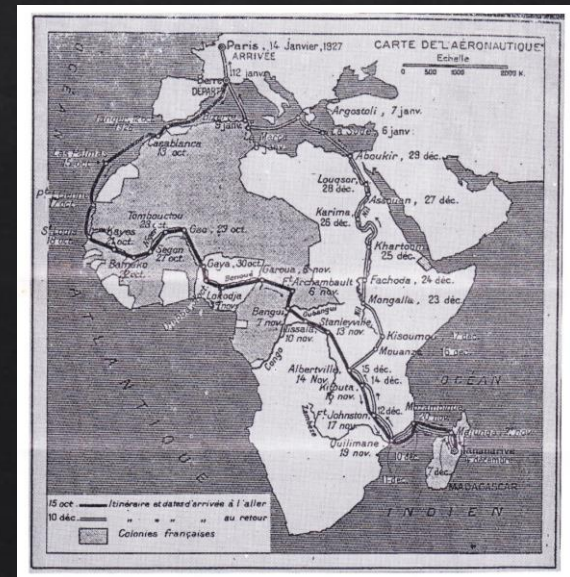
The first long distance flight to Madagascar from France began on October 12, 1926, by two hydroplanes. These were piloted by Navy lieutenants Guillbaud and Bernard. Mails were carried along several stages with the rectangular cachet "VOYAGE AERIEN / FRANCE – MADAGASCAR" in violet. Guillbaud's plane broke down in Lokoja, Nigeria, and he waited 2 months for engine replacement parts before he could return. Bernard continued on to Madagascar, reaching Antananarivo on December 4. The return flight, following the Nile route, departed on December 7 and arrived back in Berre, France, on January 12, 1927 after covering 28,000 km in 260 hours of flight.



This postcard from Berre, France to Tanger, Morocco by the pilot Bernard for himself is **one of only 13 pieces that were carried to this destination**. Postcard postage rate 1F.



The C.A.M.S. 37 as it left Lokojo after installation of new motor (left), and at Malakal on the Nile.



B. Ciragan, Airpost Journal, March 1985, pp. 198-202.



The start of postal flights in Madagascar began with Dagnaux' first flight on June 24, 1927, from Antananarivo to Majunga. **It has been reported that only 8 letters were carried on this flight.** There was no air mail fee on this first flight. Only the single letter rate 0.5F plus the registered mail fee of 1.0F = 1.5F was required.

Early Aerophilately

1930 Roux et al. Crash in Belgian Congo

The crew Roux, Caillol and Dodement were unlucky. They departed Antananarivo January 10, 1930, and crashed in the tropical forest along the Kasai in the Belgian Congo. Their last sighting was reported at Port Franqui on January 13; the crash site was not found until March 13. The mail recovered by the Belgian authorities was stamped with a violet stamp. At least two stamps are lost from the cover due to water damage, and only 2.1F remain. The expected rate is 12F per 10 g.



Flight
Madagascar France
Accident on
13 January 1930



Casablanca, Morocco date stamp June 30, 1930
"MOROCCO FEATURES ITS SIGHTS AND MONUMENTS"

Speaking of Flying



A Ruthless Deportation Plan That Became Untenable, the Plan that Preceded the Holocaust



Adolf Hitler endorsed the Madagascar Plan.



Franz Rademacher,
architect of the
Madagascar Plan

Franz Rademacher, head of the German Foreign Office's "Jewish desk," sent a memo during the summer of 1940 to the Nazi high command stating:

"The approaching victory gives Germany the possibility, and in my view also the duty, of solving the Jewish question in Europe. The desirable condition is: all Jews out of Europe." His proposed plan would banish millions of European Jews to Madagascar, where a "super-ghetto" under the rule of the Nazi SS police force would be created. This would show the world the "generosity" of the German people, but German-controlled Jews there would also be hostages to guarantee the future good behavior of Jews elsewhere in the world.

Germany's defeat of France would provide access to the French colony, but the defeat of Britain was also needed to obtain the British fleet for deporting 1,000,000 Jews per month to Madagascar. The failure to defeat Britain stalled the plan. An alternative plan, which became the Holocaust, was developed next.

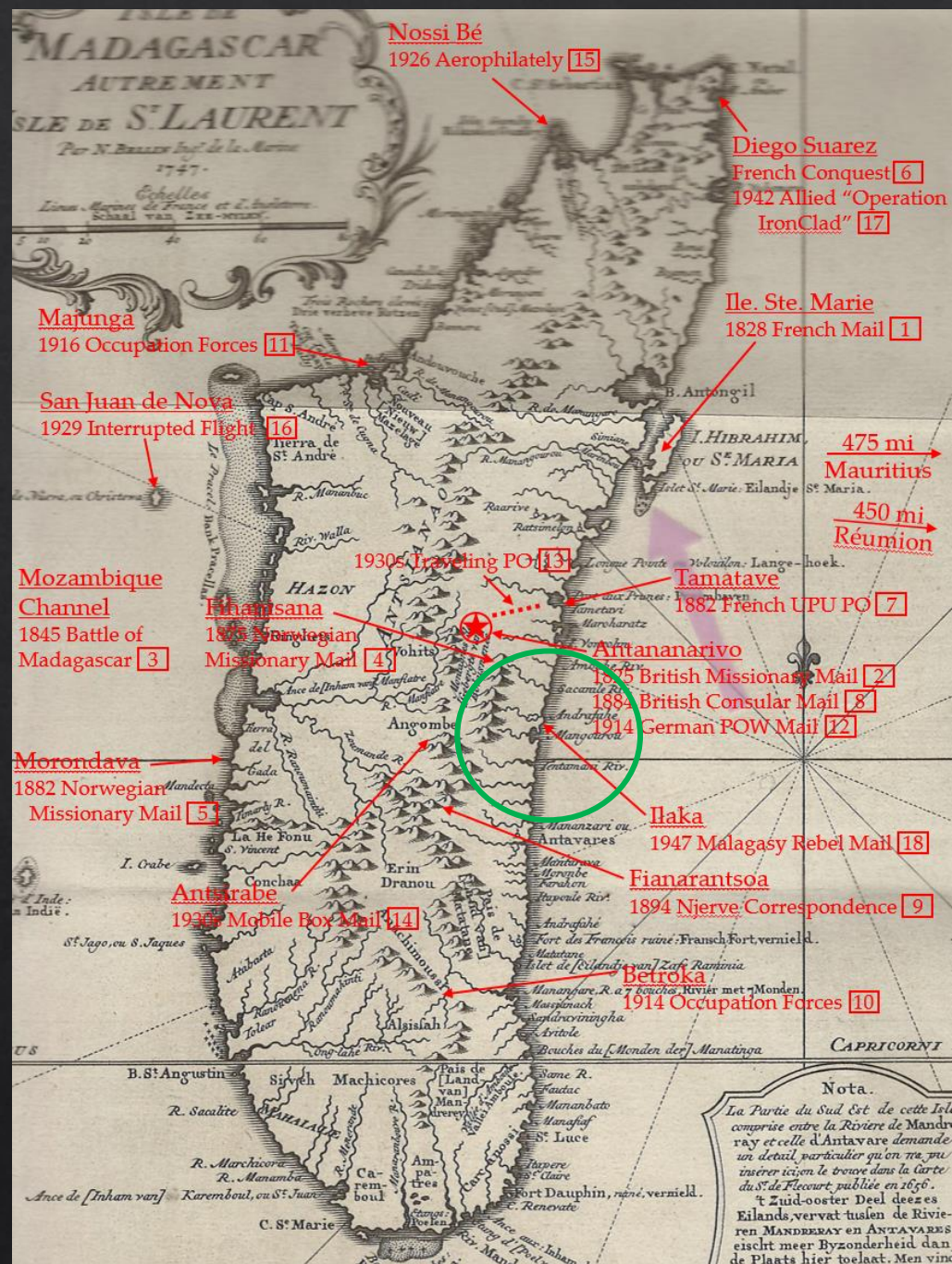
But Japan takes an interest in Madagascar next, alarming the Allies!

"Taxe perçue" (levy notice) handstamps were used towards and just after the end of the wartime period, when adhesive stamps were in very short supply. There are several types, for different post offices, Antananarivo being the most common.

Taxe perçue of 8F charged for air mail from Antananarivo to Nice, France, in November 1945. The air tariff to France was lowered to 6F per 5g in October 1945 and 2F was the rate for a single weight overseas letter.



A non-airmail use of taxe perçue in which "Aerienne" was crossed out. A postage of 1.5F was charged for this letter from Majunga to Antananarivo. 1.5F is the single letter rate for local mail at this time.

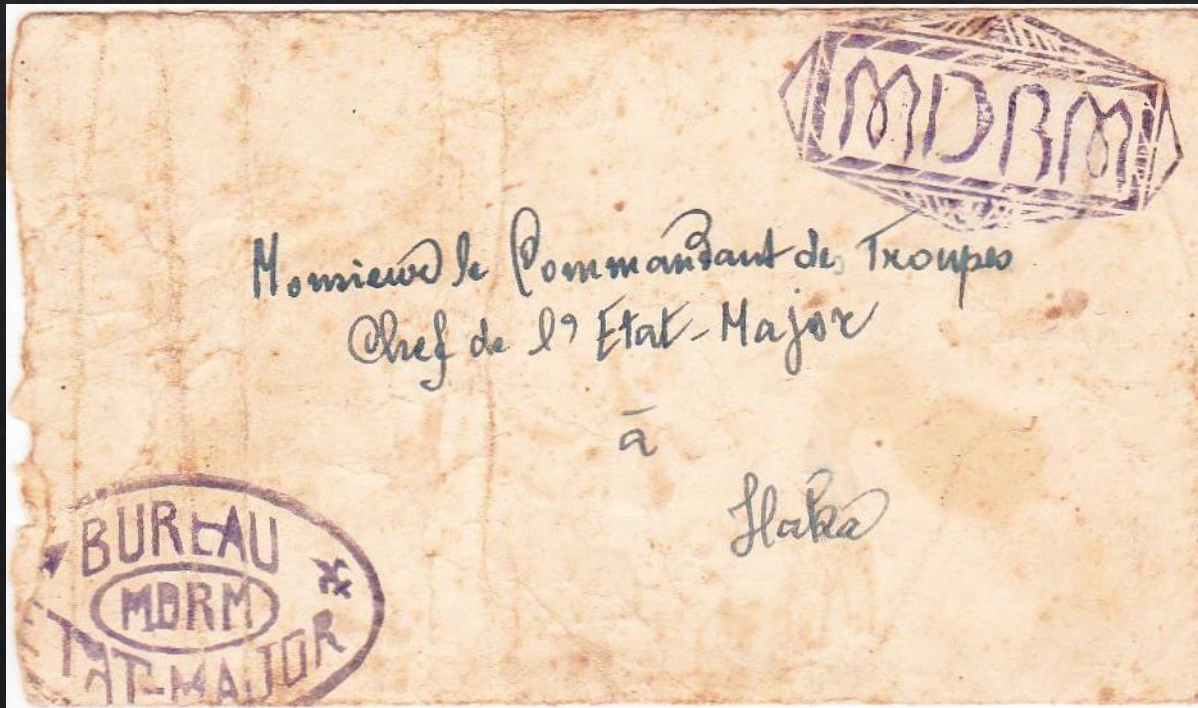


1947-48 Malagasy Uprising

- Replacement of the Fascist and racist Vichy government in Madagascar by Free French control during WWII was disappointing, and the hardships caused by the confiscation of national crops by the new government was perhaps the tipping point to a mass uprising. Orchestrated violence and surprise attacks of colonial French occurred in March of 1947. The Mouvement Démocratique de la Rénovation Malgache (MDRM), a group of Malagasy nationalists created in Paris in 1946, was the face of this rebellion.
- France responded with a massive military influx and crackdown, unprecedented in its brutality and war crimes
 - One of worst and least known massacres in French colonial history
 - Casualty estimates:
 - 1,500 French colonists/military
 - 40,000-80,000 Malagasy



The Mouvement Démocratique de la Rénovation Malgache (MDRM) set up their own mail system for secure communication between rebel leaders. This rebel mail is addressed to the commander at Ilaka, a town and commune in central Madagascar, part of the present district of Ambositra.



Only known cover

Epilogue

The legacy of violent conflict, colonialism, and anti-colonial sentiment is evident in Madagascar's politics after independence. Under the leadership of President Tsiranana, the First Republic (1960-72) was a strongly pro-French government. In 1972 farmer and student protests overturned his administration.



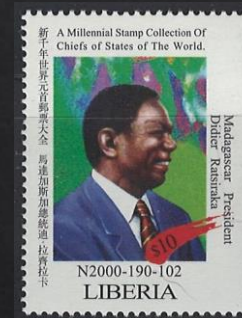
A major general in the army, Gabriel Ramanantsoa, became interim president and prime minister in 1972, but was forced to step down in 1975 because of public disapproval. His successor, Colonel Richard Ratsimandrava, was assassinated six days after taking office.



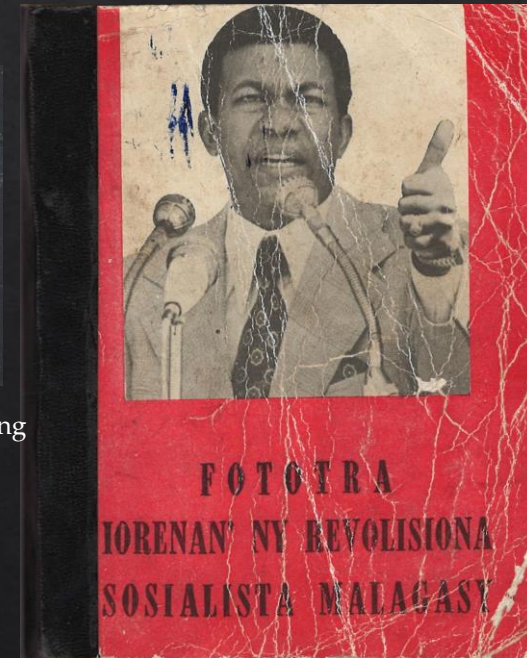
1960 issue honoring Tsiranana, Father of the Republic

1978 issue honoring Colonel Ratsimandrava, head of state

After Ratsimandrava's death, Madagascar was ruled by General Gilles Andriamahazo. After four months he was replaced by another military appointee, Vice Admiral Didier Ratsiraka ("The Red Admiral"), in a coup. Ratsiraka was president of the socialist-Marxist Second Republic from 1975 to 1993. Under his programs of economic nationalization, French interests departed, and the economy greatly weakened. He established closer ties to France in the 1980s and abandoned communist ways, but he was forced to step down in 1992.



Liberia stamp honoring Ratsiraka



Ratsiraka's Little Red Book



Anti-Apartheid



Youth, the pillar of the revolution



Socialist cooperation



Women, supporters of the revolution

1978 Madagascar issues emphasizing the socialism and revolution