

■ **MADAGASCAR**

Stone Enclosures, Political Frontiers and Monumental Tombs: Survey in Androy 1996

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During March and April 1996 a three-week season of field survey was conducted in the area of western Androy, on and between the hills of Faritsoke, Bevotry and Angavo. The main aim of this research was to continue our study of the earliest monumental stone tombs in Androy, as part of a broader investigation of the context and development of funerary monumentality. These early tombs, which date to the nineteenth century, were built in the cattle grazing areas of newly colonized land by migrating middle-ranking clans of the Tandroy. These empty regions of northern Androy had once been settled but were largely abandoned by the seventeenth century. We identified a 25-

kilometre wide frontier zone of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries which once separated the Tandroy from their northern neighbours, the Bara or possibly the Masikoro. This zone was later encroached upon from the south in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by a junior but ascendant branch of the royal clan (the Tekonda lineage of the Andriamañare) and by a newly arrived middle-ranking clan, the Afomarolahy. The region had previously been occupied in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries by groups who constructed a network of large stone-walled enclosures. These appear not to have been defensive but are associated with large quantities of fine wares and unfragmented cattle bones, thought to be the debris of feasting. Two enclosures were previously known, at Andranosoa and Amanda. During this season's research a further three were located at Bevotry, Faritsoke and Mafelefo. Mandameriñe at Mafelefo consists of two wall lengths enclosing an occupation area of 800 m by 300 m.

Monumental stone tombs of the nineteenth century

We were especially interested in establishing who was buried in these, where they were built and what was happening in terms of settlement and migration in their vicinity. The research focused on the edge of the rock massif where the Afomarolahy and associated clans, the first Tandroy groups to settle off the sands, migrated to in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We were able to identify the tombs of some of the individuals listed in the genealogies of these clans (Heurtebize 1986) and we estimate that the earliest rectangular cairn burials with *vatolahy* (standing stones) date to between 1860 and 1880. Burials marked only by *vatolahy* began earlier, in the eighteenth or even seventeenth century.

Those buried in the stone tombs were not powerful clan leaders but men renowned for their wealth in cattle. They were members of clans who were subordinate to the ruling Andriamañare clan but were ranked above other clans. The tombs were constructed in regions previously deserted and forested, and in grazing areas; they were hidden deep in the forest away from the communal cemeteries of *tseke* (wooden fenced tombs). In simple terms the tombs were built because stone was now

available. However, they appear at a time of considerable upheaval and many factors are probably involved. The Afomarolahy were moving into new territory away from the constraints of traditional authority. They were encountering hostile Bara cattle herders in competition over grazing areas. They may also have been influenced by the Bara's styles of stone tombs but, as far as is known from oral histories, did not intermarry. The numbers of the Afomarolahy clan were expanding rapidly and, around this time, new group identities of lineage and sub-lineage may have been created partly through monument construction. The first men to be honoured with this style of burial were rich in cattle but had neither political office nor marriage connections with the royal clan. The centralized power of the royal clan also seems to have waned at this time. The form of these stone tombs has changed, from small stone cairns (akin to ruined houses) to metaphorical cattle pens in stone. Early tombs have paired *vatolahy* ('man stones') whose ends are shaped like the tenons of house posts, and are also similar to the human form. The stone tomb tradition was not widely adopted by other clans until the twentieth century, but today they are found throughout Androy. Whilst the more ancient tradition of forest burial within small wooden enclosures still continues, the construction of prominently-placed stone tombs is an overt demonstration of wealth and status.

The northern frontier of the Tandroy kingdom

The early stone tombs were one of several aspects which helped to constitute the northern and western limits or frontier of the Tandroy, in that they were constructed in areas of dense and predominantly uninhabited forest which were not settled until the nineteenth century. Additionally, these areas were, according to oral tradition, zones of conflict between the Tandroy and other tribal groupings. The development of this frontier area can be traced from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century, with Tandroy expansion into these areas increasing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These northern and western limits to the Tandroy kingdom were also used as burial places for eighteenth and nineteenth century rulers (*roandria*), a practice which continues today with the Andriamañare clan's continued use of

Ampitobe, the place of gathering prior to burials of roandria (royal leaders) at Angavo. An eighteenth century *manda* (100 m east-west by 60 m north-south) was found on top of Angavo. It may be the one visited by Robert Drury at the beginning of that century (Drury 1729 [1890: 135, 165, 168, 189-90]), ruled by 'Deaan Afferrer' (Andriafara; Molet-Sauvaget 1992: 122 n.172), a nephew of the king at Fenoarivo (see Parker Pearson et al. 1994). The locations of royal centres on the edges of the Tandroy kingdom (Angavo, Ambaro/Fenoarivo and perhaps Ambahy, west of the Manambovo river) raise the possibility that royal succession was ensured by moving cadet and potentially rival successors into new lands on the edges of the kingdom.

The stone-walled enclosures of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries

The discovery of large stone-walled enclosures dating to the eleventh to thirteenth centuries in parts of this area indicate that, in more distant times, this region was more of a centre than a periphery. Stone-walled *manda* (enclosures) similar to those found at Andranosoa (Radimilahy 1988) and at Amanda (Parker Pearson 1992) were found at Faritsoke (240 m east-west and 170 m north-south) and Bevotry (180 m east-west and 110 m north-south). A third, unusually large enclosure, Mandameriñe, was found at Mafelefo, some 20 km north of Andalatanosy near the source of the Manambovo river. With one of its two wall circuits over 1 km in length, this enclosure is comparable in size to one found in Mahafaly country at Gogogo, at the source of the Linta-Manakaralahy river (Radimilahy pers. comm.).

Mandameriñe consists of two sections of rubble walls, 3-4 m wide and 1.5 m high in places, enclosing an area of 20 ha either side of a small river. The western wall has a narrow entrance at its north end, where spreads of ceramics, bone and charcoal are dense on both sides of the river. The eastern, smaller length of wall encloses an archaeologically sterile area on the river's east side.

The lowland settings of all five enclosure sites, their apparent indefensibility, their regular spacing in the landscape (Bevotry, Amanda and Faritsoke are spaced 14 km apart), the copious fineware ceramics and the large fragments of cattle bones suggest that these may have been ceremonial centres. That the larger enclosures are well to the north

suggests that their builders may have come from the plains to the north rather than from the sandy coastal belt to the south. On none of the three newly discovered enclosures were there any imported Islamic and Chinese ceramics, as found at Andranosoa.

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Figure 1: The eleventh to thirteenth century stone-walled enclosures of Androy (Andranosoa (a), Manda Meriñe (b), Bevatry (c), Amanda (d) and Faritsoke (e)). The adjacent stream beds are marked by dotted lines.

