

Protestant and French Colonial Literacies in Madagascar in the early 20th century

Abbreviations:

LMS London Missionary Society

LOI Language of Instruction

NMS The Norwegian Mission Society

MPF The French Protestant Mission

ABSTRACT

Literacy was an important instrument for colonial powers and mission societies at the beginning of the 20th century, but they had different goals. The main goal of the secular French colonial educational policy was assimilation and construction of an elite who would promote French culture. The Protestant missions' ultimate goal was to allow people to be able to read the gospel in their own language. That was also the aim of the Norwegian Lutheran mission, which is a particular focus of this chapter. Literacy is not only about technological skills, but also about promoting certain practices that are dominated by particular aims and the culture of those who promote it. In the encounter between French secularism and Protestant evangelising missions there were several points of conflict in the early 20th Century. The literacy work of Protestant missions in the French colony Madagascar provides an interesting case within literacy studies and with regards to studies on French colonial policies. The strong position of the Protestant missions and the existence of a local language for use in literacy work challenged the dominant French assimilationist and secular policy. This chapter shows that Norwegian Lutheran mission schools promoted literacies embedded in their own religious ideology on one hand. On the other hand, they were transmitting the colonial power's ideology through their literacy work. The mission's literacy work became an instrument for colonization. At the same time, the mission's approach to literacy challenged the dominant literacy defined by the colonial power.

Mission and colonial literacies

Christian missions were pioneers of a Western form of education in many countries including Madagascar (the Malagasies).¹ Arriving in 1818, the London Missionary Society (LMS) obtained a foothold among the politically dominant Merinas in the highlands. With the approval of the Merina king, they transcribed the Malagasy language with Latin characters, started literacy work and translated the Bible. Foreigners and missionaries were expelled from Madagascar in the period from 1828 to 1862. Thereafter they were able to return and up to the time of French colonization in 1896, Protestant missions managed to build an extensive educational structure in the highlands. The Norwegian Mission Society (NMS) took part in this educational work from 1867. The Norwegian mission has its roots in a pietistic Lutheran culture. Their goal was to lead people to a personal relationship with God through reading the Bible in a familiar language. Even though the goals of the missions' literacy were framed in terms of the promotion of religion, and thereby universalized and decontextualised in its content, parts of their literacy was simultaneously recontextualised to accommodate Malagasy culture and language. But with colonization, the political context for teaching reading and writing changed.

Bryant Mumford's book from 1936, *Africans learn to be French*, had significant impact on Anglo-Saxon research on French colonial educational policy.² The title of the book refers to the assimilationist goal of French colonial educational policy. The politics of the French colonial power was rooted in French Republicanism, and promoted assimilation and secularism. Republican values were to be promoted in areas that were not yet *civilised*, and in a French colonial context, *equality* meant giving people access to a *civilised* culture. The society should become modern, and not "(...) governed by tradition" but "(...) organized instead according to abstract principles formulated for that purpose".³

In spite of Republican values, private mission schools, which kept a religious orientation in their school programmes, continued to play an important role in the colonies due to the lack of state resources for a public system of education.⁴ At the *Congres Colonial National* of 1889-90 held in France before Madagascar had become a French colony, it was argued that French missionaries in

¹ Norman Etherington, "Education and Medicine," in *Missions and Empire*, ed. Norman Etherington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

² W. Bryant Mumford, *Africans Learn to Be French* (London: Evans Bros Ltd, 1936).

³ Tony Chafer, "Education and Political Socialisation of a National-Colonial Political Elite in French West Africa, 1936-47," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 35, no. 3 (2007):444.

⁴ James Patrick Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Avigdor Farine, "Society and Education: The Content of Education in the French African School," *Comparative Education* 5, no. 1 (1969):52-53.

Madagascar should be supported in their *mission civilisatrice*.⁵ At the same conference it was decided that government assistance should be given to missionaries who taught French in Indo-China. This was also to be the policy in Madagascar where the government considered the arrival of the French Protestant Mission (MPF, *La Société des Missions Évangéliques de Paris* (SMEP)) as an important contributor in promoting the French language and civilisation.

The aims of French colonial educational policy were in contradiction with the aims of the mission. The goal of the colonial power was assimilation into a culture. For the mission, the goal was conversion into a faith, which was to be achieved through contextualisation in order for it to be a personal process. These goals had implications for the literacies these two social institutions promoted, and were a reason why the mission and the colonial power became opponents in the development of literacy. Mission schools paid particular attention to religious studies and the Malagasy language. However, their pupils had to pass official exams in the French language to be able to get their diplomas. Through these requirements, the mission schools became transmitters of French-assimilationist literacies and contributors in the French *civilization project*. The mission schools were complementary to state schools, but they also offered an additional alternative education. Their goals challenged the dominant French-assimilationist literacy of the colonial power. This chapter aims to describe *how the Norwegian mission's literacy work in Madagascar persisted under the literacy policy of a French colonial power*.

Changing colonial educational policies

The British colonial policy was known to be more accepting towards mission education than the French colonial power.⁶ In addition, the British educational policy was known to be more willing to adapt to local circumstances than the French educational policy. Policies of adjustments are described in the English literature on colonisation as *adaptive* and in the French literature as *associative*. Although these concepts have different connotations, they describe to some extent similar processes. The different approaches of assimilation and adaptation are important as they resulted in different forms of literacies with a varying potential for cognitive and socio-cultural development. The Afro-American sociologist and historian William Edward Burghardt Dubois fought for equal rights for Afro-Americans. From the turn of the 19th century, he played an important role in the dispute about

⁵ Martin Deming Lewis, "One Hundred Million Frenchmen: The 'Assimilation' Theory in French Colonial Policy," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4, no. 2 (1962):146.

⁶ Bob W. White, "Talk about School: Education and the colonial project in French and British Africa (1860-1960)," *Comparative Education* 32, no. 1 (1996); Remi Clignet, "Inadequacies of the Notion of Assimilation in African Education," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 8, no. 3 (1970): 438; Bronislaw Malinowski, "The Pan-African Problem of Culture Contact," *American Journal of Sociology* 48, no. 6 (1943): 654; Mumford, *Africans Learn to Be French* (1936) ———, "Comparative Studies of Native Education in Various Dependencies," *The Yearbook of Education* (1935).

providing an adapted industrial education for Afro-Americans and Africans in the colonies, a dispute that was well described in Kenneth James King's book *Pan-Africanism and Education*.⁷ The more adapted industrial approach was supported both by the philanthropic Phelps-Stokes Fund, operating in the southern part of America and British colonial Africa, and the American and British Mission societies. In this approach, with the Afro-American Booker T. Washington as an important spokesman, Africans, in general, were considered as being at another stage of development and demanding a different set of educational standards. Dubois was strongly opposed to this.

Some critics have argued that there has been too much emphasis on the differences between colonial policies and their implementation, rather than an emphasis on common factors under different colonial regimes.⁸ According to Semakula Kiwanuka, too many stereotypes have been used on colonial policy in historical research.⁹ In the end, colonial powers had many similar policies, and they all had to relate and adapt to local circumstances in one way or another. The consequences of different policies were often the same. The implementation of policies was dependent on the personalities of the governors in the respective colonies, so they were also subject to change in different circumstances. Kiwanuka presents a stereotype of French colonial education policy as he assumes that it did not rely on missionaries for educational work.¹⁰ According to my research, the French colonial power actually relied on mission education in certain contexts. It is important to analyse the colonising intentions in order to understand the policies. However, it is even more important to focus on contextualised policies, which is the aim of this chapter. It will show that French colonial policy was not necessary always based on assimilation, and that there were different opinions among French administrators on how secularism should be implemented.

At the end of the 19th century a significant part of the Merina aristocracy had converted to Protestantism. The Protestants represented a challenge to the power of French colonisation.¹¹ They had significant linkages with the rival power, Britain, and they had a strong influence in society and their education was more liberal compared to colonial and Catholic education, particularly in using the local language. French Protestants were also helpful in order to convince the local Protestant aristocracy that being French would not necessarily mean being Catholic. These French Protestant missionaries

⁷ Kenneth James King, *Pan-Africanism and Education. A study of Race, Philanthropy and Education in the Southern States of America and East Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

⁸ Prosser Gifford and Timothy C. Weiskel, "African Education in a Colonial Context: French and British Styles," in *France and Britain in Africa. Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, ed. Prosser Gifford and WM. Roger Louis (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1971): 666; M. Semakula Kiwanuka, "Colonial Policies and Administrations in Africa: The Myths of the Contrasts," *African Historical Studies*, no. 3/2 (1970).

⁹ ———, "Colonial Policies and Administrations in Africa: The Myths of the Contrasts," 1970.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 305.

¹¹ Monique Irène Ratrimoarivony Rakotoanosy, "Historique et nature de l'enseignement à Madagascar de 1896 à 1960" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis in history Université Paris-Sorbonne Paris IV. Centre International d'Étude Francophone, 1986):82-83; Guitou, "Note sur les missions à Madagascar 1925," (1925).

collaborated in an inter-protestant collaboration with mission organizations from Britain, Norway and America. There were several disputes about territories and influence between Protestant missions during the 19th century, described by Bonar A. Gow as “the struggle for souls and territory”.¹² The 20th century however, was characterised by collaboration between Protestant mission organisations. This Protestant collaboration has to be seen in the light of the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, which advocated collaboration between Protestant missions.¹³ Other reasons for Protestant cooperation were related to the often challenging relation with the colonial power and the increased activity of the Catholic mission, with whom the Protestant missions at times came into conflict. Catholicism and Protestantism were struggling for influence in a secular colony.

Governor-General in Madagascar from 1924-1929, Marcel Achille Olivier, was important for the Protestant missions. During his time, there was a change in the Malagasy colonial political context for the missionaries. They were acknowledged for their work and asked to give their opinion on educational matters. This was a big opportunity for the missionaries, who had lobbied for influence on matters that affected their work since the implementation of a radical secularist educational policy after 1906. This policy has to be seen in the light of the formal separation of church and state in France in 1905. That same year, Jean-Victor Augagneur was inaugurated as governor-general in Madagascar. Charles Renel became Chief of Education. They were both anti-clerical Republicans and implemented secularism within education through a decree of 1906. As an illustration of this secular policy, I will here quote a letter to the Governor-General from 1911, signed by Renel. Concerning the missions’ educational work, Renel wrote: “All of what the missions have established on the island is for the purpose of religious work only, and the schools, when it comes to them, they are nothing other than an instrument [original underlined].”¹⁴ Renel remained Director of Education until 1925. He was described in the yearbooks of the Norwegian mission from the early 1920s as the worst and permanent enemy of the mission in Madagascar.¹⁵ By various means, such as forbidding teaching in church buildings and demanding that French should be the language of instruction, this secular policy had a negative effect on the educational work of the missions.

One year after Olivier was appointed Governor-General in Madagascar, Cheffaud was appointed to the position as Director of Education. Olivier and Cheffaud introduced changes in education policies through a decree of 1929. The content of this decree was somewhat different from the policies

¹² Bonar A. Gow, *Madagascar and the Protestant Impact. The work of the British missions, 1818-95* (London: Longman, 1979): 50.

¹³ Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*, ed. R.E. Frykenberg and Brian Stanley, *Studies in the History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009); World Missionary Conference, "Report of Commission III. Education in relation to the Christianisation of National Life" (1910).

¹⁴ Charles Renel, "Letter dated 24.02.1911 to the Governor-General," (Tananarive, 1911), my translation.

¹⁵ Fredrik Bjertnes, "Madagaskars Indland, Østkyst og Bara," in *NMS årbok 1922* (Stavanger: NMS trykkeri 1923):12; ———, "II. Madagaskars Indland, Bara og Østkysten," in *NMS årbok 1923* (Stavanger: 1923):64; ———, "3. Madagaskars Indland med Østkyst og Bara," in *NMS årbok 1921* (Stavanger: NMS boktrykkeri, 1921):77.

practiced by the Governors before Olivier and those who followed him. He did not emphasise as strongly the classic French general colonial educational policy built on assimilation. But Olivier's policies were too radical for the political climate in which he was working. The governor-general who replaced Olivier, Léon Henri Charles Cayla, ensured a return to assimilation after 1933. Thereafter assimilation came to once again dominate French colonial policy also in Madagascar. Even though assimilation was not fulfilled to the extent that all people in the colonies became French, it contributed strongly to the development of loyal assimilated elites.

The different perspectives and views of governor-generals and directors of education at the beginning of the 20th century in Madagascar illustrate very well the tensions connected with the practice of literacy and government powers. Based on archival material, I will describe these different views and how the missions reacted to them through two main encounters between Protestant missions and French administrators. The first event, when the missions felt threatened, is connected to the introduction of the 1906-regulations for educational policy. The second is connected with the more adapted educational policies and liberal approach towards mission education of Governor-General Olivier (1924-1929). First, I will describe the main literacies that were transmitted through the Norwegian Lutheran mission schools in this period. For this purpose, I use the concepts of *religious*, *French-assimilationist* and *contextualised literacy*.

Religious, French-assimilationist and contextualised literacies

Shirley Brice Heath and Brian V. Street defined *literacy* as “(...) written representations of oral (or gestural) language rendered in some script system that carries its own conventions and rules of usage”.¹⁶ When discussing literacy as it appears through formal education, Heath and Street argued that formal educational systems, promoting certain ways to use the written language, were created as an instrument for and tightly bound to a state or a religion, or both.¹⁷ The norms and ideology of groups in power are in charge of planning and organising formal education for all individuals. Street described in his book *Literacy in theory and practice* different literacies embedded in specific ideologies and cultural practices rather than seeing literacy simply as a technology.¹⁸

The following quote is taken from an article written in 1921 by Karen Dorothea Schaanning, the Norwegian school missionary to Madagascar in the period from 1901-1940.¹⁹ The article was aimed

¹⁶ Shirley Brice Heath and Brian V. Street, *Ethnography. Approaches to Language and Literacy Research* (New York: Teacher College Press, 2008):4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 17.

¹⁸ Brian V. Street, *Literacy in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1984):130.

¹⁹ Gunnar Andreas Meling and Maria Kjøllesdal, eds., *Guds høstfolk. Det norske misjonsselskaps misjonærer : 1842-1977* (Stavanger: Det Norske Misjonsselskap, 1977).

at mission supporters in Norway. It highlights that the mission transmitted literacies embedded in different ideologies:

The Norwegian mission has not a *single* school in Madagascar where religion is not taught: and why would we need such schools? The government has never forbid us to teach religion in the schools and has never occupied itself with our schedules. It demands that French is taught and apart from that we can teach whatever we want (...) it seems to me that mission schools have a national-cultural assignment. We teach Malagasy reading and have Malagasy as a subject until the highest level of our schools. In official schools on the other hand – at least it has been like that at particular times – all teaching, even the first teaching in reading, is in French. (...) At a higher level we do a lot of French teaching of course: that is at the same time useful and necessary; the French language is of huge practical usefulness in daily life in these times: in addition, the knowledge of it is absolutely a condition to reach any higher position.²⁰

Schaanning focused in the article on the fact that every one of their schools had religion as a subject taught in Malagasy, using Malagasy books. Additionally, the schools provided the students with ordinary knowledge such as French reading and grammar, writing, math and geography. Lastly, Schaanning argued that they had a special focus on the Malagasy language in the mission schools, thus giving them a national-cultural assignment. Through literacy development, the Norwegian mission contributed to a) Christianize the Malagasy population, b) to make *civilized*, French citizens through language and culture, and c) to promote Malagasy culture and language.

In the citation above it is clear that the colonial administration allowed the missions to teach religion in their primary schools. Transmitting *religious literacy* was the basic reason for the Norwegian Lutheran mission to engage in educational work. Schedules for the mission schools show the amount of time that was supposed to be given to religious literacy in mission schools. According to the programme of mission primary schools in 1922, the day began with a 15-minute morning devotion followed by 30 minutes of religious studies, where Bible stories and the catechism were the most important content.²¹ There was singing (*Chant et Solfège*), and learning hymns was part of the content. This occupied 30 minutes four days a week. The mission had two kinds of schools for teaching first-year pupils: *primary schools* and *bush schools*. *Bush schools* is a translation from what in the literature is referred to as *Garderies* in French, literally meaning a place where children are taken care of. In comparison to ordinary schools, there were fewer regulations for bush schools. Bush schools were accepted by the colonial administration as a temporary solution until the missions became better acquainted with the educational regulations of the 1906 decree. In contrast to primary schools, these schools used Malagasy as the language of instruction, and the teacher did not need a

²⁰ Karen Dorothea Schaanning, "Vore skoler paa Madagaskar," *NMt* 1921:50-53, my translation.

²¹ Mission Norvégienne, *Programmes et emplois du temps à l'usage des écoles primaires et des garderies* (Tanananive: Imprimerie de la Mission Norvégienne, 1922): 5.

diploma obtained through the French system. The teacher's salary was less than in primary schools, and during the weekdays it was often the catechist who was teaching as part of his job for the church. In 1922, the same religious studies was to be found in bush schools as in primary schools, but here there was only four days of teaching a week, and the catechism was taught in separate classes for 30 minutes two times a week.²²

The mission was confronted with considerable challenges relating to both the French- and religious literacy. They needed to give their pupils enough knowledge to enable them to pass official exams, while at the same time they needed to be knowledgeable about Christianity to be able to participate in the work of the Church. These challenges are evident in discussions at Norwegian mission conferences, the highest authority of the NMS in Madagascar. At the conference in 1934, missionary pastor to Madagascar in the period 1927-1945, Torstein Knutsen Skarpaas, suggested the development of an additional course in religion for teachers educated at their own teacher training colleges because he thought religious teaching in their schools was not good enough.²³ There had been a discussion about the place of education in missionary work. In several places, the educational work had been done in a way that did not fulfil its intentions, according to Skarpaas. He presumed that all missionaries agreed upon the fact that school was not only a good thing, but it was a necessary instrument of the mission. He argued that it was required to increase the knowledge of religion among teachers as the main aim of the mission's educational work should be "(...) *to win the small ones for Christ through raising and education, connecting them to Him in order for them to live with Him and serve Him in His congregations*" (originally italics).²⁴ It was not enough to learn bible verses by heart. Only by understanding the content the child could be brought to God. A Malagasy pastor, Rajaona, wrote a suggestion for the Lutheran Church conference about how to strengthen the members in the church.²⁵ He argued that teaching Christianity to children in Lutheran schools should strive to make the children understand "(...) in their hearts" what faith was about. They should live like Christians, and not only learn Christianity by heart like other subjects.

Education was an important field of collaboration for the different Protestant missions in relating to the Government, and in more practical matters like teacher education, development of schoolbooks and curriculum. At the Inter-missionary Conference in Madagascar in 1926, three questions concerning educational work were discussed: 1) teachers, their education and further development, 2) teaching in schools and 3) curriculum and school books.²⁶ There was an agreement that educational

²² Ibid.: 8.

²³ Meling and Kjøllestad, *Guds høstfolk. Det norske misjonselskaps misjonærer : 1842-1977*, 1977; NMS, "Referat av 57de konferensens forhandling paa Antsirabe 12.-21. mars" (1934):156-159.

²⁴ ———, "Referat av 57de konferensens forhandling paa Antsirabe 12.-21. mars" (1934):157, my translation.

²⁵ Rajaona, "Izay mba hahamafyorina ny olona amin'ny Fiangonantsika Loterana " (no date).

²⁶ Ole August Kopreitan, "International missionskonferens " *NMt* 1927: 21.

work played an important role in mission and evangelisation work. The Conference agreed on the need for more educated teachers, primary and secondary schools and educational reforms. In order to meet those goals, it was decided to establish an Inter-missionary School Committee (ISC) with two representatives from each of the missions.²⁷ Protestant education kept the same structure and part of the same programme as public schools. However, religious studies were added. Malagasy was the language of instruction at least for the first years, and the different missions published books written in Malagasy.

There are several descriptions of how assimilation through the language and content of education was to be the aim of French colonial educational policy.²⁸ French was the dominant language of instruction, and the content was dominated by French history and geography. The *French-assimilationist literacy* was also apparent in the Norwegian Lutheran mission schools in Madagascar. Schoolwork was appropriate for the mission as long as they could teach religion, and the secular colonial power allowed private schools to do so as long as they contributed to the assimilation project by teaching about French language and civilisation. The Norwegian Lutheran mission used the argument that they contributed in the *civilising* work when searching for collaboration with the colonial government. In describing the Norwegian mission in Madagascar in 1905, the French missionary Paul Buchsenschutz, who was the principal of the Norwegian mission teacher training college, argued that the aim of the mission for the past 40 years had been nothing else other than “(...) religious and civilising work”.²⁹

Assimilation meant teaching in French. The colonial administration met some challenges in the implementation of French as language of instruction in schools. There was a Malagasy language used as the language of instruction in mission schools before the colonial administration introduced French. Different governors and educational administrators related differently to the question of using Malagasy as language of instruction. Policies of adaptation were apparent to different degrees in different periods. The diffusion of the colonial language was the main objective of Joseph Simon Gallieni, the Governor-General in the period from 1896-1905.³⁰ But he also allowed the Malagasy language to be used. Malagasy was a subject at school during the first, second and third year during this period, as 50% of the primary school programme should be in Malagasy and 50% in French.³¹

²⁷ NMS, "Referat av 50de konferenses forhandlinger i Fianarantsoa 13.-24. mars" (1927): 91-95.

²⁸ Among others: Abdourahim Saïd Bakar, "Small Island Systems: a case study of the Comoro Islands," *Comparative Education* 24, no. 2 (1988); Avigdor Farine, "Society and Education: The Content of Education in the French African School," *ibid.* 5, no. 1 (1969); Lewis, "One Hundred Million Frenchmen: The 'Assimilation' Theory in French Colonial Policy," 1962; Mumford, *Africans Learn to Be French* (1936); Ralph J. Bunche, "French Educational Policy in Togo and Dahomey," *The Journal of Negro Education* 3, no. 1 (1934).

²⁹ Paul Büchsenschutz, "Note sur les missions norvégienne à Madagascar," (1905).

³⁰ Georges-Sully Chapus, "La Méthode de Gallieni en matière d'Enseignement," *Bulletin Economique de Madagascar*, no. 1 (1930):277.

³¹ Francis Koerner, *Histoire de l'enseignement privé et officiel à Madagascar (1820-1995). Les implications religieuses et politique dans la formation d'un peuple* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999):153.

However, the French language was dominant, as it was the language used in the yearly exams, necessary to pass on to the next level and the official exams at the end of education.³² In a 1916 decree, Malagasy as a subject based on the Merina dialect was practically erased from the programme, while exercises in the local dialects were introduced.³³ It was stated that the teacher should first use the local dialect before using more and more French in teaching at the primary level. The decree was issued after a secret nationalistic movement had been discovered and crushed by the colonial administration.³⁴ Some medical students in the capital started the movement, called *Vy, Vato, Sakelika* (VVS) meaning *iron, stone, and ramification*. The Merina elite had played an important role. Official Malagasy was based on the Merina dialect, and avoiding this language was part of French colonial policy to fight the Merina hegemony.

Even so, the Protestant missions continued to use the Malagasy language and by that promoted a more *contextualised literacy*. The mission's literacy was adapted in the way that the local language and context was used, and books were published for studying Malagasy. Contextualisation was necessary because it was believed that it helped the pupils' understanding. A personal belief was not only about memorising but also understanding what was read. The policy of the Protestant schools was to use Malagasy in the first years of schooling during the whole colonial period.

1905: From tolerance to radical secularism

We will now turn to the start of the 20th century when the traditional approach of the missions to educational work was threatened by the colonial power. Before the advent of French colonization, the religious - and contextualised literacies dominated literacy programmes. The secular school was initiated in Madagascar through the first colonial decrees on education towards the end of the nineteenth century. Article 6 of an official decree in 1899 was clear in this regard: "Complete religious neutrality is a rule in official schools. The pupils are free to practice their religion outside school."³⁵ However, the missions were allowed to continue their work under Governor-General Galliéni. The Minister of the Colonies, Gaston Doumergue, exchanged letters with Galliéni regarding the missions

³² Rakotoanoso, "Historique et nature de l'enseignement à Madagascar de 1896 à 1960," 1986:271-274.

³³ *ibid.*:276; Faranirina V. Esoavelomandroso, "Langue, culture et colonisation à Madagascar: malgache et français dans l'enseignement officiel (1916-1940)," *Omalv sy anio (Hier et aujourd'hui)*. *Revue d'études historiques* no. Nos 3-4 (1976):127.

³⁴ Faranirina Rajaonah, "L'école Le Myre de Viliers," in *La nation malgache au défi de l'ethnicité*, ed. Françoise Raison-Jourde and Solofo Randrianja (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2002): 185 Solofo Randrianja, *Société et luttes anticoloniales à Madagascar (1896 à 1946)* (Paris: Édition Karthala, 2001): 119 Koerner, *Histoire de l'enseignement privé et officiel à Madagascar (1820-1995). Les implications religieuses et politique dans la formation d'un peuple* (1999): 199; Rakotoanoso, "Historique et nature de l'enseignement à Madagascar de 1896 à 1960," 1986: 276; Faranirina Esoavelomandroso, "'Politique des races' et enseignement colonial (jusqu'en 1940)," *Omalv sy anio (Hier et aujourd'hui)*. *Revue d'études historiques* no. 5-6 (1977): 247 Faranirina V. Esoavelomandroso, "Langue, culture et colonisation à Madagascar: malgache et français dans l'enseignement officiel (1916-1940)," *ibid.*, no. Nos 3-4 (1976): 105; Direction de l'enseignement Gouvernement général de Madagascar et dépendances, *L'enseignement à Madagascar en 1931* (1931): 17-18.

³⁵ G.P. Galdi and Rochefort, "Notes sur l'Historique de l'Enseignement à Madagascar," *Bulletin de Madagascar* 10, no. 171 (1960):651, my translation.

and their impact in Madagascar. In a confidential letter to the Governor-General, Doumergue argued that it was important for the future of the country that the different missions' evangelisation work did not divide the population.³⁶ Therefore, the educational system needed to be secularised. In Galliéni's last important decree of January 1904, he seriously began to confront the missions' educational work.³⁷ It was specified in the January 1904 decree that due to the complete separation of church and state that was to be implemented in France, private schools would no longer be supported by the state. All resources were now aimed at supporting official education. In a circular to the missions dated 19.02.1904, Gallieni explained that this policy would involve a change in the situation for private schools.³⁸

The French historian and Protestant missionary Georges-Sully Chapus argued in 1930 that the 1904 decree reversed Galliéni's policy, and that he was under pressure for Paris to follow a centralized policy.³⁹ Chapus found in Galliéni the "perfect spirit of secularism", as he did not show any regard or disregard towards religious ideas and let the missions do their moral teaching the way they wanted.⁴⁰ According to Koerner, Galliéni, who was born in a Catholic family, was tolerant towards the different religions.⁴¹ However, he became more and more sceptical and was also disappointed with the missions' contributions within education. In 1902, he joined the Freemasons, which was founded in Madagascar in 1880 as a political lobby for the colons.⁴² He was also member in a secular organisation working to promote secularism. The Malagasy historian Monique Irène Ratrimoarivony Rakotoanosy argued that the Director of Education, P. Deschamps, who was a member of the council of the French secular organization in Madagascar and a freemason, also had an impact on Galliéni's change of attitude towards the mission. It was not by chance that the freemason Augagneur was appointed to take over as Governor-General after Galliéni. It was part of a strategy by the French government to strengthen secularism in Madagascar. Augagneur argued, in a speech in the capital in 1907, that secular education meant "teaching what was proven to be real for every human being," and which was scientifically approved.⁴³ That which had to do with feelings, traditions or hypothesis was not to be taught. Augagneur was promoting the universality of secular literacy by pointing to its *scientific nature*, hiding its inherited ideologies. This is a good illustration on how governments

³⁶ Gaston Doumergue, "Letter dated 08.12.1903 to Governor-General Galliéni," (1903).

³⁷ Galdi and Rochefort, "Notes sur l'Historique de l'Enseignement à Madagascar," 1960:655.

³⁸ Joseph Galliéni, "Circular dated 13.02.1904 to Mission representatives," (1904).

³⁹ Chapus, "La Méthode de Gallieni en matière d'Enseignement," 1930:276.

⁴⁰ Ibid.:276, my translation.

⁴¹ Koerner, *Histoire de l'enseignement privé et officiel à Madagascar (1820-1995). Les implications religieuses et politique dans la formation d'un peuple* (1999):109, 143-144.

⁴² Rakotoanosy, "Historique et nature de l'enseignement à Madagascar de 1896 à 1960," 1986:94-97.

⁴³ Victor Augagneur, "Discours du Gouverneur Général Augagneur le 06.09.1907," (1907).

promoted literacy as something neutral, building on neutral competencies and hiding their ideological roots.

Augagneur was said to have an authoritarian temperament and was called “His Majesty Victor the first” by opponents back in France.⁴⁴ Furthermore, he accused mission organisations of caring more for evangelisation than for education, and of employing missionaries who were not French and did not know the French language. Several decrees that came out in 1906, had important implications for the missions. It was no longer possible to teach in churches or religious assembly houses and permission to open schools would now be given by decrees to qualified persons instead of organisations. In order to enter a higher educational level, it was required that the candidates spend the two last years at a public state school.⁴⁵ The missions also had difficulties in obtaining permission to build new churches. Many new restrictive regulations were issued, sometimes verging on the absurd, such as forbidding the natives to teach their neighbours to read.⁴⁶ The policy of *neutrality* became an anticlerical, even antireligious fight that provoked the missions. The statistics on public and private schools and pupils in 1905, both recognised and unrecognised, illustrates the position of mission education and the impact of the new regulations on the missions’ educational work.⁴⁷ Only about 1,000 out of more than 41,000 registered pupils at the Norwegian mission were recognised in terms of the new regulations. That they were recognised meant that they were taught by teachers and in educational buildings that could be certified by the colonial government. The rest were taught by uncertified teachers, and often teaching took place in church buildings.

The protestant missions reacted strongly against the new policy, and lobbied the government in Paris. The President of the *Ligue des droits de l'homme*, the Deputy of Rhone, who was the the son of a Protestant pastor, Francis de Pressensé, wrote a letter

to the Minister of the Colonies that was published in the official French newsletter, *Ligue des droits de l'homme*, in May.⁴⁸ The Minister’s attention was drawn to the different decrees adopted by Governor-

	Unrecognised		Recognised	
	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils
Public			371	28,626
Catholic Mission	938	45,693	73	6,533
French Protestant Mission	300	12,748	108	8,017
London Missionary Society	403	20,321	75	7,677
Friends Foreign Mission	172	9,216	9	830
Anglican Mission	66	4,012	31	1,772
Norwegian Mission Society	944	41,326	15	1,070
Total private	2,823	133,316	311	25,899

⁴⁴ James Vigen and Jacques Tronchon, "Dynamism ecclésiastique et affrontements (1896-1913)," in *Histoire oecuménique Madagascar et le Christianisme* ed. Bruno Hübsch (Antananarivo, Paris: Éditions Ambozontany, Éditions-Diffusion Karthala 1993): 326.

⁴⁵ Victor Augagneur, "Arrêtés sur divers concours d'admission," (1906).

⁴⁶ Rakotoanosy, "Historique et nature de l'enseignement à Madagascar de 1896 à 1960," 1986: 96-97.

⁴⁷ Gouvernement général de Madagascar et dépendances, "Enseignement privé. Etablissement non reconnu," (1905).

⁴⁸ Wikipédia, "Francis de Pressensé," http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_de_Pressensé; Francis de Pressensé, "Letter dated 16.03.1907 to M. le Ministre et cher Collègue," (1907).

General Augagneur in Madagascar during the year 1906, which were said to violate the freedom of thoughts. Augagneur was accused of primarily attacking the Protestant missions and destroying their work within education. The deputy argued that the Minister should not tolerate differential treatment of Protestant and Catholic missions in a French colony. The letter concluded by saying that, “The Republic’s principles of justice and freedom of religion” should not be sacrificed for an “(...) atrabilious mood of a proconsul or a more or less secret pact of an ambition without scruples”.⁴⁹

That same month, four deputies, among who at least some were Protestants, sent a letter to the Governor-General.⁵⁰ One of them, Eugène Réveillaud, was born into a Catholic family, became a Republican anticlerical, converted to Protestantism in 1878 and participated in formulating the decree on the separation of church and state.⁵¹ In the letter the deputies addressed the Governor-General as a member of the Parliament, one of the Republican majorities and a supporter of the government. They confirmed their support to the secular school, but argued that due to the shortage of resources it would be regrettable to discourage private education that was already well developed in Madagascar. They argued that the colonial government would not be able to replace those schools. They explained their understanding of the decree on the separation of church and state, and argued that the state should allow the different congregations to organise themselves. It was argued in the letter that Augagneur’s policy was not in line with the policy in France. The heritage of the French Revolution was also referred to: “(...) the liberty of thoughts, which is part of the heritage from the French Revolution, has an essential corollary: the freedom, for every citizen, to manifest and propagate their own convictions”.⁵² The deputies further described their concern that these moves would provide the enemies of the Republicans with evidence that the “(...) liberalism and the tolerance of Republican France” was endangered through the Governor-General’s policy.

In a letter dated 18th of April 1907, the Minister of the Colonies, Milliers-Lacroix, wrote to Governor-General Augagneur asking for clarification on the issue.⁵³ It is said that the French mission complained about the political decrees that were seen as a hindrance to the intellectual development of Malagasies in the highland, and as an attack on the freedom of thought and religion. They argued that it was difficult for foreign missionaries who had worked in education for many years to pass a French teacher exam. 2,800 schools functioned in churches or religious assembly houses, and the decrees would have serious consequences by forcing many of them to close. It was also noted in the letter that MPF, and also the NMS, had laid complaints about decrees touching upon religious life. The Minister

⁴⁹ ———, "Letter dated 16.03.1907 to M. le Ministre et cher Collègue," 1907, my translation.

⁵⁰ Jules Siegfried et al., "Letter dated 22.03.1907 to Governor-General Augagneur," (1907).

⁵¹ Wikipédia, "Eugène Réveillaud," http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugène_Réveillaud.

⁵² Siegfried et al., "Letter dated 22.03.1907 to Governor-General Augagneur," 1907, my translation.

⁵³ Milliers-Lacroix, "Letter dated 18.04 to Governor-General Augagneur," (1907), my translation.

gave his support to an argument put forth by the missions that closing their schools in remote areas would destroy the effort already made “(...) to introduce the European civilisation in this country”. Reference was made to the policy of former Governor-General Galliéni which had aimed at collaboration between government and private schools which would overcome the insurmountable problem of establishing many new government schools. Governor-General Augagneur was asked in the letter to inform the Minister about the policy he intended to implement in private and public education in Madagascar.

The protests of the missions were unsuccessful in so far as their effort to change the regulations was concerned. However their protests meant that , Governor-General Augagneur was put in a position where he had to defend his policies. In May 1907, he replied to the letter of his former deputy colleagues.⁵⁴ He addressed them, particularly Réveillau and Réville, as strong supporters of the separation of church and state and secular education. He expressed his surprise in receiving this letter. He considered his policy to be in accordance with the Republican majority in the government. He argued that his so-called *tyranny* was quite simply a matter of his expectations of at least a minimum of teaching abilities and morality from the teachers in private school, which was also expected from teachers in official schools. Augagneur stated that he intended to continue the French secularisation work in Madagascar despite the protests of both Protestants and Catholics. But there was an important context of over a century of Protestantism and English influence in education to deal with. In November of the same year, Augagneur had to defend his policy in front of the Chamber of Deputies in Paris.⁵⁵

In the letter, Augagneur defended the decree which prohibited schools in church buildings and assembly houses in terms of a defence of equality and the freedom of thoughts. If the government was to support the mission schools it could be held that it was supporting their religious work and this would interfere with the secular role of government. In addition, the Governor-general was afraid that the public educational system would be inferior. The missions could easily extend their educational work if they did not need to construct buildings. He argued that confessional education, whether inside or outside a church, was after all evangelising. The government should not help to make this easier by allowing them to teach in church. According to him, the missions were protesting, not because they cared for their educational work, but rather because they were afraid of losing their “(...) power of evangelisation”. The administration claimed that there was actually no real education in church schools. They were just used to collect members to the congregation and were of no utility to official education. They were described as “(...) ridiculous parodies of real schools”. Augagneur considered

⁵⁴ Victor Augagneur, "Letter dated 15.05.1907 to former colleagues " (1907), my translation.

⁵⁵ Rakotoanosy, "Historique et nature de l'enseignement à Madagascar de 1896 à 1960,"1986:97.

mission schools as only transmitting religious literacy. They did not manage to transmit French-assimilationist literacy, considered by the colonial administration as the basis for “real schools”.

Augagneur recognised that the church schools could have a *moralising role*, or put differently *civilising role*. For that reason they were allowed to exist under the name *garderie*; bush schools where reading and writing Malagasy and arithmetic were taught. These bush schools were nevertheless only allowed on condition that they provided their own buildings for educational purposes. Since the bush schools should not be in competition with public schools, they had to be constructed outside a radius of at least 6 km from an existing public or private school. Catholics and Protestants were said to be treated in the same way, but they could not have a bush school in the same area. One of these schools in each area would be enough for the moral role they were believed to play. It was also argued that the mission schools were in competition with public schools, rather than being a supplement to public education.

The missions redoubled their efforts to teach literacy in bush- and Sunday schools when ordinary schools became difficult to establish. In the early 1920s, the missions tried to have the regulations against bush schools and the ban on literacy teaching in Sunday schools lifted. The Director of Education, Renel, was fighting against lifting these regulations. He was clear in his view that bush schools were only to be a temporary phenomenon: “The bush schools are considered as nothing else than temporary establishments that will rightly disappear when an official or private school are built within a radius of five kilometers”.⁵⁶ In a letter to the Director of Civil Affairs dated 06.11.1920 Leeveaux, who was an interim for Renel, wrote that the missions had not, as expected, transformed their bush schools to ordinary schools, and that the missions now intended to increase the number of these institutions.⁵⁷ In this letter, the bush schools were viewed in the same way as church schools, as “(...) places for religious propaganda that in no way contribute to the educational work”. Leeveaux argued that the missions preferred bush schools instead of ordinary schools, as they did not have enough money to pay the salary of educated teachers. In this way, the missions could use the catechist to ensure the transmission of their religious propaganda in bush schools. Based on these arguments, the Director of Civil Affairs stated, in a note to the Governor-General, that “the missions might open new schools, but an increase in bush schools, led by the catechists, will only increase religious propaganda without contributing to the educational work.”⁵⁸ In other words, the official view was that bush schools only were places of religious literacy without the benefits of French-assimilationist literacy. Even though the children learned to read and write and some arithmetic, loyalty to France was

⁵⁶ Charles Renel, *Principe de pédagogie indigène à l'usage des Européens. Leur application à Madagascar* (Tananarive: Imprimerie officielle 1922):27, my translation.

⁵⁷ Leeveaux, "Letter dated 06.11.1920 to the Director of Civil Affairs," (Tananarive, 1920):2, my translation.

⁵⁸ Guy Machard, "Note dated 17.11.1920 to the Governor-General," (1920), my translation.

not promoted, but only faithfulness to the missions and the church. In 1924, the missions obtained some reliefs regarding bush schools due to lobbying by Protestant missions.⁵⁹ With the change of Governor-General to Olivier, the missions even got permission to teach literacy in Sunday schools, which had been prohibited since the 1906 decree.

Contextualised literacy challenging the dominant ideology

The number of recognised private schools in 1925 is given in a report about mission organisations written by Guitou, Director of Political and Administrative Affairs in Madagascar (see Table 2).⁶⁰ The number of pupils in NMS mission schools had now increased to 8,598 pupils. It is however important to note that 46 of the 59 recognised schools of NMS were bush schools. The report recognised that the church bush schools that had disappeared with the 1906 regulations did not constitute a huge loss for the educational sector. Uneducated teachers had served in these schools and closing them was therefore not a huge loss. Their disappearance nevertheless represented a considerable loss to the missions as it removed a strong instrument from them.

	Schools	Bush schools	Pupils
Catholic Mission	216	69	29,113
French Protestant Mission	95	25	11,913
London Mission Society	78	47	10,988
Friends Foreign Mission	25	18	4,026
Anglican Mission	39	38	5,771
Norwegian Mission Society	59	46	8,598
Total Protestant	296	174	41,296

The report helps to impart an understanding of the opinion of some colonial administrators regarding the missions.⁶¹ As will be demonstrated below, the views of the Governor-general at this time, Olivier, were more sympathetic to the work on the missions. Nevertheless the views of the colonial administration, as expressed in the report, remained sceptical about the general influence of the missions regarding education. The report stated that : “There is no question that their moral influence is very strong and that they are an element of civilisation and progress, but do they always act according to French interest?” European missionaries from different confessions were described as courteous towards the administration, but their native followers were described as less correct. Too often, their speeches and writings showed an attitude that could not be neglected. On the other hand, the Catholic mission was described as always supporting French interests. In addition to Protestant missions was often being perceived by the population as representing Britain, a hostile power rival to France. Church building was another focus of the report. The Protestant missions encouraged the

⁵⁹ See more about the Sunday- and bush school disputes in Ellen Vea Rosnes, "With a church comes a school: Protestant mission education in Madagascar," *Southern African Review of Education* 19, no. 2 (2013).

⁶⁰ Guitou, "Note sur les missions à Madagascar 1925," 1925.

⁶¹ Ibid., my translation.

creation of native and independent organisations. The rise of native churches took place in many African countries at this time, as described among others by Terence Ranger and Bengt Sundkler.⁶² According to the report the organization of native churches with native pastors could create aspirations for political rights. The Protestant missions, or rather that the ideas which supported loyalty to the colonial administration:

Discussions between members of the church and the District are frequent in the churches and witness an independent spirit, which is not without creating continuous troubles toward European leaders. This spirit is not distant to movements that push some of the natives to claim political rights.⁶³

The report illustrated that the missions' religious- and contextualised literacies were a challenge for the colonial power because they could encourage the development of thoughts and groupings that acted in contradiction to the goals of the colonial power. According to Francis Koerner, it was a French protestant pastor who warned the administration about the independence movement of 1916, VVS.⁶⁴ During investigations of the origins of this anti-colonial movement, the names of three active Catholics and three Protestants were frequently mentioned. Even though the ecclesiastical denied all participation in the VVS, and the missions were convinced that their followers were innocent, it became apparent that there was indeed a relationship between VVS membership and both Catholic and Protestant churches. The Malagasy historian Rajaonah has emphasised that many students from different parts of the country at the highest native educational institution, *Le Myre de Viliers*, were attached to a Lutheran congregation.⁶⁵ Common religious affiliations created sympathies between students from the Highlands, and the East and West, where the Lutheran missions were present. That the Church could foster a "supra-ethnic Christian humanity", which could lead to political engagement, was also mentioned by Raison-Jourde in relation to the construction of a missions' elite.⁶⁶ Goguel has argued that it was possible that the missions' educational networks played a role in challenging the uniform education of bureaucrats in the colonial educational structure.⁶⁷ In other words, the missions offered an education based on their own goals and with another literacy that challenged the dominant French-assimilationist literacy of the colonial power.

⁶² Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, vol. 74, Studia missionalia Upsaliensia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?* (Harare, Cape Town, Portsooth (N.H.) & London: Baobab, David Philip, Heinemann & James Currey, 1995).

⁶³ Guitou, "Note sur les missions à Madagascar 1925," 1925, my translation.

⁶⁴ Koerner, *Histoire de l'enseignement privé et officiel à Madagascar (1820-1995). Les implications religieuses et politique dans la formation d'un peuple* (1999): 199.

⁶⁵ Rajaonah, "L'école Le Myre de Viliers," 2002:201.

⁶⁶ Françoise Raison-Jourde, "Les missions et la promotion des élites de la périphérie après 1920," *ibid.*, ed. Françoise Raison-Jourde and Solofo Randrianja: 212, my translation.

⁶⁷ Anne-Marie Goguel, *Aux origines du mai malgache. Désir d'école et compétition sociale 1951-1972* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2006):40, 56-57, 98.

The 1925 report was written only one year after Olivier became Governor-General in Madagascar. He was less sceptical about the work of the missions than his predecessors and this led to an improvement in the relationship between the colonial administration and the missions. In a letter written by a Norwegian missionary to the Norwegian magazine *Morgenbladet* before the new governor arrived, Olivier was said to be a Protestant and reported that Catholics were demonstrating against his nomination.⁶⁸ In Olivier's book *Six ans de politique sociale à Madagascar*, which was published two years after his period as governor-general, he explained his policies.⁶⁹ He argued that even though his book was aimed at describing the French administration, he could not write a chapter on education without writing about the role of the missions. He had put in place a regulation for private schools that was "(...) as flexible as possible", which he had always tried "(...) to implement with liberalism". Olivier made his admiration for the work of the missions very clear in writing that regardless of any philosophical or religious opinions, no colon could ever "(...) dream to challenge the beneficent influence of the missions in the colonies, the precious help they contribute often for free to the civilisation work of the administration".⁷⁰ He argued that the missions were not only doing religious work, but that they were *un civilisateur* with schools, workshops, an infirmary and other activities connected to the church. Shortly after his arrival, Olivier had actually launched an enquiry into the missions' schoolwork and sought cooperation.⁷¹ In a letter dated 18.05.1925, he acknowledged that the missions had a lot of experience and competence in the country and he was ready to listen to their suggestions. He concluded in saying that this collaboration was "(...) for the interests of the French cause, of the colony and also for the spirit of tolerance and liberalism that characterize the regulation of private education in the metropole [France in Europe]".⁷²

A joint-Protestant letter was sent to the Governor-General describing their schoolwork and regulations of schools.⁷³ The Norwegian Superintendent Bjertnes wrote about this letter in a circular to his missionary colleagues, and in the archives I found draft copies of the letter. There were several meetings in the Inter-missionary Protestant Committee where the missions' response to the Governor-General was discussed. The text started by thanking the Governor-General for his cooperation in educational work. Secondly, they reminded him that many of the official bureaucrats were educated in mission elementary schools. The missions had taken seriously the demands of the colonial administration concerning educational policy. They emphasized that they had not only emphasized religious concerns, but had also contributed in spreading French-assimilationist literacy. It is

⁶⁸ Bjørn Elle, "Smaateri fra Madagaskar og Bourbon," *Morgenbladet*, no. 10.05 (1924).

⁶⁹ Marcel Olivier, *Six ans de politique sociale à Madagascar* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1931):228-230, my translation.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*:229-230, my translation.

⁷¹ ———, "Letter dated 18.05.1925 to the Superintendent," (1925).

⁷² *Ibid.*, my translation.

⁷³ IPC, "Draft of letter to the Governor-General," (no date); Fredrik Bjertnes, "Circular no. 175 dated 10.07.1925 to the missionaries," (1925).

interesting to note that in the letter the Protestant missions argued for an adapted education in Madagascar. This demonstrated the influence of the approach being promoted by the Phelps-Stokes Fund Commission and British colonial policy as described elsewhere in this volume.⁷⁴ (see Cappy and Glotzer)

The use of the Malagasy language at primary level was an important issue for the missions, and Olivier was to implement this policy through an educational decree in 1929. The missions explained that they found it appropriate to use the local language as the language of instruction, at least the first three years in order for the children to understand and learn French better. However, French was used at higher educational levels. They admitted that French was useful, and that it was an advantage for youth in a French colony to learn French in addition to their mother tongue. The lack of schoolbooks was identified as a hindrance to obtaining good results. Up to that time such books had been imported from France which were not adapted to the Malagasy mind or context. The missions therefore asked for admission to search for more appropriate books or to publish themselves. They concluded with the hope that the collaboration with the administration would continue. They wished to be given the opportunity to comment on possible changes in the educational policy before they were sent to the Ministry in France.

Olivier wanted to develop a policy which made primary education an end in itself, and also to develop steps by which students would be able to access higher levels of schooling.⁷⁵ Primary school was to give pupils an elementary knowledge in order to better live their lives in the context of the communities in which they lived. He argued that knowledge in French was not needed in order for the rural masses to evolve, and to gain knowledge about civil duties, hygiene and the exploitation of the soil – much in the same way as the Phelps - Stokes recommendations on adapted education had been framed. However, at higher levels, more of an emphasis was to be put on learning the French language. Olivier's policy was quite radical since it touched upon the very base of the French-assimilationist literacy. In response to critics of his policies, Olivier actually pointed to the success of students who had been taught French in mission schools. Although they were taught in Malagasy during their first years at school, Olivier argued that he was often struck by the extent of their knowledge of French once they reached high school.

Four years after Olivier's educational reform, Governor-General Léon Henri Charles from 1930-1939 reversed the policy, and French again became the language of instruction. Olivier's attempt to

⁷⁴ King, *Pan-Africanism and Education. A study of Race, Philanthropy and Education in the Southern States of America and East Africa* (1971).

⁷⁵ Olivier, *Six ans de politique sociale à Madagascar* (1931):211-215, 218.

introduce more adaptive literacy at lower levels in schools did not succeed. Rakotoanosy has argued that there was concern in Paris over Olivier's deviation from assimilationist policy in Madagascar.⁷⁶ Former governors had given the secular spirit and the French language a clear priority whereas the critics now argued that the policies of Olivier had endangered French influence on the island. Governor-General Cayla returned to discourses on assimilation. His views on language favoured French:

(...) French reading has to be prior to Malagasy reading, and he supposes that this way is pedagogically more positive, more efficient. "It seems", he argues, that reading in the maternal language will be possible one day for the pupil that have learnt first to read in French whereas the other way around presents serious difficulties.

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In 1933 an inspector of the colonies, Moretti, visited Madagascar and he discussed the different arguments relating to the language of instruction to be used in schools.⁷⁸ Moretti admitted that pupils' taught in the vernacular progressed better than those given instruction in French. Nevertheless, he asked if it would be right to sacrifice the elementary knowledge of French for the benefit of the local culture. Here, Moretti is actually recognising the pedagogical advantages with more contextualised literacy, but he argues that these gains are achieved to the detriment of French-assimilationist literacy. Moretti emphasised the complexity and originality of the language issue in Madagascar. In his conclusion he put forth arguments for using French in areas where there were many different dialects, and using the local language where this dialect was dominant. Moretti argued that linguistic unity was not yet realised and that French should be prioritised. In Moretti's report, acting Governor-General Bernard criticised the former Director of Education, Cheffaud, for having laid too much emphasis on the Malagasy language. As a result Méheust, the acting Director of Education in the absence of Cheffaud, issued a new educational decree.⁷⁹ This decree returned to the ideas of the 1916 reform. Again it became compulsory to use the local dialect, not the official language based on the Merina dialect, before introducing the French language as the language of instruction as soon as possible. The aim of primary education was firstly to enable the pupils to use the French language, but also to give them essential elementary knowledge and to teach manual work like agriculture, art and sewing.

Five years after French had been reintroduced as the language of instruction (LOI) in primary school, the Inter-Missionary Conference sent a letter to the Director of Education, edited by the NMS

⁷⁶ Rakotoanosy, "Historique et nature de l'enseignement à Madagascar de 1896 à 1960," 1986: 281-282.

⁷⁷ Ibid.: 282, my translation.

⁷⁸ Ibid.: 290; Esoavelomandroso, "Langue, culture et colonisation à Madagascar: malgache et français dans l'enseignement officiel (1916-1940)," 1976: 108-109, 118; Moretti, "Report dated 15.03.1934. Mission d'inspection 1933-1934. Concernant le rôle de la langue indigène dans l'enseignement," .

⁷⁹ Esoavelomandroso, "Langue, culture et colonisation à Madagascar: malgache et français dans l'enseignement officiel (1916-1940)," 1976: 108; Galdi and Rochefort, "Notes sur l'Historique de l'Enseignement à Madagascar," 1960: 1087.

superintendent Büchschütz and signed by the President of IPC, arguing for the promotion of Malagasy as LOI.⁸⁰ The letter was mentioned in an official despatch to the Governor-General in the same year highlighting the argument that Malagasy should be kept as LOI in primary school.⁸¹ The reasons of the Protestant missions to engage themselves in the matter were many:

Our aim is to give as many children as possible the minimum of instruction necessary in order to mature intellectually and morally. It seems to us that all humans should at least have knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic, which, when lacking, make them defenseless in front of people without scruples who search to be enriched at the expense of the weak. On the other hand, moral progress is inseparable, in our view, from religious life. As Protestants, we want our children to be able to read their Bible in their mother tongue, understand it, and associate with the service of the church in order to find enlightenment that should make people out of them with conscience and character.⁸²

The missions argued that they gave a considerable importance, especially during the first years, to the study of the Malagasy language. The reasons were that they promoted education for all, in addition to the diffusion of a Christian moral development. They were “(...) convinced that a solid knowledge of a foreign language demands, as a base, a complete study of the mother tongue”.⁸³ It should be mentioned that this is in line with research evidence from the beginning of the 21st century.⁸⁴ At the same time, the letter emphasised that Protestant schools strived to teach their pupils the French language as “Our children will find themselves in a bad situation if, after having learnt their mother tongue as good as possible, they do not learn, in a complete manner as possible, French elements”.⁸⁵ The missionaries argued that the schoolbooks that they had published and exams that their pupils had passed provided proof that they sought the same educational level as public education.

In the letter, the missions highlighted their scepticism regarding the use of French as LOI in primary school and pointed to the policies of both Governor-Generals Gallieni and Oliver, who had introduced French as the language of instruction without seeking to suppress the Malagasy language. In the view of the missions, arithmetic could be taught in French but otherwise French should be used little by little as language of instruction from CP classes (third and fourth year). The missions advocated more contextualised literacy as the best instrument for learning. The letter continued by describing how a foreign language as the LOI deprived children of learning outcomes. They argued that learning in French imposed a double liability on the child. Pupils had to learn the content at the same time as

⁸⁰ Conference Intermissionnaire, "Rapport de la cinquième conférence intermissionnaire tenue à Ivory, Fianarantsoa, Madagascar du 10 au 16 août 1938" (1939):65, 77-80.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*: 75-76.

⁸² *Ibid.*: 77, my translation.

⁸³ *Ibid.*: 77, my translation.

⁸⁴ Birgit Brock-Utne, *Whose Education for All? The Recolonization of the African Mind*, ed. Mark B. Ginsburg, Studies in Educational Politics (New York: Falmer Press, 2000).

⁸⁵ Conference Intermissionnaire, "Rapport de la cinquième conférence intermissionnaire tenue à Ivory, Fianarantsoa, Madagascar du 10 au 16 août 1938" (1939): 78, my translation.

learning to use a foreign language. That slowed down the learning process. Teaching subjects like arithmetic, geography and morals in a foreign language would hinder pupils' development and inhibit their ability to think critically due to the lack of vocabulary. The result was that Malagasy children neither learnt French nor Malagasy and their intellectual development suffered. In the letter, the Inter-missionary Conference asked the Director of Education directly not to insist on French as LOI in primary school. The missions did not receive any reply to the letter and it was mentioned again in a 1943 note on educational issues to the governor-general.⁸⁶ Again the missions stated the necessity of teaching the French language but at the same time rejected what they named the *quasi-suppression* of the Malagasy language and using a foreign language as LOI in the first grades. In that note they were also promoting the Merina dialect, the language they used in their schools and churches as the official language of schools : "It was with this hope we demanded in 1938 that this language should be kept as the language of instruction and still we insist today that the study of it will not be excluded from the programme in schools of different levels".⁸⁷

I did not find any comments from the government on this note. However, the implementation of the linguistic policy speaks for itself as an aspect of the general policy of assimilation followed in most French colonies. At the same time it is important to also recognise that Malagasy linguistic unity was a threat because the universal use in schools of the language based on the Merina dialect would privilege the Merina. In summary, the elitist character of the educational policy in this period which favoured French as the language of instruction, was aimed at the creation of a loyal assimilated elite, and an assimilationist policy was to be continued towards independence.

Conclusion

The position of Protestant mission schools in pre-colonial Madagascar was in due course a challenge to the French colonial administration. The colonial power had to manifest itself as hegemonic in forming the local "colonial population". The arrival of the colonial power that offered education in the language of the conquerors provided the opportunity for some Malagasies could learn to read and write without going through the missions' religious literacy with the goal of conversion into a Christian belief. However, colonial education had another aim, namely to make the colonised French or at least be loyal to France. Even though *civilisation* was an aim for both of these institutions, there were important differences in their literacies, which is well illustrated by their use of languages. In order to become French, or at least loyal to France, learning the French language was the basic criteria, while in order to become a Christian Lutheran missions insisted on the significance of an education

⁸⁶ IPC, "Note to the Governor-General dated 10.12.1943," (1943).

⁸⁷ Ibid.: 4, my translation.

that enabled new recruits to the church to understand its message. For the Lutheran it was only through reading the gospel in their own language that indigenous peoples could become conscientious Christians; therefore local language and culture were instruments in their literacy work. Hence, the missions promoted more contextualised literacy in their schools. (see also Kallaway)

Both the colonial power and the missions regarded improving the literacy rate as a step towards *civilisation*, but their literacies were different due to their different goals. This chapter has shown that there were disagreements between colonial administrators on how to relate to the more contextualised literacy promoted by the missions. The colonial context in which the missions worked changed dramatically several times at the beginning of the 20th century. The numbers of Malagasy children learning to read and write in Norwegian mission schools changed according to this changing French colonial and secular context.

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