Narratives and Moral Projects: Generational Memories of the Malagasy 1947 Rebellion

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ABSTRACT *This article develops an analysis of how different generations in both rural and urban areas of East Madagascar remember a violent anticolonial rebellion that took place in 1947 and places these memories in the context of various state regimes' efforts to create competing narrations of the events. I show how rural and urban elders, rural and urban youth, and former soldiers remember the 1947 rebellion in different, but overlapping, ways. Rather than viewing the overall pattern as a simple reflex of the particular narratives people use, I suggest that their memories are best viewed as a complex outcome of the ways in which people's "moral projects" shape their selection, use and interpretation of particular narratives, thereby accounting for the considerable heterogeneity in the ways 1947 is remembered. Such a reading attempts to move beyond the tendency within cultural historical studies to focus solely on narrative dynamics to a more nuanced understanding of the interaction between narrative and context in the making of memory.*

Oh young Malagasy, natives of Madagascar,
your island is calling you!

—Chief Lieutenant,
Political Office for the Movement for Malagasy Renovation (MDRM), 1947

Illuminating the dynamics of social and individual memory, or the interrelationship between how individuals and groups encode, reconstruct, and understand the past, requires rethinking the complex interplay between context and memory. Perhaps the earliest pioneer to explore this question was Durkheim's student, Maurice Halbwachs. In analyzing social or collective memory, Halbwachs took the group as his

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unit of analysis, focusing on the role of ritual commemorations and spatial emplacement in localizing and transmitting collective representations of the past (1980). He emphasized the malleable nature of these representations and their tendency to be interpreted and transformed according to present interests. Though Halbwachs's ideas provided an important starting point in theorizing the role of social practices in shaping memory, his approach was hampered by the fact that he was heir to Durkheim's dictum that individual representations were not the proper domain of sociological inquiry (Durkheim 1951). As a result, his analysis folded individual and social memory together, and he neither distinguished between context and memory nor illuminated the social dynamics that made some memories more relevant and enduring than others.

Throughout the late eighties and early nineties, many of Halbwachs's ideas have been drawn into the project of illuminating national memory, with several studies focusing on the ways in which collective representations of the nation are historically constituted, transmitted, and contested (Gillis 1994; Sturken 1997; Zerubavel 1995). An underlying assumption in much of this work was that of a division between "national" or "state" and its supposed opposite, "popular" memory. This division underlies many different accounts of memory—for example, studies of "popular memory" in the Soviet Union or China, where popular memories are supposed to stand in opposition to state narratives (Watson 1994). It is similarly visible in subaltern historical studies that emphasize the recuperation of alternative popular histories with which to write a counternarrative of the nation-state (Guha 1996). As Stoler and Strassler (2000) note, such analyses assume that popular memories possess hidden circuits of movement, a window onto countermemories of the nation-state. Yet these discussions that assume a circuit of memories outside the state's purview fail to examine the media through which these accounts circulate, and they overlook the complex ways in which "national" or "state" and "popular" memories might be entwined with one another.

An alternative formulation for understanding memory, one that offers a means of moving beyond the individual/social or state/popular binaries while also offering a more fine-grained approach to the social dynamics of memory production, is that offered by theorists drawing on the Russian cultural-historical school of psychology (Cole 1996; Wertsch 1985). According to this view, various forms of mediation—whether "cultural artifacts" like a pencil or symbolic forms like narrative—used in historically located activities provide a way to situate mental processes within a wider social and cultural frame.[1] The combination of mediational means used in joint activity reacts back on individuals to change their psychic condition. Applied to the domain of memory, this approach suggests that social memory is produced through the dynamic interplay of agents, mediational

means, and particular contexts (Wertsch 2002). Insofar as this approach views individual and social memory as co-constituted through the use of particular mediational means, which in turn may circulate between popular and state contexts, it breaks down the false divide between the individual and the social, the national and the popular, enabling instead a focus on the ambivalent ways in which different kinds of memory may be unevenly woven together (Cole 2001; Kenny 1999; Wertsch 2002; White 2000).

However, there are two significant problems with recent work of this kind addressing the question of social memory. Both problems can be particularly well illustrated with reference to recent work taking narrative as a key mediational means in the constitution of social memory. First, there is a tendency to downplay or severely limit the political and historical context in which the use of narratives occurs. For example, in an analysis of collective memory in the Soviet Union, James Wertsch (2002) highlights narrative as a cultural tool through which one can understand state efforts to shape collective memory. He argues that one way to illuminate transformations in collective memory over time is to examine the differences in how narratives are both produced and consumed. In an examination of how Ukranian high school students and adults interpreted the events of World War II, Wertsch found major differences between the two groups. He argues that most adults approached the state narrative as an "authoritative text," while younger students used it as a "thinking device" and openly questioned the state's narrative (Bakhtin 1981). In interpreting his findings, Wertsch (2002) acknowledges the importance of performative context, and the relative weight given to private and public spheres in shaping how individuals appropriate, in the Bakhtinian sense of make their own, state narratives. However we learn very little about the historical and political contexts in which the two groups operated. Similarly, in an analysis of a monument to the Nazi book burning that took place in 1933, Jans Brockmeier gives analytic priority to various textual representations of the past, ranging from a "little explanatory note about the monument . . . to the continuous flow of comments and conversations of the visitors and bystanders that blends with the texts in city guides" (2002:38). But we learn nothing about the historical and political context in which these narrations take place.

Second, and somewhat ironically given that many of the people drawn to this approach are culturally or semiotically oriented psychologists, there is a tendency to ignore the agent. Here, Shweder's more general critique of theories of mediated action is relevant. Shweder (1995) points out the methodological individualism that inheres in such approaches, which take up a variation on the economist's idea that human action is shaped through the interaction of "preferences" and "constraints" (the affordance and constraint inherent to a tool or mediational means, respectively)

mediated by human agency. Shweder argues that such an approach has the advantage of not opposing culture and mind, but it does so by eliminating a "thick" agent, one specific to the cultural, historical context at hand. For example, in Wertsch's (2002) study of memory and school textbooks, we learn nothing of who the young people are, aside from the fact that they were born after World War II and learned about it only from textbooks. In Brockmeier's (2002) study, there simply are no voices beyond the author's presentation of various narrative texts.

To be fair, neither Brockmeier nor Wertsch are arguing anything so simple as that narrative determines memory irrespective of either context or agent. For example, in his analysis of the German antimemorial to the Nazi book burning, Brockmeier notes that "typically narrative and other forms of verbal communication occur contemporaneously with and not independently of other material and symbolic activities" (2002:38). Likewise, Wertsch emphasizes repeatedly that viewing narratives as cultural tools means that they are part of situated contexts and that narratives exist in "irreducible tensions between the text and the active agent" (Wertsch 2002). Yet despite these cautions, by leaving out rich description of the social, cultural, and historical context, both authors suggest that narrative dynamics are sufficient to understand the cultural and historical shaping of memory. When context does emerge as important in these accounts, it is usually used in the linguistic sense as the immediate context of a narrative utterance.

The failure to look beyond narrative and the immediate context of its performance poses a risk. In particular, scholars of memory may focus so exclusively on narratives and their dynamics that they lose sight of what is at stake in telling a particular narrative, of why it matters. In reducing the different generational narratives to different performative contexts, or to the specialized moment of visiting a museum, we do not gain a sufficient sense of what motivates actors, nor do we get a sense of the cultural politics in which these actors and their narratives are embedded. After all, our memories are part of a landscape of action, and the broader moral and political projects and historical circumstances in which narratives are inevitably situated. To make this argument is not to return to the well rehearsed view that the past is reread through the interests of the present, for it is now widely accepted that particular narrative forms constrain what is possible to say (Appadurai 1981; Lambek and Antze 1996). Nor am I suggesting a naïve incorporation of "people's voices" as if they could somehow be recuperated free of sociocultural mediation. But I do want to argue that the relationship between narrative, agent, and context in producing memory may be more complex than current approaches focusing on narrative and memory imply.

In this article I develop the idea of "moral projects" as a way to provide a fuller analysis of the complex interrelationship between narratives, agents, and historical contexts in the production of memory. In using the term *moral projects,* I am inspired by Charles Taylor's (1989) insights into the centrality of human striving for the good in the formation of selfhood. I wish to root these strivings, however, in concrete, sociopolitical circumstances. The concept of moral projects, therefore, refers to local visions of what makes a good, just community, and the ways in which these conceptions of community reciprocally engage people's notions of what constitutes a good life, and their efforts to attain that life. In other words, moral projects link individual concerns and desires to wider sociopolitical formations. By focusing on the ways in which moral projects partially shape agent's selection, interpretation, and use of particular narratives, we can better illuminate the complex interplay between agent, narrative, and context in the production of memory.

My argument draws from my research in Madagascar into the vicissitudes of Malagasy memories of a foundational event of national history—the anticolonial rebellion of 1947 in which an estimated 100,000 people died, primarily on the east coast of the island in what is now known as Toamasina province (see Figure 1). Although I turn to competing interpretations of this event below, it is generally viewed as a situation where Malagasy could no longer tolerate colonial oppression and rose up against the French administration, only to suffer tremendous loss of life in the subsequent repression. Over the past ten years I have tracked the emergence of memories of the 1947 rebellion in both private and public discourse. In the early 1990s, I spent 14 months in a village of peasant farmers located in the southern region of Toamasina province that had been deeply affected by the events; from 1999 to 2002 I have also conducted fieldwork in the provincial capital and bustling port town of Toamasina. In addition to tracking changes in national policy with respect to 1947 and observing the ways in which references to 1947 were rhetorically used in casual conversation, I have also interviewed over sixty people in both rural and urban areas and from different generations about their memories of the rebellion. In examining how rural and urban people from different generations remember the events, it becomes clear that narratives and memory do not map onto each other in an unproblematic way. Four competing narratives of the events appear to be in circulation. Across the different groups of people whom I interviewed, however, only two of the possible narratives of 1947 appear to be taken up in a powerful way. In viewing the overall pattern we find a situation in which different groups use different narratives; in other cases different groups use the same narrative but interpret it differently and use it to different ends. To understand the complexities of

Figure 1. Provincial capitals and major towns on the east coast of Madagascar.

this pattern, one must understand the ways in which agents' moral projects shape the selection, interpretation, and use of particular narratives.

Insofar as the narrative of 1947 embodies notions of justice, freedom, and good government, it provides a shared idiom through which different groups continue to debate moral notions of community and good government. The interactions that take place between state and various factions of popular interests as they struggle over the meaning of the events of 1947 is captured through the Bakhtinian notion of voice. Bakhtin (1981, 1984) suggested that in analyzing the meanings of texts, it is important to consider the structure of the text, the context of its utterance, and finally the production of voice. For Bakhtin, no utterance is fully original because "the speaker receives the word from another voice and filled with that voice. The word enters his context from another context, permeated with the interpretations of others" (1984:202). Through this process words gather history around them, accumulating layers of "obscuring mist" from the various contexts in which they have lived (1984:276). As a result, words are not "a neutral medium that pass freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions" but, rather, are "overpopulated with the intentions of others" (1981:294). Various groups try to bend the various meanings of the rebellion to the measure of their own desires, but it remains a difficult and complex process, though it is easier for some than for others.

Taking Bakhtin's insights as a point of departure, the following sections explore some of the contexts in which memories of the rebellion have lived, by examining the ways in which French colonial and successive Malagasy national regimes have sought to give meanings to the events. I then turn to how the rebellion is remembered by various groups within Toamasina province today. Bakhtin's insights into voice and narrative dynamics are crucial for overcoming the false dichotomy between state and popular memory, yet a focus on narrative dynamics is not enough. Only by examining the interplay between agents, narratives, and moral projects can we understand not only the different versions of the rebellion that exist today but why they matter.

BACKGROUND: THE DIALECTICS OF IDENTITY IN TOAMASINA PROVINCE

Stretching along Madagascar's east coast, Toamasina province is one of the most populous of Madagascar's six official provinces. In colonial, and now national, official political discourse, this region has been home to groups now referred to as Betsimisaraka, Sihanaka, and Bezanozano. However, because of its position on the edge of the Indian Ocean, located between the Merina ethnic group of the central high plateau and the plantation islands of Réunion and Mauritius, this region has been the site

of cultural mixing since at least the 18th century, and this process continues today. This process of intermixing is matched by an opposing tendency towards purification, which has taken on different forms according to particular historical periods. During the colonial period, this move toward purification was part of a nationalist movement; subsequently, during the early 1970s and then later during the 1990s, it has taken a partially ethnic form.

During the 19th century, the area along the central east coast was conquered by the expanding Merina kingdom of the high plateau, whose leaders sought access to the ports that would enable them to trade slaves and goods with planters on Mauritius and Réunion. Through a combination of strategic liaisons and force, state agents of the Merina kingdom were able to subjugate coastal groups, subjecting them to both taxes and forced labor (Esoavelomandroso 1979). Relations between Merina state agents and various local groups were further complicated by the arrival of European settlers from Réunion and Mauritius who came to make their fortune on the east coast. What evolved was a Creole society with women, in particular, acting as important agents of cultural mixing and adaptation (Bois 1997).

Tensions, as well as personal and strategic alliances between Merina state agents and various east coast peoples, existed throughout the period of Merina conquest (1823–95). With colonization, these divisions and alliances were reworked in new ways as colonial rule both fostered a sense of pan-Malagasy subjugation vis-à-vis the French and recast tensions between Merina and coastal peoples in increasingly ethnic terms. Inhabiting the region with the highest rates of public work projects, as well as colonial settlers, east coast groups suffered disproportionately in terms of both land appropriation and forced labor recruitment by both settlers and the colonial administration. Consequently, Toamasina province was an important center for fomenting dissent against the colonial regime. It is thus not surprising that Toamasina province was the primary arena for the organization and execution of the 1947 rebellion, much of which took place in remote parts of the countryside (Tronchon 1986).

Madagascar gained independence in 1960. In the early years of independence under the First Republic (1960–72), tension between Merina and various coastal groups appears to have remained submerged in favor of national unity. The nationalist agenda was re-energized and given new life with the events of May 1972, which led to the fall of the First Republic, perceived by many as a neocolonial regime that continued to favor the French. During one of the periods of unrest, however, ethnic tension also re-emerged as rioters in the city of Toamasina looted and sacked Merina homes, forcing many Merina to flee the city. Eventually, under the leadership of Didier Ratsiraka, national unity was restored and promoted via a program of state socialism that lasted throughout the Second Republic (1975–91).

In the early 1990s, however, numerous groups based mainly in urban centers and large towns contested Ratsiraka's regime, which had led Madagascar from relative prosperity to dire poverty. Threatened by the growth of a prodemocracy movement and the potential loss of power, Ratsiraka sought to maintain power by playing the ethnic card, arguing that electing the opposition was tantamount to a Merina reconquest. Despite these arguments, in 1993 Ratsiraka lost to the contender Zafy Albert. In 1996, however, Zafy Albert was impeached and successfully removed from office. In 1997 Ratsiraka was re-elected to the presidency. During this second phase of office, Ratsiraka introduced a system of "federated states" that would give political and economic autonomy to each of Madagascar's six provinces. Those who supported Ratsiraka interpreted the move toward "federated states" as a way to protect the coastal regions against reconquest by the Merina. Conversely, those who opposed the program saw it as a divisive move that would exacerbate ethnic tension, harkening back to colonial tactics of divide and rule.

Following the period of relative isolation during the socialist period, the economic liberalization of the 1990s has added a new layer to the tension between ethnic/regional and national unity: the desire on the part of urbanites to attain what are perceived as modern ways of life, defined by access to particular consumer goods, the source of which is seen to lie outside of Madagascar. More than any other group, youth have been particularly engaged by these desires. However, like young people in other urban centers throughout Madagascar, youth in Toamasina find themselves faced with high rates of unemployment and few job opportunities. In this context, many young people believe that leaving Madagascar to go abroad is the only way out of their impoverished circumstances. For women, the dream of acquiring a European husband, who would supposedly rescue them from hardship and limited opportunities, appears increasingly widespread.

The majority of people who stay behind, however, perceive the few existing opportunities as channeled through personal connections of patronage. Young urbanites are keenly aware of state power, and they both despise the state for its corruption and want to be a part of it at the same time. As a result, an uneasy alliance characterizes the relationship between students and the men who hold political power. Many young men at the university dream of entering national politics in some capacity, so that they too might distribute goods to *their* families. As a result, they often work for politicians as propagandists during elections, either by leading parades about town or tearing down the posters of the opposition. In return, politicians either pay them small daily wages or distribute gifts of pens, t-shirts, and calcium. But students also feel a deep resentment for the ways that politicians manipulate them by courting their votes and

then, once elected, rarely enact policies that give youth a better chance at getting jobs or actually establishing adult households of their own. Youth respond by sabotaging the system where they can, for example, by working as propagandists for many competing political parties at the same time in order to gain more money and by voting for the political opposition regardless of which party they may have worked for. Taken together, these social and political circumstances point to the web in which both state and popular interests are entangled. To begin to sort through how these differently positioned groups remember the rebellion, I now turn to the events of 1947 viewed from official histories and state propaganda as well as my own perspective based on French and Malagasy written archives.

ACADEMIC HISTORIANS RECOUNT 1947

According to written historical accounts, fighting erupted simultaneously at a number of points on the east coast on March 29, 1947. Rebel bands that were drawn from the ranks of the hungry, dispossessed peasantry but were often led by former soldiers who had fought for France in World War II attacked military garrisons, administrative centers, and Malagasy sympathizers with the colonial regime, burning buildings and killing a number of French administrators and settlers. The French colonial administration responded with force, leading a campaign of military repression whose savagery was matched by the brutality of rebel soldiers who often forced civilians to join their cause. The rebels, who had sworn oaths to save their ancestral land or die, fought on. As the French army slaughtered cattle and burned towns and fields in retribution, rebels and civilians alike found themselves without food. Hampered by inferior weapons and weakened by hunger, they were beaten into a slow retreat. The historian Jacques Tronchon (1986) estimated that by the time the rebellion was declared officially over in December of 1948, 550 French were dead, and 100,000 Malagasy had been executed, tortured, starved, or driven into the forest. Over 11,000 appear to have been killed as the direct result of French military action. Though one recent historical analysis has contested the number of people who died (Fremigacci 1999), the rebellion remains a foundational event in contemporary Malagasy history.

The events of 1947 are generally interpreted as part of a wave of independence movements that swept Africa and Asia in the years following World War II when growing experience in the domain of modern state politics combined with a lessening tolerance for colonial exploitation. In Madagascar this period was characterized by the growth of the Mouvement Démocratique de la Rénovation Malgache (MDRM), a political party that had massive popularity throughout Madagascar, and whose leaders—the Deputies Ravoahangy, Raseta, and Rabemananjara—were in the process

of negotiating a peaceful independence in the context of a greater French union when the rebellion broke out. At the time of the events, colonial officials quickly blamed the MDRM. The result of this interpretation was that the French were able to use the rebellion as a pretext to decapitate the independence movement. They were also able to give power to those who had joined a competing political party, sympathetic to French interests, the PADESM (Parti des Déshérités de Madagascar), which some have argued represented disenfranchised groups like the descendents of slaves on the high plateau, as well as the coastal peoples (Randriamaro 1997).

At the time the French colonial government interpreted the rebellion as an MDRM and a Merina plot. As it happened, many of the most visible public leaders of the MDRM were Merina, making it easy for the French to cast the MDRM as an entirely Merina organization. Subsequent analyses, however, have suggested that the causes of the rebellion were more complex. As several historians have argued, the MDRM leadership was officially committed to obtaining independence by legal means, but the party also contained within its ranks the members of two secret societies that used the administrative structures put in place by the MDRM to further their own, more radical, goals (Raison-Jourde 1999; Tronchon 1986). Nor does the thesis of a Merina plot hold up. Many of the most visible public leaders of the MDRM were Merina, yet even the briefest glance at the MDRM membership lists reveals that Betsimisaraka and other coastal ethnic groups were also involved (Cole 2001).

Yet another division that is particularly important for understanding what happened during the rebellion is the different ways in which rural and urban areas were recruited into the movement. Writing of the history of the MDRM, Randrianja (1999) has argued that a split-level organization characterized the party. At the top were leaders involved in the formation of political parties who functioned as important symbols to mobilize the population, and at the bottom, the militant masses. The two levels were loosely coordinated and relied on each other—the top relying on the masses to generate support, the masses relying on the symbolic power of the leaders to give the movement momentum and a particular direction.

However, rural and urban members of these groups never had precisely the same goals. In this context, it is useful to recall the distinction between nation and state, where nation refers to an idealized notion of community based ideally on shared language and culture, and state refers to the particular institutions and structures of governance. Though there is no necessary connection between nation and state, in the historical context of Madagascar, as in many other contexts, nation and state have implied one another. Indeed, urban people appear to have joined the MDRM and participated in the nationalist movement because they wanted to gain independence and thereby accede to the privileged positions in the

state that the French had previously held. Rural people's motives for joining the movement were more ambiguous. In many areas of the east coast, MDRM activists gained supporters by telling peasants that once independence was gained, peasants would be free to burn their rice fields and never have to pay taxes, suggesting that some peasants hoped to do away with state government altogether. But the archival research and oral histories I have collected indicate that some rural people may have wanted to control local positions of privilege such as the Chef de Village, suggesting that in some cases it was less the abolition of state government than a transfer of control that was at stake. Whatever people's initial motivations, rural east coast people bore the greatest costs of the rebellion in terms of lost life and property.

SUCCESSIVE STATE REGIMES INTERPRET THE REBELLION

Processes of meaning accretion took place within days of the first attacks, as the French colonial government and military tried to impose their interpretation of the events by calling it an MDRM and Merina plot. Their strategy was twofold. First, in the process of repressing the rebellion, the French imprisoned, executed, or exiled most of the leaders who might have given alternate interpretations. Second, they disseminated their own interpretation of the events. In urban areas, French interests spread the MDRM-Merina thesis via radio, newspapers, and public decree. In rural areas, however, this process was more complex. My reading of documents for the Mahanoro region suggests that soldiers who brought Betsimisaraka out of the forest to resettle them in camps continually stressed that the rebellion was "all the Merina's fault" (Centre des Archives d'Outre Mer n.d.). The French army also purposefully used their knowledge of Betsimisaraka cultural practices to stage public ceremonies aimed at emptying the rebellion of any political content and stripping it of any heroic qualities that might contribute to future political protest. To this end, cattle sacrifices were held in which rebels were made to depose their spears, repudiate their actions, and swear loyalty to the French colonial regime. Finally, the French arranged public tribunals, in which local people were made to judge each other and mete out punishment for their participation in the events (Cole 2001).

During the years immediately following the rebellion, as well as throughout the First Republic, the rebellion was represented as a senseless tragedy in which thousands of people had died. France engineered an independence in which power was handed to Philibert Tsiranana, a man who came from the west of Madagascar, which had been significantly less involved in the rebellion, and who was associated with the former PADESM, the party favorable to French interests. As a result, it was taboo to discuss the events

of 1947 or to assimilate them to a nationalist narrative. The task of constructing a nationalist narrative out of the rebellion was further obstructed by the fact that many of the MDRM leaders repudiated the events, claiming that they had nothing to do with the violence that had taken place (Raison-Jourde 1989). In 1967, however, as Tsiranana sought to expand his constituency by incorporating former MDRM into the government ranks, he decided to honor their requests for a commemoration. However, the emphasis in this first commemoration of 1947 sidestepped the issue of a *national* commemoration, placing the emphasis instead on begging forgiveness from the dead as well as reconciliation with France (Raison-Jourde 1989). The newspaper *Le Courrier de Madagascar,* associated with Tsiranana's group and the French embassy, called for a day that was "typically Malagasy" by excluding all hate or resentment! Subsequent articles in the same paper emphasized that French and Malagasy had all died together (Raison-Jourde 1989:27). The representation of 1947 as an anomaly in the history of Madagascar was further encoded in history textbooks throughout the First Republic (Labatut and Raharinarivonirina 1969).

With the transition to the state socialist Second Republic in 1975, the commemoration of the rebellion entered a new phase. In trying to create legitimacy for his regime in contrast to the First Republic, whose authority derived from France, Ratsiraka claimed that his own policies were "a consecration of what the martyrs of 29 March 1947 had always demanded" (Leymarie 1973:34, cited in Covell 1989). To this end, he created a cultural committee that sought to construct a respectable lineage for the government. They did so by representing the new regime as the culmination of all previous Malagasy anticolonial movements, of which the 1947 rebellion was portrayed as the most important. Thus, in his *Charter for a Socialist Revolution,* a book I found in people's houses even in remote parts of the countryside, Ratsiraka traces out what he sees as the three key struggles for independence—including the Menalamba uprising in 1895, the VVS secret society scandal of 1915, and the rebellion of 1947.[2] The narration of 1947 as part of the glorious quest for Malagasy independence that had been preceded by the Menalamba and the VVS is also what is taught in Malagasy schools, illustrating the point that in nation-states, school history books work to transmit a morally charged, self-legitimizing form of collective memory.

Moreover, in an effort to articulate people's private memories with the nationalist narrative, Ratsiraka had memorials to the martyrs placed in towns throughout Madagascar, and declared March 29, the day on which the rebellion started, as a day of memory. He also declared that he would give a nominal pension to all those who had fought in 1947 and created a committee to represent the interests of *anciens combatants.* Although rural people I knew claimed this promise was never fulfilled during the

Second Republic, after Ratsiraka's removal from, and return to, power in the mid-1990s, those able to prove their involvement in the rebellion have sporadically received a small pension.

Ratsiraka's appropriation of the rebellion is not without its ironies. Although, as president, Ratsiraka was head of the AREMA party created at the start of the Second Republic, Ratsiraka's parents, as well as his wife's family, had been members of the PADESM, the party created by the French to rival the pro-independence MDRM and associated with the former colonial administration. Significantly, in choosing the anciens combatants, however, Ratsiraka rewarded and acknowledged only those people who had been caught with "arms in their hands" and intentionally excluded members of the MDRM, though most historical analyses hold the MDRM partially responsible for organizing the rebellion. Whether the motivations for Ratsiraka's decision to honor the former combatants is linked to his own desire to atone for his family's PADESM loyalties, or a strategic attempt to disable political opposition, is of course impossible to say. However, the effects of meting out state rewards in this way are threefold. First, during the state socialist phase of the Second Republic, this definition enabled Ratsiraka to distinguish between the MDRM, represented as an elite Merina faction of the population, and the "true" peasant nationalists. In turn, it suggested that the real martyrs were free of any association with a political party or partisan interests, thereby sidestepping the thorny question of what kind of national community those peasants might have imagined, if they did so at all. Finally, it emphasized that it was primarily coastal people who suffered and died, thereby recuperating the divisive colonial reading and making it possible for the nationalist narrative developed throughout the socialist period to also tell an ethnically partisan story.

Over the course of the 1990s, those who favored the creation of autonomous provinces have tried to promote this ethnic and regionalist reading of 1947. In this context, interpretations of 1947 figure prominently in the profederalist and procoastal repertoire as a sign of coastal exploitation. Take, for example, a series of cartoons that appeared in the newspaper *The Sun* (Masova), a profederalist newspaper that appeared briefly during the 1990s (see Randrianja 2002). The series appeared in March, the month that commemorates the start of the rebellion on March 29. The cartoon, however, took the narrative of 1947 as an opportunity to teach local people about the benefits of federalism. In the cartoon, an old man reminisces about the causes and motivations behind the insurrection to his young interlocutor. The speaker concludes in a professorial tone that "the Malagasy hate exploitation and structures that only benefit a minority of the population." In turn, the young interlocutor is shocked to learn that "many regions continue to be exploited today." The old man offers a solution:

"In order to avoid having one region steal all the wealth of Madagascar, the Malagasy should agree to create a federalized republic."

GENERATIONAL MEMORIES OF 1947

In his famous article on generations, Karl Mannheim (1972) argues that generational renewal enables forgetting or a "lightening of the ballast"; in this context he suggests a fundamental distinction between personally acquired memories and what he called appropriated memories—memories learned from someone else. Mannheim argues that personally acquired memories have the most salience. In what follows I examine the ways in which two different generations remember the rebellion: the people who were young when the rebellion happened and experienced it firsthand and people between the ages of 15 and 20 who are reaching adulthood now. Cutting across these generational differences is another important social distinction of those who inhabit rural areas versus the provincial capital of Toamasina. As we will see, these groups differ with respect both to what they remember about the events, what they see the significance of the events to be, and what their emotional relationship to the events is.

In looking at the pattern of official narratives just sketched out, it becomes clear that four narratives of the rebellion are in circulation: the narrative of the MDRM-Merina plot constructed by the French, the narrative of forgiveness and senseless violence constructed during the First Republic, the narrative of national liberation forged during the Second Republic, and finally the narrative of ethnic sacrifice created during the 1990s by those citizens and government agents in favor of federalization. However, as I will show in the following section, only the MDRM-Merina plot disseminated by the French colonial government and the nationalist narrative forged under Ratsiraka appear to shape how contemporary rural and urban people from different generations remember the rebellion. In comparing the ways in which these different groups remember the events, we find a situation in which in some cases different groups use different narratives of the rebellion but in other cases different groups use the same narratives to obviously different ends. Mannheim was partially right that events that one has personally experienced may create more powerful memories, although that does not mean that these memories are any less mediated. Moral projects, however, also shape which narratives people select and how they interpret them. They therefore act as a powerful constituent of memory. As we will see in the case of young urbanites, agents' moral projects may also work to make appropriated memories compelling.

RURAL ELDERS REMEMBER

The rural area to the south of Toamasina province, near Mahanoro, is inhabited by peasants who earn their living farming rice. Though today the area feels somewhat isolated because of the poor condition of the roads, during the colonial period it was a relatively prosperous area where numerous settlers had farms, interspersed among Betsimisaraka villages. This area was actively engaged in the rebellion (Cole 2001).

Rural elders who lived through the rebellion of 1947 structure their memories of the events around two themes—the role of the political party, the Mouvément Démocratique de la Rénovation Malgache (MDRM), and their memories of the rebel army (the Marosalohy, lit. "many spears"). Their interpretations of the rebellion and the political sensibilities that accompany it cut across differences of gender and wealth suggesting that at least for this generation of rural people, there is a widely shared memory and interpretation of the events.

Velomaro, a man of about 65, remembered the beginning of the rebellion this way:

> Mongosolofo was the school foreman, he was a Betsileo [an ethnic group from central Madagascar], and he came here and kept making speeches to make people join the MDRM. And then [Deputy] Rabemananjara came to Mahanoro to give a speech. He said that we were going to fight for our ancestral land and that colonization was finished and that the French would all leave. And he left and went to Vatomandry, but he paid for us to come attend his next speech. And he said, "We Malagasy have been enslaved by the *vazaha* [Europeans] for a long time but we're going to get our independence." Even the local settlers had come to listen.

And he continued:

> You vazaha, get your bags ready and go to the edge of the sea. He said he wasn't just speaking for himself alone, but [the deputies] Raseta and Ravoahangy too. He explained that they had a political party and needed people to join, and that Americans would come and help. And he made people join the MDRM. We all went home, but after a week the settlers came, asking for the MDRM. They called the village together and started asking everyone, "where are all the MDRM?" And those who weren't there, they took their mothers or their sisters and took them to Mahanoro and put them in prison. After that a month passed. The leader of the rebel army came and he made a speech. "Now he said, we are finally going to get our independence, there aren't going to be any more French, for they have enslaved us for too long. Now our leader is Ravoahangy and Raseta and Rabemananajara along with America." And he told the men to watch the town, and then the vazaha came back. Then the fighting really started, and they made everyone who was not in school join the rebel army. They caught everyone who had worked for the colonial government—Chef de Quartier, Chef de Canton, Secretaire, and they attacked the administrative building and burned all the papers. They took the Chef de Canton down to their camp and judged him, and anyone who was of mixed blood was caught and killed. It was really just jealousy, not war.

Two themes in Velomaro's account are particularly important for understanding the way in which many older rural people remember 1947.

First, many peoples' interpretations of what caused the rebellion are tightly linked to the MDRM. As we have seen, professional historical interpretations of the rebellion stress that the MDRM was an umbrella organization that comprised several more radical groups. It was these factions within the MDRM, in combination with a huge upswelling of peasant discontent brought about by increased labor exploitation during World War II, that led to the outbreak of armed revolt. Rural people, however, are not aware of these distinctions. Having heard Deputy Rabemananajra's speech, they, like the colonial administration, hold the MDRM leadership totally responsible. But what Velomaro's narrative fails to convey is the sense of horror and outrage most villagers felt at joining what they believed to be a state-sponsored political party, without fully understanding the consequences.

For example, Bemaresaka, a woman in her early sixties, explained that the MDRM was responsible for the events that were all an elaborate ploy to kill Betsimisaraka. The recruiters for the MDRM had come, she said, to encourage people to join the party. Soon thereafter, however, French officials had imprisoned people who actually joined the party. Moreover, she stressed, the recruiters tricked people into joining the party—they had been promised independence and control over their own lives, but in the end their actions had lead only to suffering and death.

A second strand that runs throughout Velomaro's narrative and is equally visible in many other rural peoples' recollections of 1947 revolves around the rebel army and the breakdown of social order that occurred once the fighting began. As Velomaro concluded, "Really, it was jealousy and not war," a position that strikes at the heart of the nationalist reading by reducing the events to a series of self-interested acts. For example, many people told me stories of how wealthier Betsimisaraka were abused as people used the chaos of the rebellion to settle old scores. The same woman who viewed the MDRM as responsible for the events also recounted how she had watched the rebel army arrest a local man who had become a rich planter through his connections with vazaha. The rebel army had tied him up and was planning to try him. It was only thanks to the intervention of the colonial governor's mistress that his life had been spared. Another man told me about how his father had been captured and taken off and tried at the rebel camp because people claimed that he was a friend of the vazaha. He too escaped only when the rebel chief realized that two of this man's sons had been killed during the attack on a local French concession, indicating that he too had contributed to the rebel cause.

These memory-narratives correspond quite closely to the interpretation promoted by the French colonial administration suggesting that the French colonial narrative continues to mediate many rural Betsimisaraka's memories. While it is tempting to conclude that the French narrative best

corresponded to these people's actual experience, my prior historical research and long-term fieldwork in local communities suggests that rural people's relationship to the events was more complex than the French narrative allows (Cole 2001). Though it is true that Merina and Betsileo people from the high plateau were particularly visible in the organization of local sections of the MDRM, over the course of the nine months of fighting many of the local leaders were coastal people; French archives reveal that they had considerable autonomy in organizing the local struggle (Services Historiques de l'Armée de Terre n.d.).

Why, then, did rural Betsimisaraka adopt the French narrative? One possible answer is that in using cattle sacrifice rituals to create a narrative of 1947, the French military and rural Betsimisaraka jointly constructed a first retelling of the events that has proven remarkably immutable despite subsequent efforts throughout the Second Republic to renarrate the events according to nationalist concerns. One could argue that this immutability is because first reproductions are inherently harder to change (Bartlett 1932) or because memories formed during youth are unusually stable (Conway 1997), and both of these explanations are partially true. But crucial to my arguments here is the way in which this interpretation allowed people to enact a certain moral vision of community.

As I noted earlier, historical documents make clear that prior to the rebellion some members of the community *did* join the MDRM and *did*, apparently, want to participate in state-level structures, while others probably wanted to get rid of the state altogether. As a result of their experience of defeat in the rebellion, however, the more locally based vision of community, one that contrasted local ideals of succor and mutual reciprocity with the dangers of state involvement, won out. In this context, adopting the French narrative, which laid the responsibility for the rebellion with so-called Merina agitators outside the community, enabled survivors, who in fact had done considerable harm to one another, to continue to live with each other in their small communities. In the primary village in which I worked, for example, the descendants of the man responsible for having led local settlers to burn the town in 1947 continued to live peaceably with their neighbors and never suffered any kind of subsequent settling of accounts.

At the same time, memories of the 1947 rebellion have also become a powerful rhetorical tool that survivors use to enforce the vision of moral community that emerged as dominant in the wake of the rebellion. For example, when during the elections of 1992–93 the prodemocracy movement gained sufficient power to force Ratsiraka to hold a series of national elections, elders refused to take part in the political discussions that accompanied the multiple political parties who toured the countryside, courting votes. Instead, they evoked their memories of 1947 as a way of warning younger people to avoid participating in the oppositional parties

that were circulating through the town, trying to make sure that the party in power, which had given them considerable local autonomy, remained in power (Cole 1998).

This pragmatic use of the old colonial narrative of rebellion, however, is inseparable from people's moral, existential concerns, and local visions of what the community should be like as these ideas were reforged through the experience of 1947. Although many rural older people held nationalist sentiments in terms of an awareness of a larger community based on shared language and culture, Ratsiraka's nationalist narrative clearly paired nationalist sentiment with a particular state structure. Embracing Ratsiraka's vision required people to also accept the idea of state government; it would also require that they had something at stake in the current state structure. To put it another way, in order to appeal to rural Betsimisaraka, the nationalist narrative would need to become imbued with affect, something that is only derived from embodied practices and daily routines. Insofar as these peasants retained a worldview predicated on a version of locality that excluded the state, Ratsiraka's version could not take hold. The voices of the French lived on in the mouths of Betsimisaraka, but the difference in moral projects also meant that Betsimisaraka bent these words to very different ends.

URBAN ELDERS REMEMBER

People who lived in the port city of Toamasina during 1947 have an understanding of the rebellion that differs significantly from their rural counterparts, a difference that is the product of both a different experience of the events, a different narration of the events, and a different moral project arising out of a particular historical experience. Contrary to those rural elders with whom I spoke, urban elders who lived in Toamasina at the time of the events are mainly Christian, have some schooling, and worked in their youth as schoolteachers, chauffeurs for the many local import-export businesses, or subaltern functionaries. In short, they are the people who hoped that the political process might lead to independence and who believed in the idealized vision of the nation as a community of equal members, with equal rights guaranteed by the state, which could be enacted through the practice of universal suffrage. For them, the events of 1947 were a means of achieving this idealized form of community, and this moral project shapes the ways in which they continue to remember the event, despite its failure.

Like rural elders, many older people who lived in Toamasina city in 1947 attribute the events to the growth of the MDRM, and their memories focus on the organization of the party—the way in which local notables like Bezaka Alexis, who later became the mayor of Toamasina, campaigned

for independence, and the various elections that took place as the MDRM won progressively more seats in the national assembly despite the efforts of the French to create the rival PADESM. They recall the ways in which MDRM organizers would follow the small roads to avoid being caught by the administration, and one man recalled that a local notable came as part of the MDRM to his neighborhood and taught him the national hymn, "Our Dear Ancestral Land." At least some former participants still remember how the secret societies that many hold responsible for setting off the rebellion held meetings at a local, Toamasina hotel (Razoaliarinirina 1999). Yet because the MDRM within Toamasina was mainly in favor of a legal separation from France, the fighting between French soldiers and rebels that took place in rural areas did not happen here (see Randaniarison 1996). Rather, people endured the political and legal reprisals that followed in the wake of the events.

However, unlike rural elders, whose experience of the repression led to a reassertion of a local vision of community that attempted to exclude the state, the commitment that urban elders feel to an idealized national community, embodied in the state, means that they interpret their experiences in different terms. They feared Ratsiraka's current state because they saw it as linked to the PADESM, the party that the French put in place to combat the MDRM. Take, for example, Rakoto, a Merina man who had long inhabited Toamasina and whose father-in-law had been killed by the colonial government for his involvement in the MDRM. Rakoto whispered to me in a hurried interview that he was afraid to talk about the rebellion because "they"—a reference to the descendents of the PADESM—were still in power. In this sense, some older urban people have drawn a lesson that is not dissimilar from their rural counterparts about the dangers of state violence. The crucial difference is that rural elders exclude the state in their efforts to build a locally based moral community. By contrast, urban elders who had joined the MDRM fear the particular people in power. They continue, however, to believe in the possibilities for good governance and justice to be derived from a national community, embodied in the state form. This view is most evident in their continued participation in oppositional state politics that many view as a way to continue the struggle for an idealized national community that took place in 1947.

BRIDGING PERSPECTIVES: THE ANCIENS COMBATTANTS

The preceding sections suggest that within the generation who experienced 1947 directly, there is a division between those rural people who remain committed to a very local vision of moral community and remember the events primarily according to the French colonial narrative of Merina trickery, and those urbanites who embrace an ideal of a national

community and narrate their memories according to the nationalist narrative of 1947. However, there is also a group that cuts across this rural-urban split in important ways: the anciens combattants, or former soldiers from the rebel army who today receive a small pension from Ratsiraka for their contribution to the independence fight. Given that Ratsiraka defined an *ancien combattant* as someone who was taken with "arms in his hands," these men are from the rural areas where fighting took place during the rebellion. However many of them fled the social tension in rural areas that was left in the wake of 1947 seeking the anonymity of the city. These men heartily embrace the nationalist narrative.

Take, for example, Letoandro, a man who had been tried and exiled to Mayotte for 15 years for his participation in the rebel army. As someone who had actively led troops during the rebellion, Letoandro feared that his neighbors would label him a troublemaker and blame him whenever a theft occurred, so he decided to settle in Toamasina. For Letoandro, the rebellion was about the struggle for national independence, which he imagined as leading to a state that would protect its citizens. As he put it,

> Many things happened during 1947 because we had decided to fight the colonizers during 1947. So we fought. Because during colonization we had really suffered, some people they treated us like we weren't humans. And our honor was hurt during colonization. When it came time to fight for independence, all the men stood up to protect our ancestral land. I was not scared, for I had already sworn an oath that I would die along with my ancestral land. If I lived, my ancestral land would live too, for I had helped to save it. If I died, it was for a good cause.[3]

Letoandro participated regularly in the annual ceremonies held March 29 to commemorate the start of the rebellion. He and other anciens combattants also had their stories broadcast on the radio.

Insofar as this group espoused the nationalist version of the rebellion, it played an important ideological role, linking rural and urban populations in terms of a shared ideological project of independence and the formation of an autonomous Malagasy nation. In many respects this group of elders had more in common with their town compatriots than the people who remained in their rural villages. However, whether these men actually believed in the nationalist vision at the time of their actions is impossible to say, and one wonders what role the government pension had in encouraging people to (re)formulate their narratives in line with national concerns as they were inserted into a national system of compensation and rewards.

Nevertheless, what is striking is that while the anciens combattants adopted the nationalist narrative, they interpreted it in terms of a moral project that aims at making the current state live up to the promise of an idealized national community that many dreamed of at independence. In particular, against the reading offered by those in favor of federalism in the 1990s, many anciens combattants I spoke with cited their goals as fighters

during 1947 as proof that the state should continue to nurture a unified, national community. Again, I turn to Letoandro:

> These days the fight is over, because we got our independence, but the thing I want to tell you is this: The independence we got wasn't the one that we fought for. We fought not to be divided, but to gain our freedom. We didn't distinguish if people were Merina, or Antaimoro, or Betsimisaraka. We were all Malagasy trying to get our independence. But now that we've gotten our independence, what has happened? The President of the Republic has a bad reputation—no honor. They distinguish by the color of your skin, between north and south and east and west . . . when we fought no one paid us, it was our choice and our will. But there are some people who say they like their ancestral land but as soon as they get up on their seat [e.g., accede to a certain position of power] they don't remember those who chose them but fill their own pockets.

If during the Second Republic Ratsiraka managed to gain legitimacy through mobilizing the narratives of 1947, his choice of narratives had its perils. After all, Letoandro uses the narrative of national unity, strength, and independence promoted by Ratsiraka in the past to criticize Ratsiraka's more recent advocacy of federated states with its inherent ethnic divisions. In representing Madagascar as both a unified and sovereign state, Leotandro speaks as the guarantor of a national dream, a dream that may have only represented a fraction of the total Malagasy population but, nevertheless, today has become part of an idealized past that many people want to reclaim.

CONTEMPORARY YOUTH REMEMBER THE REBELLION

Rural and urban youth remember the events of 1947 in ways that both resemble and diverge from the generation of people who actually experienced the events, again revealing a complex interplay between narratives and moral projects in the shaping of memory. In examining these memory-narratives, two clarifications need to be made. First, this group is not the second generation after the rebellion: some of these youth had parents who lived through the rebellion while in other cases it was their grandparents. Second, the distinction I make between rural and urban youth is not purely geographical but includes elements of social class as well.

Rural Youth Remember 1947

Most rural youth I met recounted a view of the rebellion that combined the stories that they had learned from their elders with elements of the narrative taught in school in a variety of different ways. Several young people I knew had grown up mainly in rural villages and then around age twenty moved to the city to look for work, primarily as maids in people's houses. Whether they would stay for long was an open question, depending on what kinds of work they could find. Other people who had lived in the city for generations referred to these young women as *ambassady*

(ambassadors), emphasizing the perception that they were merely visitors to the town, "in" the town but never "of" it. Njira, for example, is the daughter of Bemaresaka. She attended school until she was 15 before moving to Toamasina. Njira remembered that her grandmother had been harvesting rice when the fighting broke out and fled with her family to the west. She knew that somehow the events had been connected to a fight for independence, but little more. Other young people knew even less. When I asked Zana, a girl of 20, whom I have known for almost 10 years, what she knew about 1947, at first she denied knowing anything. Then, as the conversation drifted on to other topics, she recounted the following story: a man in her village had gone out to gather kindling and had met a wild person. The wild person had been abandoned in the forest during the 1947 flight when, as a crying baby, his parents had tossed him aside to flee from the soldiers. The wild person had learned the secrets of the forest, and he promised to give wealth to whomever would bring him back to civilization. While these two girls' memories focused on local knowledge, other young people's narratives emphasized that the events of 1947 were part of a struggle for independence, revealing the traces of the nationalist narrative learned in school.

Perhaps what is most striking about many young rural people's memories is the way they reveal neither a close engagement with the nationalist narrative central to urban elders and the anciens combattants nor the message of fear transmitted by their elders. Significantly, when I asked them why 1947 was important, many of these youth emphasized that now they were free, in the sense of free from outside control. Indeed, the few young people that I met who were able to recount detailed narratives placed considerable emphasis on the fact that Malagasy had been enslaved and rose up to throw off the shackles of their oppressors. For example, one young man who had recently arrived from the country explained that unlike earlier generations, he enjoyed liberty, because before the vazaha could force you to work, and you had to go, even if you were only a small child, whereas now you could do as you pleased and keep what money you earned for yourself. In many ways, this attitude is congruent with these young people's current position vis-à-vis both the state and the rural villages from which they come, for many rural youth do not share their parent's fear of state involvement. At the same time, they are unlikely to accede to positions of state power and live their lives, even in the urban context, avoiding state intrusion where possible.

Urban Youth Remember 1947

Finally, let us turn to how students in Toamasina, the group that is in many ways farthest away from the rural rebels in both space and time, remember the events. Given the nature of contemporary Toamasina,

where most youth seem more focused on the present and future economic success than the past, one might expect to find an absence of memories. But clearly, despite the fact that youth and elders alike lament the fact that youth only exhibit a self-interested obsession with money, certain forms of historical transmission are occurring. Among the high school youth I spoke with, almost everyone argued that 1947 was the most meaningful event in their country's history. Indeed, in contrast to rural youth who seemed to know comparatively little, the way urban high school students remember 1947 reveals both striking similarities, and striking differences, when compared to rural people's memories. When asked what he knew about 1947, Elie, a 17-year-old boy attending Lycée Jacques Rabemananjara, a school that carries the name of one of the three MDRM deputies, responded thus:

> It was about fighting for the ancestral land. We needed to return to what made the Malagasy the Malagasy and not be controlled by the vazaha. It started the night of March 29. It started in Antananarivo and spread everywhere, and was hottest at Moramanga, especially in the wagons. Really, the population at Moramanga fought in 1947. And many people died in the eastern province, and the fighting was hot around here, around the river Vavitenina, Lac Alaotra. Many people fled into the forest and died. And many people realized they'd never find their dead and they set up memorial stones—here in Toamasina, in Moramanga and Antananarivo. That is how we commemorated those Malagasy who had died for their ancestral land.[4]

Many other high school students echoed Elie's narrative of the events of 1947, which recounts the rebellion as primarily a struggle for national independence imagined within a Western historical framework of key dates and sites of battle. As Florencia, the mistress of a local political "bigman" explained, "1947? It was the great day when the Malagasy fought for independence. Because they each loved their ancestral land so much they worked very hard to get independence." Regis, a 15-year-old student, commented:

> From what I've heard, 1947 was very important. It was a fight for independence. The responsible parties were the MDRM and the VVS—the vazaha really didn't like those groups. From Moramanga until Antananarivo, those groups carried the word and the vazaha didn't like it. And the Malagasy saw vazaha make other Malagasy suffer and even kill them and send them off to Algeria and they couldn't stand seeing that. For them, if you were Malagasy they believed you were equal—no one on top, no one on bottom—but the colonials distinguished among people on the basis of race. The VVS didn't accept that, nor did the MDRM.

These statements indicate that a focus on the official history of political parties, as well as the struggle for national independence, dominates young urbanites' narratives of 1947. In fact, the mixing of the MDRM and the VVS—the protonationalist Merina group that was arrested in 1916—echoes the nationalist narrative forged during the Second Republic and currently taught in schools.

There is also evidence in youths' narratives of a secondary, more personal discourse that locates the history of the nation within the families that comprise it. For example, though not everyone interviewed actually had a family member who lived through 1947, most young adults had heard about the events or encountered its effects on adults they knew. As one young woman recounted:

> My grandfather, he is from the region around Ambatodranzaka, and he came down here to Fenerive Est. And the settlers they chased him all the way to Fenerive Est. Those settlers, some didn't know where the right paths were, and that is what saved him. Because they didn't see the paths, but our grandfather did. But he almost died because the settlers came from this direction too—from Toamasina to return to Ambatondrazaka. They finally decided to hide in the forest until the fighting was past.

For many young people, family stories of suffering and survival create a form of personalized historical memory. In much the same way that young people often cite their personal experiences of ancestral power as proof of its efficacy, they cite the experiences of people they know as proof that the grand historical narrative they learned in school is in fact true.

Since both rural elders and urban youth organize their narratives of 1947 around party politics, on the one hand, and narratives of flight and survival, on the other, at first glance their narratives appear fairly similar. But what diverges most sharply among the two groups are the different meanings that participants give to the events. Recall that while some rural Betsimisaraka who fought in the rebel army knew that the rebellion was supposed to be a fight for independence, it is not the nationalist narrative that dominates their contemporary interpretations of the events. If anything, memories of 1947 have caused people to see themselves in local rather than nationalist terms and to opt out of larger forms of community participation precisely because of their violent prior experience.

By contrast, when asked specifically what 1947 meant to them, the answers that youth in Toamasina gave were presented almost entirely in nationalist—yet often very nostalgic—terms. The following statements give some sense of the meanings that they give to 1947:

Laurencia, 16: The lesson to take? We Malagasy, there are already people who sell wealth to the outside, and we should remember and control ourselves. Our Malagasy ancestors, they gave up their life for their ancestral land and died for their descendants. But people now, debase our ancestral land, and we make it lose efficacy *[hasina]* by selling our wealth to strangers.

Stefanio, 19: And we are suffering, our life is so hard that some people say "let us return to colonization." That really goes against the people who gave their lives for the ancestral land—the one thing left is to try. We shouldn't go back to colonization but we should try to continue the love that the ancestors felt for Madagascar.

Désire, 18: I see it as the Malagasy wanted to beat the vazaha. But they didn't have the tools like guns, but only their bare hands. It means we shouldn't always rely on things coming from the outside.

Given that urban youth clearly know both their grandparents' and the nationalist narrative, why is it that they ultimately narrate the rebellion according to a nationalist narrative? Or to put it in Wertsch's terms, why have they mastered the rural story of flight but appropriated the state narrative of national struggle so that they re-interpret their grandparents' narratives through this nationalist lens?

My answer is that it is precisely because these young people are so vulnerable to the changes that have come with globalization that they find the image of an idealized ancestral homeland compelling. As my sketch of the dialectics of identity in Toamasina province should make clear, young urbanites' anxieties revolve around the fear of loss of the homeland, a loss of identity, and an image of moral corruption at one pole and the desire to acquire money and build a modern identity on the other. A recurrent image in young people's narratives is that of "cultural mixing" *(métissage),* a practice that they claimed took place in the gap between their desires for all that is European and their inability, because of their economic situation, to realize these desires. The result, they claimed, was that they produced bastard social forms that were morally corrupt—degenerate social forms that were neither European nor Malagasy. A 22-year-old university student summed up some of the problems when he said, "We are the like the offspring of a duck and a *dokitra* (another kind of domestic bird), that makes a *sadoko* (another kind of bird). Do you know what the sadoko does? He wants to fly, but he can't get off the ground." These fears are also captured in people's concern that if all young women married Europeans then eventually no Malagasy would be left. And it was expressed in their fear that Malagasy as a language was dying out as well.

In this context, where young people are increasingly caught up in a pursuit of Western goods and dream of leaving Madagascar, many youth evoked 1947 as a means of reflecting on the ambivalence of their position and the possible value of an ancestral land. In a context where "made in Madagascar" *(vita gasy)* is synonymous with "second rate," Désire's comment that "we shouldn't always rely on things coming from the outside," despite the fact that he spent most of his time worrying about how to obtain foreign brand clothing in order to impress girls, may inspire a sense of self-critique. But these youths' position also aligns them with the nation-state. In their idealized narratives of rural rebels defending their ancestral homeland, the experience of rapid cultural change that creates a sense of deracination now vividly felt by Tamatavian youth meets up with the territorial project of the modern nation-state (Steedly 1999).

In this sense, the urban high school students echo both the nationalist version taught in school and the nationalist version promoted by the anciens combattants. Like the anciens combattants, students' interpretations of 1947 also slide into a critique of the government in two ways: first,

because young urban people see the contemporary state policy of federalization and the accompanying creation of autonomous provinces, each associated with a separate ethnic group, as fostering internal social divisions; and second, because many young people also hold the state responsible for their unequal access to the foreign goods they so desire. For example, the potential for the martyrs of 1947 to serve as a symbol of civic virtue was evident in one youth's comment that one of the lessons of 1947 was to remind people to adhere to ancestral values of love and equality and to stop selfish behavior that might harm their ancestral land. And others, as we saw, specifically referred to the lesson of distinguishing people on the basis of "race," an implicit critique of the government's policy of creating federated states. And for some, thinking about 1947 *did* lead to an overt critique of the contemporary state: "If they [the martyrs of 1947] hadn't fought, we wouldn't be this free. Each of us needs to think about that—including the leaders of the state," one young woman told me. Or as Gilda, an 18-year-old girl, commented, "1947 should inspire people here always to fight because things are going so badly these days. We shouldn't make some people on top or some people on bottom. We shouldn't see any enslavement now."

In listening to these young people's words, one appears to hear the echoes of the voices of the anciens combattants, as well as the state, spoken through the mouths of young consumers (Bakhtin 1981, 1984). Yet such a view must be at least nuanced, because although in the context of Madagascar's historical experience the use of the nationalist narrative does assume a state, it does not specify what form that state will take, nor what kinds of values or projects it will espouse. Insofar as these young people draw on the nationalist narrative, their choice of narrative imports a notion of state organization with it—such is this narrative's constraint. But while the narrative appears to import a state form, it does not necessarily import the contents shaping what that particular state would look like. Similarly, while it is tempting to reinterpret urban elders', anciens combattants', and urban students' shared use of 1947 to critique the state as exhibiting a basic continuity across space and time, it is crucial to remember these groups may have had very different visions of what that state should look like. For the older anciens combattants and urban elders, this ideal state may have been imagined as a modern welfare state, but most young urbanites seem to imagine the state according to a neoliberal model as the guarantor of equal opportunities for making money for all.

PRODUCING MEMORY: THE INTERPLAY OF NARRATIVES AND MORAL PROJECTS

The different groups I have examined—rural elders and their children and grandchildren, anciens combattants, and urban elders and youth—all reveal the multiplicity of different ways that the 1947 rebellion lives on in

people's lives. Rural elders tell the French colonial story of the MDRM plot but use that narrative to help enact their vision of local village autonomy. Elder urban MDRM members like Rakoto, or elder rural rebels like Letoandro, on the other hand, believe deeply in the narrative of independence and regret only that the current state has not fulfilled its promise. Young urbanites in Toamasina, torn between their desire to do whatever it takes to acquire modern goods and the idealized image of elders dying for their ancestral land, find in the rebellion both a poignant allegory of their own predicament and a potential tool for changing it. These different ways of remembering the rebellion suggest that moral projects are an important factor in shaping memory.

I have analyzed the different generation's memories not so much as a direct product of the particular narrative they use but, rather, as a complex outcome of the way in which agent's moral and existential predicaments shape their selection, interpretation, and use of particular narratives. Using this analytic strategy, I have suggested moral projects as a term that situates people's private concerns and existential predicaments within wider social and historical political ideologies and material contexts. Insofar as I focus on moral visions and concerns as a way to think about a "thick agent," my approach provides one possible answer to Shweder's critique of mediated action approaches to the study of mind.

My argument also speaks to the methodological limitations of a purely textual approach to understanding memory. Part of the problem with looking only at texts is that they flatten out the variety of possible human experiences and ways of being into a single dimension. A Bakhtinian might counter that every narrative speaks with many voices, but it is also true that Bakhtin's literary approach privileges texts over the people who speak them. Such a view is understandable for a literary theorist like Bakhtin, who used his writing to transmit his ideas in the hostile political environment of the Stalinist Soviet Union, and it is certainly true that Bakhtin's ideas have given anthropologists a fruitful way to theorize plural and contested models of culture. Nevertheless, in dealing with a subject like contested forms of memory, it is crucial that we remember the tensions that exist between world and text. Tracking the circulation of key narratives, like the narratives of 1947 described here, can help us to understand the very different terms through which people think about and debate the nature of their communities and their relation to a wider world.

This analysis cannot be done through a discussion of successive narrations alone. Rather, an important part of this process is attending to the changing existential predicaments that people face, which transforms the ways in which they relate to master narratives. By using ethnography to illuminate moral projects, one gains a much more complex vision of the variety of possible tensions between narrative tools and the agents who use

them. Such an approach is necessary if theories of mediated action, which have much to offer both anthropologists and psychologists, are to be successfully applied to cases of national memory, where memories are often mobilized in state and ethnic political contests, making lives continually at stake.

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NOTES

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1. According to Cole (1996:17), cultural artifacts are "an aspect of the material world that has been modified over the history of its incorporation into goal-directed human action." As a result, cultural artifacts are simultaneously material and ideal.

2. The *mena lamba,* or "Red Shawls," were peasants and low-level Merina functionaries on the margins of Imerina who attempted to rebel against the French conquest in 1895; the VVS (Vy, Vato, Sakelika, or Iron, Stone, Branches) refers to a quasi-nationalist secret society of elite Merina students who in 1916 were accused by the administration of plotting to overthrow the government and were arrested and sent to prison. See Ellis (1985) and Esoavelomandroso (1981), respectively.

3. The trope of "ancestral land," which occurs repeatedly in people's narratives of 1947, is translated by the word *tanindrazana.* For many Malagasy groups the tanindrazana refers to the place where one's ancestors are buried; for many people the highest moral injunction is to protect and care for the land in which one's ancestors are buried.

4. "Wagons" refers to an infamous incident during the insurrection when the French machine-gunned several trains filled with Malagasy prisoners who were all killed. The incident took place at Moramanga, a stop on the railway line that used to lead to Tamatave and that was one of the key places the rebellion first broke out.

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