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The Antananarivo annual and Madagascar magazine (1875–1900)

Laurence J. Dorr

Abstract

The Antananarivo annual and Madagascar magazine (1875–1900) is re-introduced to botanists. Six volumes were published in Madagascar. The first two volumes were also revised and re-edited by the original editors and reprinted in 1885 and 1896, respectively. Details of the publication of the original and reprinted volumes of the journal are given and short biographical sketches of the two principal editors, James Sibree and Richard Baron, are presented.

Introduction

The Antananarivo annual and Madagascar magazine (Fig. 1), a remarkable journal containing articles on the language, history, and natural history of Madagascar, is overlooked by botanists. This is unfortunate since the journal, written in English, was the first scholarly journal to be published in Madagascar and it contains, to quote James Sibree (1924), the journal's founder and main editor, "an amount of information about Madagascar which cannot be found anywhere else." The journal includes an important amount of botanical information, especially that which concerns botanical exploration, ethnobotany, and the common names of plants in Madagascar.

Publication History

Several of the Protestant missionary societies active in Madagascar in the 19th century met regularly to deal with mutual concerns. At a meeting of representatives of the London Missionary Society (L.M.S.) and the Friends' Foreign Mission Association (F.F.M.A.) at Antananarivo on 10 August 1875 one of the participants read a paper on a journey to the Sakalava country made by two of the L.M.S. missionaries. The presentation produced such

a lively discussion that Sibree (1875) proposed that the missionaries "try and prepare . . . a pamphlet or magazine containing accounts of any journeys made during the year in new or previously little-known parts . . . together with papers on the philology, traditions, natural history, botany, geology, and physical geography of Madagascar." His proposal was well-received and he promptly began gathering materials and published the first number of *The Antananarivo annual* at the end of that year.

In his preface to the second number of *The Antananarivo annual*, Sibree (1876) noted the positive response that the first number had elicited not only from friends in Madagascar but also from those abroad who had received copies of the journal.¹ He repeated his earlier calls for contributions and wrote: "[W]e shall be particularly obliged to those of our friends who are interested in Natural History and Botany by contributions of information on those branches of research."

A single number of *The Antananarivo annual* was issued "about Christmas-time" each year (Sibree, 1924),² four numbers formed a volume, and altogether six volumes were published over the course of 25 years (Table 1). Each of the first eight numbers was paginated independently. Beginning with the third volume, the separate numbers that formed a volume were paginated consecutively. Each number consisted of approximately 128 pages. Sibree prepared the indices for each volume. With the exception of volume I, which lacked an index, the indices appeared at the end of the fourth number of each volume.

The early numbers of *The Antananarivo annual* quickly became scarce and the editors,

THE
ANTANANARIVO ANNUAL
AND
MADAGASCAR MAGAZINE.

A RECORD OF INFORMATION ON THE TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL PRODUCTIONS
OF MADAGASCAR, AND THE CUSTOMS, TRADITIONS, LANGUAGE,
AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF ITS PEOPLE.

—♦♦♦—

EDITED BY THE

REV. J. SIBREE, F.R.G.S.

AND

REV. R. BARON, F.L.S.,

Missionaries of the L.M.S.

—♦♦♦—

No. IX.—CHRISTMAS, 1885.

—♦♦♦—

ANTANANARIVO:
PRINTED AT THE L.M.S. PRESS.

1885.

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Figure 1. Title page of *The Antananarivo annual and Madagascar magazine*. No. IX.—Christmas 1885. Author's collection.

receiving requests for the numbers that were out of print, chose to reprint the first four numbers in a single volume in 1885. They later reprinted the second four numbers in 1896 (Table 2). The reprinted volumes were re-edited, errors were corrected, and the scientific names of plants and animals were added when known. Consequently, the pagination of the reprinted volumes differs from that of the original ones.

The Antananarivo annual was printed at the L.M.S. Press by Malagasy printers. The L.M.S. had introduced the first printing press to Madagascar in November 1826, but it was closed in 1836 for political reasons. When Madagascar was re-opened to foreigners in 1862, the L.M.S. quickly brought their printing press back to working order (Oliver, 1886). Although the primary function of the L.M.S. Press was to assist the society in proselytizing the Malagasy, the Press also printed secular

material, such as textbooks, and trained young Malagasy in a practical trade.

Few illustrations were included in *The Antananarivo annual* because of the expense. Those that were included (Tables 1, 2) were lithographed by the F.F.M.A. Press, which was set up at Faravohitra, Antananarivo, in 1872. The first lithograph used in *The Antananarivo annual* was prepared by William Johnson (1842–1895), a Quaker missionary with artistic and cartographical skills, and the second lithograph was the work of George A. Shaw (1842–1917) of the L.M.S. Like the L.M.S., the F.F.M.A. employed Malagasy workers, and one of these, Rajemisa (also spelled Rajamisa), became a competent draftsman under the tutelage of Johnson. Rajemisa's distinctive signature can be seen in many of the plates (Tables 1, 2; see also Dorr, 1988). The other Malagasy draftsmen who prepared plates for *The Antananarivo annual* have not been identified. All of the plates were made from line drawings except for the last plate, which was reproduced from a photograph.

Contents of the Journal

The Antananarivo annual contained original articles as well as reprints and translations of articles pertaining to Madagascar. Alfred Grandidier (1836–1921), a friend of Sibree, generously allowed the editors of *The Antananarivo annual* to publish translations of his numerous articles in French about Madagascar and excerpts from his monumental *Histoire physique, naturelle et politique de Madagascar* (1875–1954?).³ Each number of *The Antananarivo annual* also had notices of books and articles that were published on Madagascar and a summary of the important events in Madagascar during the previous year. These summaries concerned primarily politics, but they also had information on literary events and they occasionally had necrologies of persons associated with Madagascar.

Table 1. *The Antananarivo annual and Madagascar magazine* (1875–1900).

Year	Number	Volume (Part)	Pages
1875	I	I (I)	[ii]–iv, [1]–124 ^a
1876	II	I (II)	[ii]–iv, [1]–136
1877	III	I (III)	[ii]–iv, [1]–136
1878	IV	I (IV)	[ii]–iv, [1]–124 ^{b,c}
1881	V	II (I)	[ii]–iv, [1]–126
1882	VI	II (II)	[ii]–iv, [1]–128
1883	VII	II (III)	[ii]–iv, [1]–128
1884	VIII	II (IV)	[ii]–iv, [1]–124
	Index	II	125–128
1885	IX	III (I)	[ii]–iv, [1]–128 ^d
1886	X	III (II)	[ii]–iv, [129]–260 ^e
1887	XI	III (III)	[ii]–iv, [261]–396 ^f
1888	XII	III (IV)	[ii]–iv, [397]–520
	Index	III	521–524
1889	XIII	IV (I)	[ii]–iv, [1]–[128]
1890	XIV	IV (II)	[ii]–iv, [129]–[256] ^g
1891	XV	IV (III)	[ii]–iv, [257]–[384]
1892	XVI	IV (IV)	[ii]–iv, [385]–508 ^h
	Index	IV	509–512
1893	XVII	V (I)	[ii]–iv, [1]–128
1894	XVIII	V (II)	[ii]–iv, [129]–256 ⁱ
1895	XIX	V (III)	[ii]–iv, [257]–384 ^j
1896	XX	V (IV)	[ii]–iv, 385–512
	Index	V	i–v
1897	XXI	VI (I)	[ii]–iv, [1]–128 ^k
1898	XXII	VI (II)	[ii]–iv, [129]–256
1899	XXIII	VI (III)	[ii]–iv, [257]–384
1900	XXIV	VI (IV)	[ii]–iv, [385]–508 ^l
	Index	VI	i–iv

Notes to Table 1

^a Frontispiece: “Map of Lake Itasihanaka.” Lithographed by William Johnson. The 1885 reprint of this number has a revised and much improved version of the map (see Table 2).

^b Frontispiece: “On a house-post in Fianarana,” “Facsimile of Betsileo spoon handles,” and “Window at Ilanjana Scale 1/4.” Lithographed and printed by G. A. Shaw. The figure is recomposed and redone in the 1885 reprint of this number (see Table 2).

^c There is no index for volume I, nor do the individual parts have indices.

^d Frontispiece: “Map of Valalafotsy, etc.” Illustration: “Map of West Ankaratra,” facing p. 83. Both were lithographed by Rajemisa.

^e Illustration: “No. 1.—The Fanorona Board,” and “No. 2. Fanorona Board with Pieces, as arranged at commencement of game,” facing p. 156. Lithographed by Rajemisa. Also, “Errata,” unnumbered page following p. 260.

^f A brief “Errata” is added to this number.

^g Frontispiece: “Some of the Solitary Wasps of Madagascar.” The lithograph is not signed.

^h Frontispiece: “Plan of Antananarivo” and “Map of the Country Surrounding Antananarivo.” Native lithographer not identified.

ⁱ Frontispiece: “Skeleton of *Aepyornis ingens*” and “Restoration of *Aepyornis ingens*.” Lithographed by Razaka.

^j Frontispiece: “Map No. 1. Geological Sketch-Map of the Antsihanaka Province” and “Map No. 2. Geological Sketch-Map of the Northern end of Madagascar.” Map no. 1 is inset in map no. 2. The lithographer’s signature cannot be identified.

^k Frontispiece: “Portrait of John Dean, photographed from the Original Painting in the India Office, London.”

^l The first sixteen pages of No. XXIV were numbered incorrectly (i.e., [1]–16 instead of [385]–400).

Table 2. Reprints of *The Antananarivo annual and Madagascar magazine*, Volume I (1885) and Volume II (1896).

Year	Number	Pages
1885	Preface ^a	[iii]
	Contents	[v]–viii ^b
	I	[1]–128
	II	[129]–256
	III	[257]–400
	IV	[401]–536 ^c
	Index	537–541
1886	Contents	iii–vi
	V	[1]–[102]
	VI	[103]–[206]
	VII	[207]–[308]
	VIII	[309]–419
	Index	i–iv

Notes to Table 2

^a Dated: “Antananarivo, May 15th, 1885.”

^b Frontispiece: “Map of Lake Itasihanaka.” Lithographed by Rajemisa. Recomposed and redone from the original of Johnson (see Table 1).

^c Illustration: “Specimens of Betsileo Ornament,” “Window at Ilanjana,” “Facsimile of Betsileo spoon-handles,” “On a house-post in Fianarana,” facing p. 401. Lithographed by Rajemisa. Recomposed and redone from the original of Shaw (see Table 1).

Although *The Antananarivo annual* did not contain descriptions of new taxa, its value as a primary source of information on the botany of Madagascar should not be underestimated. Many of the missionary contributors to the journal also collected plants and other natural-history objects and they frequently published accounts of their travels in *The Antananarivo annual*. These accounts are now useful in reconstructing itineraries and in determining type localities. In addition to the activities of missionaries, one can also find information on the travels and collections of other British, French, German, and American plant collectors who visited Madagascar in the same period.

The Antananarivo annual contains a great deal of ethnobotanical material, both in the form of articles and incidental notes. There are several papers on the *tanghin* or *tangena*, the infamous ordeal poison (*Cerbera venenifera* Steud.), a Malagasy materia medica prepared by Dr. George W. Parker (1848–1904), notes contributed by Rev. James Wills (1836–1898) on native products used in Malagasy industry, and ethnobotanical notes submitted by Richard Baron.

The Editors

Three L.M.S. missionaries shared responsibility for editing *The Antananarivo annual*. Numbers one through three, twelve, and thirteen were edited by James Sibree, number four was edited by George Cousins, numbers five through seven were edited by Richard Baron, and the remaining numbers were edited jointly by Sibree and Baron. Sibree and Baron also revised and re-edited the reprints of the first and second volumes. The journal is amazingly free of printers' errors—a tribute to the editors (and printers?), since the Malagasy printers were setting type in English, a language unknown to them.

James Sibree (1836–1929) believed *The Antananarivo annual* to be one of the most note-

worthy of his many literary undertakings (Sibree, 1924). Sibree was born 14 April 1836, in Hull, Yorkshire, England and was educated at the Hull Collegiate College. His grandfathers, father, and two uncles were Congregational ministers and it is not surprising that he eventually was attracted to the ministry. He was first, however, an assistant surveyor for the local board of health in Hull (1859–1863) and was greatly interested in architecture. Through a combination of circumstance and family connections, Sibree was chosen to go to Madagascar on contract to the L.M.S. as architect of the Memorial Churches in Antananarivo (1863). Returning to England in 1867, he studied for the ministry at Spring Hill College in Birmingham, married, and prepared to return to Madagascar as a L.M.S. missionary. When he returned to Madagascar he was stationed (1870–1876) at Ambohimanga, north of Antananarivo, and it was there that he began *The Antananarivo annual*. In late 1876 he moved to Antananarivo to work at the Theological Institution. He resigned his position and returned to England in 1877 because of difficulties with the Malagasy government. He was then appointed superintendent of a L.M.S. High School in India (1879–1880), but resigned that post because of his wife's ill-health. He was re-appointed to Madagascar, and although he left England in early 1883 he did not arrive in Antananarivo until late 1883 because of the French blockade of Tamatave. From then until 1915, when he left the island definitively, he served as principal of the L.M.S. College in Antananarivo (Sibree, 1923, 1924).

When Sibree left Madagascar in 1877, the Rev. George Cousins edited the fourth number of *The Antananarivo annual*. Publication then lapsed for several years (Table 1) until the Rev. Richard Baron assumed responsibility for editing and publishing the journal in 1881. With Sibree's return to Madagascar in 1883, Sibree and Baron continued the publication as co-editors.

The study of natural history was one of Sibree's hobbies (Sibree, 1924) and this led him to include extensive passages and chapters on the natural history of Madagascar in several of the books that he wrote. Material on the flora of the island appears in at least four of these books. One book, *The great African island* (1880), was noticed by Stafleu and Cowan (1985). Attention also should be called to *Madagascar and its people* (1870), *Madagascar before the conquest* (1896), *A naturalist in Madagascar* (1915), and *Things seen in Madagascar* (1921). The last book was written for children. Sibree apparently did not collect plants for herbarium specimens (Stafleu & Cowan, 1985), but his daughter, Elsie Sibree (1881–1969), did collect mosses in Madagascar. Sibree does mention collecting shells (1915: 36) and attempting to obtain bird specimens (1915: 61). Such collections, if they survive, might be sought in The Natural History Museum, formerly the British Museum (Natural History). In *The Antananarivo annual* Sibree's natural-history articles were concerned primarily with birds, mammals, and geology.

The second principal editor of *The Antananarivo annual* was Richard Baron (1847–1907). Baron's accomplishments as a botanist and geologist have been noted elsewhere (Dorr, 1987, 1988), but it is worth restating that he was also an excellent linguist, knowing French and German and fluent in Malagasy. He spoke Malagasy without an accent and his Malagasy friends said that they could not identify him as a foreigner by his voice alone (Hardyman & Molet, 1979). Baron's fluency in Malagasy lent unquestioned authority to the observations on Malagasy plant names and place names that he published in *The Antananarivo annual*.

Baron began the study of botany in late 1879 (Dorr, 1987), and it appears (Hardyman & Molet, 1979) that it was Baron's second wife (Baron married four times) who encouraged him in this direction. Baron made a significant contribution to Malagasy botany both

as a collector of specimens and as an author. Between 1880 and 1905 he sent 7,000 numbered plant collections to Kew, of which over 1,000 serve as types. (The figure given by Jackson [1901], i.e. 11,834, may include duplicates. It does not agree with unpublished records at Kew concerning the number of collections made by Baron.) Baron contributed extensive botanical notes to Richardson's (1885) Malagasy-English dictionary, published the first phytogeographic synthesis of the flora of Madagascar (Baron, 1889), published the first textbook in Malagasy on botany (Dorr, 1988), and compiled the first catalog of the Malagasy flora (Dorr, 1987). There can be little doubt that he was the editor responsible for the botanical material included in *The Antananarivo annual*.

George Cousins (1842–1926) reluctantly played a minor role as editor of *The Antananarivo annual* in 1877. Cousins served in Madagascar from 1864 to 1883, but he does not seem to have taken any particular interest in the natural history of the island.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. No attempt was made to trace reviews in scientific journals of *The Antananarivo annual*, but it is worth noting that number VIII (Christmas 1884), at least, was favorably reviewed in *Nature* (Foster, 1885).

2. Precise dates for the publication of each number cannot be established. Indirect evidence and the original covers examined (numbers III–XII) suggest that “about Christmas-time” meant either shortly before or shortly after the holiday. For example, Cousin’s notice of the change of editorship in number III (Christmas 1877) was dated “Dec 7th, 1877” implying publication in early December. In contrast, the cover for number VII (Christmas 1883) stated: “Printed at the Press of the London Missionary Society. 1884” indicating publication in January or later.

The London agents for *The Antananarivo annual* may have printed new covers for several numbers. In the Widener Library collection, the title page of number VIII (Christmas 1884) stated that *The Antananarivo annual* was printed in 1884, but on the cover “Trübner & Co., 57 + 59 Ludgate Hill. 1885” was printed. In the Hardyman collection, the cover of number VIII has no mention of either 1885 or Trübner & Co. Copies of number IX (Christmas 1885) in the Widener and Hardyman collections both referred to Messrs. Trübner & Co. as London agents. Hardyman (in litt.) noted that about 1889 John Haddon was given as the London agent and in the late 1890s the agent in London was the L.M.S. One or two Haddon items carried advertisements that might support a London imprint, but generally it appeared that the covers were printed in Antananarivo.

3. Monumental may be an understatement. Grandidier’s *Histoire physique, naturelle et politique de Madagascar* (1875–1954?) consisted of 39 volumes published over the course of almost 80 years. The volumes were not issued consecutively but appeared in an irregular sequence. Some were also published posthumously. Grandidier authored or co-authored several volumes, including a few with his son, Guillaume Grandidier (1873–1957). He also edited volumes written by specialists in different disciplines. Stafleu and Cowan (1976) analyzed those volumes that pertain to botany. However, I am not aware of a bibliographical analysis of the entire work, which would be extremely valuable to students of Malagasy history and natural history.

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