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Elites in Madagascar: a sociology¹

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Résumé

Le rôle des élites dans la trajectoire de Madagascar, et en particulier dans la construction et l'accroissement des inégalités, une des sources identifiées de l'instabilité sociopolitique chronique, impose de mieux les appréhender. En s'appuyant sur des enquêtes statistiques représentatives, dont une spécifique et inédite sur les élites de la Grande Île, cet article permet d'établir une sociographie de ces dernières, de comprendre leurs stratégies pour atteindre le pouvoir et s'y maintenir, mais aussi de connaître leurs opinions sur le fonctionnement de la société et notamment leur appréhension des facteurs de blocage ou de développement à long terme du pays. Une majeure partie des élites est issue de l'ancienne aristocratie. La mobilisation du capital social, constitué d'un réseau riche par son ampleur, sa diversité et l'intensité des liens établis au sein du cercle élitaire, ainsi que la multiplication des positions de chevauchement (*straddling*), constituent une stratégie d'accès aux positions hiérarchiques les plus hautes. Cette classe dominante affiche une adhésion plutôt mitigée aux principes démocratiques. Le principal désaccord entre les élites et la population concerne l'ordre des priorités dans l'agenda politique. Si pour les élites le maintien de l'ordre prime avant toute chose, pour la population c'est l'amélioration des conditions de vie des pauvres qui doit constituer la priorité.

Mots clefs : Elites, Madagascar, Chevauchement, Réseau, Pouvoir, Enquête statistique, capital social

Abstract

The role of the elites in Madagascar's trajectory, especially in the formation and widening of inequalities as a known source of chronic socio-political instability, calls for a closer study of the elite group. This article establishes a sociology of the elites based on statistical surveys, including a unique representative survey focusing on the Red Island's elites. It provides insights into their strategies to attain and remain in power, but also their opinions on the running of society and especially their views of the obstacles to and the drivers of the country's long-term development. The majority of elites are from the old aristocracy. Social capital made up of a rich network in terms of its size, diversity and the intensity of the connections established within the elite circle and straddling is used as a strategy to access the highest hierarchical positions. This dominant class displays rather mixed attitudes to democratic principles. The main point of disagreement between elites and the rest of the population concerns the order of priorities on the political agenda. Although maintaining order counts the most for the elites, the rest of the population prioritises improved living conditions for the poor.

Keywords: Elites, Madagascar, Straddling, Network, Power, Statistical Survey, Social capital

JEL Code: D30, D63, O11, O55, P48, Z13

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Introduction

Elites are central to NWW's subject matter and, more broadly, to all studies of institutions and organisations, given that they are fashioned and controlled by individuals and social groups or coalitions whose most influential players are elites. Most of the recent studies on elites in Southern countries are concerned with how these elites affect the development process in general (based on the generic opposition between rent-seeking elites and developmental elites; see, for example, Amsden *et al.*, 2012) more than with who they are and what they actually do. Yet can a satisfactory answer really be found to the first question without addressing the second?

The frequency of research bringing into play the concept of elites is inversely proportional to the empirical material available to studies on the subject. In most cases, elites are either referred to in a loose, abstract manner (predatory, rent-seeking, mafia, enlightened elites, etc.), or are addressed by more thematic approaches (political, economic, bureaucratic, religious elites, etc.), or are approached in isolation by case studies (examples of individuals, families, lineages, etc.). There is good reason for this. The first of the three major challenges facing the academic community in its quest to advance in its research on elites is precisely how to define them and identify who they are in concrete terms based on sound empirical data.²

This particular challenge is not exclusive to the field of the elites, since similar debate surrounds the concept of the middle class (see Darbon & Toulabor, 2011; and Jacquemot, 2013, in the case of Africa), but it is felt more keenly here. From the point of view of sources, although biographical databases in the Northern countries (like *Who's Who*) provide statistical information on the elites, they are by nature incomplete (an often-opaque selection procedure determines directory inclusion) and they differ in quality from one country to another. In addition, they more often cover political or administrative elites than business elites (Genieys, 2011). In the Southern countries, and in Madagascar in particular, such databases are much thinner on the ground and are even more incomplete. However, it has been possible to use some of them (*Official Journal* and biographical directories: Verdier 1995, 2000 & 2002). Traditional quantitative data sources (mainly household surveys) can more or less outline the shape and profile of the middle class, whatever its definition. Yet there are no equivalent sources on the elites, who are by nature absent from these data. They are too few and far between to appear in sufficient numbers in the usual samples. Moreover, they generally refuse to answer this kind of survey for reasons of prestige or availability.

In addition to the intrinsic elite "measurement" problems, the last decade's international development agenda has played a part in sidelining thinking on this group. Its virtually exclusive focus on poverty reduction (MDGs, PRSPs, HIPC initiatives, etc.) has placed the poor and poverty eradication strategies at the top of the research and policy agenda, while the study of the "top of the distribution" (of incomes, wealth or, more broadly, power) has been shifted offstage and into the wings in developing countries. Granted, the question of the reconfiguration of inequalities (national and global) has prompted many studies (see Bourguignon, 2015, for a short summary). In the developed countries, some studies have focused on analysing the top quantiles drawing on the most

² "The first and most fundamental impediment facing both scholars and policy makers seeking to understand the role elites play in the process of economic development is the absence of a commonly agreed way to identify who constitutes a member of the elite," (DiCaprio, 2012).

detailed level of tax data available (i.e. a level of detail that can capture elites in terms of income; Piketty & Saez, 2006; Piketty, 2014). Unfortunately, such sources do not exist in developing countries (especially the poorest). So not only do the elites remain unexplored territory, but the inequalities they create are massively underestimated (Guénard & Mesple-Soms, 2007).

The purpose of this paper is twofold. The first ties in directly with the purpose of this book as to the role(s) played by the elites in the regulation of Malagasy society and especially in its trials and tribulations; in a word, on its development impasse. For want of being able to tackle this problem head on, this paper looks into the process of elite reproduction from both angles: objective (player strategies) and subjective (value systems). Upstream of this question, the chapter draws up as accurate a sociography as is possible of the elites in Madagascar. This is a fundamental first step before any more detailed analytical undertaking on the subject: how can we explore these social players we call “elites” without first defining their contours and describing their internal structure? This taxonomic (species description) step is especially important since, to our knowledge, it has never been done in Madagascar or elsewhere, at least not in the terms we propose here.

Indeed the main originality of this paper is that the results presented are drawn from a first-hand statistical survey designed to be representative of the elites in Madagascar since independence – the first of its kind to our knowledge. The survey of “elites” in Madagascar (ELIMAD) is designed to capture the pathways, social networks and values of a representative sample of members of the different types of “elites”. It poses a triple methodological challenge: definition of scope (who is or are the elites?), representativeness (where to find a comprehensive list of the sphere in question?) and reliability of the information collected (how to guarantee honest, in-depth answers?). The sheer magnitude of these methodological questions probably explains why no one has managed (if indeed undertaken) to conduct an operation of this kind before. Not wishing to go into the technical details, which is not the point of this book, we believe we have risen to the challenge by providing some “satisfactory” answers to the methodological questions raised above. This research interviewed a total of 1,000 people considered to be part of the elites in Madagascar in at least one of the nine spheres covered (political – governmental, elective and partisan –, economic, religious, military, civil society, international organisation and public institution) from 2012 to 2014. Although we have absolutely no intention of sidestepping valid questions (a certain number of technical details on ELIMAD are presented in boxes 5 to 8),³ we prefer to focus here on the survey findings to give this book’s readers the exclusive first. A special supplementary survey directly connected with ELIMAD was conducted in 2013 on a sample of 1,200 people representative of the adult population living in Madagascar (CITMAD survey). This mirror survey put a set of common questions to elites and the rest of the population to compare their opinions and values. It takes up the principle already tried and tested by the authors in the area of governance and corruption in French-speaking Africa, to wit comparing experts’ points of view with those of the public at large (Razafindrakoto & Roubaud, 2010).

This article is in three parts. The first section starts with a tentative estimation of elite group size before presenting a detailed outline of their socio-demographic profile. With the scene thus set, we consider the strategies used to access and remain in the spheres of power, in their different

³ More detailed methodological presentations are (and will be) made in individual scientific papers. (Razafindrakoto et al., 2012).

dimensions. The second section focuses on the elite reproduction process from its many angles. It maps out the elites' social pathways, focusing on intergenerational and intragenerational mobility (vertically) and matrimonial alliances (horizontally). Yet elite strategies also take the form of branching out simultaneously into different areas of the social space – political and economic, public and private – in a phenomenon well known and defined in the Africanist literature as *straddling*. Then there is associative involvement, especially building, maintaining and drawing on individual networks. This section also measures the level of this associative involvement and analyses the structure of these egocentric elite networks. The last section addresses the question of values. Lifestyle and means of reproduction are not the only elements that differentiate elites from the rest of the population. They are also set apart by a system of representations, which may be more or less antagonistic with the other social groups' representations and more or less conducive to development. Here, we take the above-described mirror survey to compare the elites' answers with the rest of the population in order to measure and interpret the distance between the two groups.

1.- Who are the elite groups in Madagascar?

Who holds the power (political, economic, military, religious, etc.) in Madagascar? Is it a homogeneous group, which reproduces itself over time? Does the process of elite reproduction work on a family basis and/or by means of group strategies (ethnic or status groups)? Is the ethnic or status group aspect relevant? Is the power in Madagascar “Merina power” or “Andriana power”? What are the overlaps between the different dimensions of power in Madagascar? These are the questions addressed based on the initial findings of the survey of the elites.

Box 1

Survey scope: Definition of the “elite” concept

Given the debate and lack of consensus over the notion of elite in the literature, we need to specify the definition we have adopted. We define “elite” in its broadest sense as: *any person with or potentially with power and/or influence over the decisions and running of society in Madagascar.*

These are people who hold or have held “important” positions and/or have a level of responsibility in different spheres:

- 1- Government (minister, principal private secretary or permanent secretary)
- 2- Elected office (national assembly, senate, city hall, etc.)
- 3- Political party
- 4- Public institution (administration; non-political position)
- 5- The army (paramilitary police, police, army, etc.)
- 6- Large corporation (public or private)
- 7- Civil society (including the media; consortiums such as GEM and JPM, unions, and associations or committees such as CNOE, SeFaFi and CNOSC)
- 8- Religious institution
- 9- International organisation (including the large international NGOs).

These conceptual choices call for two comments. First, the power (to be measured) held by the “elites” is not a binary variable (has or has not), but a continuous variable (has more or less). Although this definition does not pose a ceiling problem (e.g. the President of the Republic in the political field is necessarily a member of the elite), a floor needs to be set below which an individual is no longer considered part of the elites. This threshold

is arbitrary by definition. In ELIMAD, we chose a separate floor for each sphere set at a relatively high level, as seen from the distribution of posts/positions in our sample. Second, our breakdown into nine spheres (and their aggregation into four fields) is designed to cover all the elites in Madagascar with power at national level. This field in principle excludes three groups that can be considered as elite at their level: local elites, diaspora elites and international elites who influence Madagascar from the outside (e.g. President of the French Republic, President of the World Bank and the head of a global industrial group with operations in Madagascar). These groups are evidently excluded for reasons of technical difficulties (access, in particular), but they can also be legitimately considered as extensions to our scope and subsequently worth surveying. However, the main foreign communities (Indo-Pakistani – *Karana*, Chinese – *Sinoa*, and descendants of settlers – *Zanatany*) long established in the country are part of the survey's scope.

Categories of elites: classification of elites in the different fields of power

For the needs of the analysis, we have to identify the spheres of power to which the elites belong. As we will see later, elites are active in different spheres ("straddling"). We have therefore assigned the survey respondents to a main field as follows:

- **Political field (27.7%)**: This category is designed to capture political responsibilities by including all individuals who have held (or currently hold) a position in government or elected office (members of the National Assembly or the Senate, including members of the High Transitional Council (CST) and Transitional Congress (CT) in the transitional period) and senior political party leaders;
- **Economic field (23.9%)**: Classed in this category are business elites who have never held a position of political responsibility;
- **Public institutions (28.1%)**: The elites who have held (or currently hold) senior positions in public institutions or in the army, but have not had either political responsibilities or responsibilities in large corporations;
- **Civil society and others (20.3%)**: The elites who cannot be classed in the above three categories are classified in this category. They are leading figures in religious institutions, civil society and international organisations who have not held a position of political responsibility or responsibility in a large corporation or public institution. Over two-thirds of them head civil society organisations.

Looking at the sociodemographic characteristics of the elites as a whole in Madagascar, all spheres combined, note firstly that this is a mature, graduate, male population (Table 1). Their average age is 52 years and 55% are over 50. Just 20% are women and 96% have graduated from higher education. Their religious breakdown is relatively balanced between Protestants (FJKM) and Catholics, with the other churches representing approximately a quarter of the total. The *Merina* ethnic group (ethnic group from the region around the capital) is predominant (64%), followed a long way behind by the *Betsileo* (another Central Highlands ethnic group). Nevertheless, one-quarter of the elites are from coastal (*côtier*) regions. Lastly, most (52%) of the elite population are descendants of the *Andriana* (nobility in the days of the kingdom).

A comparison of the composition of the elite population with the population of Madagascar in general gives a more precise idea of the elites' particularity in terms of their composition.⁴ Elites are 2.5 times less likely to be female or under 45 years old. In terms of religion, whereas Catholics are overrepresented among the elites (38% vs. 31%), this bias is even greater for FJKM followers (37% vs.

⁴ Given that elite members are all over 25 years old, we compare them with the general population over 25 years old.

20%) to the disadvantage of the other persuasions. The elites are also twice as likely to be from the Central Highlands. Yet what sets them apart much more is that they are 31 times more likely to be higher education graduates than the rest of the population and up to 34 times more likely to claim to be of *Andriana* descent or assimilated.⁵

Table 1 The elites' main sociodemographic characteristics⁶

	Status group				
	<i>Andriana & assimilated</i>	<i>Hova & assimilated</i>	Others (inc. don't knows)	Total	
Elites Population	51.5	12.3	36.2	100	
	1.5	2.6	95.9 ⁷	100	
Ethnic group					
Elites Population	<i>Merina</i>	<i>Betsileo</i>	Others	Total	
	63.9	10.7	25.4	100	
	32.4	19.0	58.6	100	
Religion					
Elites Population	Catholics	FJKM (Calvinist)	Others	Total	
	38.1	37.2	23.1	100	
	30.6	19.6	49.8	100	
Age, gender and education					
Elites Population	Under 45 years	46 to 60 years	Over 60 years	Women	Higher education
	28.1	51.5	20.4	20.5	96.7
	63.8	24.2	12.0	49.7	3.0

Source: Surveys: *ELIMAD* 2012-2014, Afrobarometer 2013 (ethnic group) & 2008 (status group), COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL; ENEMPSI (ethnic group) 2012, INSTAT; authors' calculations.

Note: Population aged 25 years and over.

⁵ The social stratification into status groups described in Chapter 2 was a characteristic common to a number of ethnic groups, but the terms used to refer to them differed from one ethnic group to the next. The *Andriana* (nobility) and *Hova* designations applied essentially to the *Merina* (ethnic group from the Antananarivo region). At the same time, the *Hova* actually included commoners as much as clans who enjoyed the same privileges as the nobility. The question asked (for both parents) in the *ELIMAD* and Afrobarometer surveys was, "If the ethnic group of your father (mother) had castes or status groups, do you know which caste or status group his (her) family belonged to?" The analysis classified the answers to these questions into three categories in order of frequency of answer: *Andriana* or assimilated, *Hova* or assimilated and a last category covering all the other answers, including "don't knows". This necessary statistical clustering has the disadvantage of obscuring each status group's subtle internal distinctions.

⁶ The survey questionnaire contained more detailed categories, but some categories have been clustered (mainly under the "civil society and others" category) for the quantitative analysis (where groups need to have large enough numbers). Caution is called for when analysing the results derived from these aggregates since their relevance could be debatable. For the breakdown by ethnic group, given that the available information was on the respondents' parents, individuals with one *Merina* parent were classed as "*Merina*".

⁷ This high percentage actually reflects the low number of Afrobarometer survey respondents who claimed to be of "high" status origin. Note that the 2008 Afrobarometer survey interviewed 1,200 people sampled by stratified random sampling by gender and (former) province for a total of 78% country dwellers and 22% urban dwellers. Hardly any of the respondents answered this question, either because there were no status groups in their parents' ethnic group or because they did not know what status group their parents belonged to or even because they did not wish to divulge this information.

Box 2

Sampling strategy for the representativeness of the elite universe

In the absence of any pre-existent sampling frame, we used a two-step strategy.

1- Purposive sampling

A first survey wave (around 30 questionnaires) was launched with the selection of some 30 “super-interviewers” (themselves members of the elite; see below) from as wide a range of backgrounds as possible. Chosen from among the team members’ connections (the team also being members of the elite), they interviewed respondents in their own network (after validation by the central team). Taking this base as the launch pad, a “snowball” technique was then used whereby the “elite” network of these first respondents was asked at the end of the ELIMAD questionnaire to fill in a table suggesting eight people to be contacted to take part in the survey in turn. Following a mid-term qualitative evaluation (400 questionnaires) to identify shortcomings, a second wave was launched targeting the main areas of underrepresentation (e.g. the Indo-Pakistani community, Catholic religious elites, etc.) to be reached “by all means”. At this stage, the second strategy was launched.

2- Building a sampling frame

Alongside the first survey wave, we set out to develop a comprehensive elite sampling frame. We drew on a wide range of sources for this, some common and others specific to each elite sphere. They included: the *Official Journal*, the different official directories and registers, websites, the press and direct interviews. Wherever possible, we also went through these sources’ archives for the 1960-2012 period. This gave us a list of nearly 10,000 names (9,357), or some 7,000 after eliminating doubles (individuals identified in more than one sphere).

This sampling frame is obviously imperfect, but it constitutes a reasonable preliminary approximation of the elite universe. As partial elements of validation, virtually all the first 400 ELIMAD respondents checked out as being in the frame. In the same vein, our examination of the press checked that the prominent people cited by our respondents were in the frame. Any who were not were added in. The frame’s other limitation is that often only the name is available without any other information on the person in question, which rules out any possibility of ex-ante stratification of the sample. This sampling frame serves two purposes. The first is to align (during the survey) the ELIMAD sample with the frame structure (e.g. proportion of women). From this point of view, ELIMAD could be considered to be a stratified survey based on two criteria: gender and sphere. The frame’s second purpose is longer term. This long-term investment should be able to be used as a sampling frame for all future surveys on the elites once updated and enriched by individual characteristics.

Behind these averages for the elite universe as a whole lay large differences by elite sphere and field. The political sphere is by far the most male and mature, with 86% of men and 30% of over-60s (Table 2). This characteristic is also found in the senior public administration, albeit less pronounced. The members of the economic sphere and especially “civil society and others” are younger and more female. However, the proportion of women never tops 30% in any sphere.

Table 2 Elite demographic characteristics by sphere of power

	Men	Women	25-44 years	45-60 years	Over 60 years	Total
Political sphere	85.6	14.4	18.8	50.9	30.3	100
Economic sphere	78.2	21.8	33.9	52.7	13.4	100
Public institutions	81.5	18.5	24.6	55.2	20.3	100
Civil society & others	70.0	30.1	38.9	45.8	15.3	100
Total	79.5	20.5	28.1	51.5	20.4	100

Source: *ELIMAD* survey 2012-2014, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL, authors' calculations.

Note: Although no age limit was set, all members of the elite are at least 25 years old.

The question of education is obviously central to the elite issue. Overall, 97% of the elites report having a level of higher education. Yet this indicator provides but a highly imperfect measurement of their "overeducation". Whereas the population's rate of higher education attendance by level (undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate) forms a logical pyramid shape, the pyramid is inverted for the elites (Table 3). Over 40% of elites say they attended university for more than five years and 80% for more than three years. A member of the elites is approximately 50 times more likely than the rest of the adult population to have attended university at master's level and 200 times more likely to have gone on to postgraduate level. In addition, the proportion of those who have studied abroad is far higher than the percentage of "ordinary" people who have attended higher education. The same holds true for their knowledge and command of the French language, and even other foreign languages although these are still relatively rare. All the elite spheres exhibit this overqualified characteristic, with the political and public institution elites in first place in this respect. So even though the respondents have probably inflated their academic record, there is no doubt that access to higher education is a necessary (albeit not sufficient) condition for integration into the elite world.

Table 3 Elite level of education by sphere of power

	Secondary or less	Higher (1-3 years)	Higher (4-5 years)	Higher (over 5 years)	Total
Political sphere	4.0	12.9	37.5	49.6	100
Economic sphere	3.2	18.1	49.1	29.6	100
Public institutions	2.3	20.2	31.6	46.0	100
Civil society & others	3.9	13.3	42.2	40.6	100
Total Elites	3.3	16.3	39.5	40.9	100
Total Population	97.0	2.0	0.8	0.2	100

Source: Surveys: *ELIMAD*, 2012-2014, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL; ENEMPSI, 2012, INSTAT; authors' calculations.

Note: Population aged 25 years and over.

Although the different spheres display similar curves by their members' religion, this is not the case when looking at ethnic and status groups. The *Merina* are relatively more numerous in the economic sphere, which they massively dominate (76%; Table 4). They are also found in large numbers in the "civil society and others" sphere and in the public institutions, where they represent two in three civil servants. Their weight is lowest, and even in the minority (47%), in the political sphere. The status groups present less variation in their distributions by fields of power. Descendants of the *Andriana* are in the majority everywhere except in public institutions, where they nonetheless corner 48% of

the positions. Descendants of the *Hova* tend to favour the economic sphere and public institutions. The rate of “castes” is ultimately highest among the business heads, where it exceeds 70%.

Table 4 Elite ethnic and status groups of origin by sphere

	Ethnic group			Status group			Total
	<i>Merina</i>	<i>Betsileo</i>	Others	<i>Andriana</i>	<i>Hova</i>	Others	
Political sphere	46.9	12.3	40.8	52.7	7.6	39.7	100
Economic sphere	76.1	8.4	15.5	54.4	15.9	29.7	100
Public institutions	66.6	11.4	22.1	47.7	16.4	35.9	100
Civil society & others	69.0	10.3	20.7	51.7	8.9	39.4	100
Total	63.9	10.7	25.4	51.5	12.3	36.2	100

Source: *ELIMAD* survey 2012-2014, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL, authors’ calculations.

The elite universe is, by definition, profoundly inegalitarian. In this article, we have defined the elite by their power of action in society. However, if members of the elites are differentiated from other members of society by their “holding” power, their own universe is necessarily differentiated from this point of view. Everyone in it holds more or less power. So a valid line of inquiry is to analyse the elites’ social breakdown by the power they hold. Differentiation by level of power is important to build an accurate picture of the elites.

We have developed a scale of power with four levels (Box 7). The oldest are more often found at the top of the scale of power (respectively 83% of over-60s, 73% of 46-to-60 year olds and 63% of under-45s are ranked at the highest level; Table 5). Although there is an automatic aspect to this link between age and level of power, since the oldest have already had the time to reach the peak of their career, a purely gerontocratic factor could also be at work whereby age, as such, takes precedence. From the point of view of gender, not only are women underrepresented within the elites, but their numbers dwindle as the scale rises. They fall from a share of nearly half at the lower levels (3 and 4) to just 18% at the highest level of the ladder.

Box 3

Inequalities in the elite universe: development of a scale of “power”

In a population survey, the observation units are considered to be equivalent, are weighted in the same way and can be substituted for one another. This statistical principle echoes the democratic principle of “one man, one vote” and reflects relative homogeneity. Yet unlike the rest of the population, the elites are profoundly and intrinsically heterogeneous from the very viewpoint of what defines them; that is their power. It stands to reason that the President of the Republic has an infinitely greater power of action and influence than a director-general in the central administration, president of a producer’s association or a prelate. This heterogeneity is both internal (between the elites themselves) and external (between the group of elites and the rest of the population). From this point of view, a survey of the elites is more like a business survey than a household survey: where businesses need to be differentiated by size (in staff numbers or turnover), elites need to be able to be identified according to the power they hold.

However, measuring an individual’s power is a tricky exercise. Firstly, the sources of power (status position, charisma, expertise and tradition) and the instruments of power (law, force and influence) are many and varied. It is very hard not only to capture them all, but also to determine a system of measurement whereby they can be compared. Secondly, power cannot be addressed solely by a substantialist approach like realisable,

accumulative, disposable capital. An individual's power lies not solely in the individual's capacities for material or moral action, but also in the potential to "impose one's own will within a social relationship, even in the face of resistance," (Weber, 2003). This approach defines power less as a stock than as a relationship, since its influence only really comes to bear in the interaction.

Power cannot be measured directly by the ELIMAD survey, either from its interactionist or its substantialist angle. Our approach therefore consists of making the reasonable assumption that it is essentially a function of the individuals' status position(s). The individuals have hence been classed according to their rank on a "standard" hierarchical scale. Putting this theoretical metric into operation is no mean task. It calls for a double classification operation: first within each of the nine spheres (and sub-spheres) and then between the spheres. This was a painstaking task based on the survey's two main pieces of information: institutional affiliation and position held. Some auxiliary variables were also used (e.g. business size for the economic sphere) with a diagnostic conducted by manual processing, on a case-by-case basis, of qualitative information declared in full by respondents on their current status (e.g. business name, still in the economic sphere). This operation encoded over 6,000 elite positions held by the 1,000 people interviewed and over 15,000 links with their elite network. Three nested classifications were hence developed. For the purposes of this article's analysis, we use here only the most aggregated scale with its four levels of power.

Table 5 Elite demographic characteristics by rank on the power scale

	Men	Women	25-44 years	45-60 years	Over 60 years	Total
Level 1 (max)	82.0	18.0	24.6	51.9	23.6	100
Level 2	79.9	20.1	33.2	52.8	14.0	100
Level 3	48.1	51.9	51.9	44.2	3.9	100
Level 4 (min)	61.5	38.5	46.2	38.5	15.4	100
Total	79.5	20.5	28.1	51.5	20.4	100

Source: ELIMAD survey 2012-2014, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL, authors' calculations.

The analysis in terms of religious and ethnic groups does not return a very steep curve, since no category appears to have an advantage over the others (Table 6). Nonetheless, a few minor differences can be observed by status group. Slightly more *Andriana* are found at the top of the power scale, but the difference is slight (75% of *Andriana* are at Level 1 compared with 72% of all elites).

Table 6 Elite ethnic and status groups of origin by sphere

	Ethnic group			Status group			Total
	Merina	Betsileo	Others	Andriana	Hova	Others	
Level 1 (max)	63.8	9.7	26.5	53.3	12.2	34.5	100
Level 2	65.0	14.5	20.6	45.8	12.6	41.6	100
Level 3	63.5	9.6	26.9	53.9	11.5	34.6	100
Level 4 (min)	53.9	7.7	38.5	38.5	15.4	46.2	100
Total	63.9	10.7	25.4	51.5	12.3	36.2	100

Source: ELIMAD survey 2012-2014, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL, authors' calculations.

So the Malagasy elite, associated by definition with the ruling class, has remained the same on the whole in Madagascar since independence (Razafindrakotto et al., 2017). It is made up largely of the *Andriana* and *Hova* bourgeoisie, which has inherited symbolic power (before colonisation for the *Andriana*, and before and during colonisation for the *Hova* who were responsible for managing public affairs). Members of the *côtier* high families have joined this group based on the place they have secured on the national scene as representatives of their region, among others, since the colonial period.

This role of ethnic groups and castes in Malagasy society (despite their late 19th century abolition) is a persistently nagging question in the country's history. The elites' point of view about the importance of the status groups or castes sheds further light on the pre-eminence of origins in Malagasy society. Two questions were put to find out whether the people interviewed attached importance to these status groups – if they considered them important (in their life and career) – and whether they felt that these groups were important to Malagasy society in general.

More than a century after the abolition of the principle of status groups, nearly 30% of the members of the elites said status groups were still important to them personally and nearly 50% said they were still important to society (Table 7). These responses show that the symbolic ranking system still prevails, at least in the elites' minds, even though its importance diminishes slightly among the younger people. An analysis of responses by individual status origin hones this observation. Descendants of the *Andriana* in effect most frequently say that a system placing a higher value on them by birthright is important to them (39%) and to society (59%). Conversely, only 18% of the individuals who did not give their origin in terms of caste placed value on the status groups, even though 38% of them felt they were still important to society.

Alongside descendants of the *Andriana*, it is the socially dominated groups in the rest of the population (women, the oldest and minority church congregation members) who believe castes to be a defining principle of Malagasy society today, either as they personally see it or by virtue of their observing its effects. This paradox merits further exploration, but it could reflect the fact that the few rare elected representatives from these categories seek to make their mark by overrating caste attributes they did not initially have.

Table 7 Elite opinions of the importance of status groups

Castes are important	Caste of origin			Religion			Gender		Age	Total
	<i>Andriana</i>	<i>Hova</i>	Others	Catholic	FJKM	Others	Men	Women	<45	
To you	39.4	19.5	18.0	25.5	29.3	34.8	27.6	35.6	24.9	29.2
To society	58.6	46.3	38.1	46.5	51.1	52.6	47.4	58.5	48.0	49.7

Source: ELIMAD survey 2012-2014, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL, authors' calculations.

In general, although the elites' statements somewhat play down the importance of status groups (only a minority openly feel they still carry weight today), the strong presence of the *Andriana* in this group tends to suggest that the *Andriana*'s strategies to preserve their power or influence are not overt.⁸

Box 4

Highly sensitive questions: minimise non-responses and guarantee reliability

How can a satisfactory response rate and honest answers be obtained to such sensitive subjects when respondents at the top of the social ladder may feel they do not have time to waste on answering a statistical survey or may have good reason not to want to divulge their resources. Special strategies specific to the field of study had to be put in place to address these issues.

Firstly, ELIMAD targets elites: only a "horizontal" relationship is possible (elites talking to elites). Given that elites like to cultivate their own small world (as this article's network analysis clearly confirms), interviewers were chosen from among the members of the elite itself. This choice makes it harder for respondents to dismiss the interviewer out of hand, which would have been a natural tendency with an average interviewer. Secondly, the ELIMAD questionnaire is particularly long (two hours on average). The opportunity cost of the time spent answering the questions is very high. Consequently, despite all the respondents being connected, interviews can only be conducted face to face. The few attempts to proceed otherwise (submitting or e-mailing the questionnaire) came to nothing. Thirdly, ELIMAD deals with highly sensitive questions, especially the question of network and social capital. Respondents are asked to provide a list of all their connections and a maximum of personal characteristics. Not only is such a procedure terribly intrusive, but it also bears a certain number of negative connotations. The idea of elite collusion via their networks is quite common. So a relationship of absolute trust is needed between interviewer and respondent. Only an interviewer who is not only a member of the elite, but also known (or recommended) to the respondent will be able to obtain honest answers.

These three main strategies were applied successfully to limit total and partial non-response rates. Other approaches were also used. For example, emphasis on the esteem of being chosen as part of the elite, akin to other public figures, made the survey a mark of elite membership. In addition, reference to the long-standing credibility of the team of researchers served as a guarantee of data confidentiality.

However, these instructions were not always applied to the letter. In a certain number of cases, the chosen strategies are double-edged and a choice has to be made. For example, some respondents find it easier to confide in a friend or relation than a stranger. In other cases, it is easier to talk to an anonymous stranger to prevent the family from finding out certain personal details and possibly arousing jealousy. Intimate knowledge of the "terrain" means the strategy can be adjusted on a case-by-case basis to the known or presumed circumstances. This meticulous high-end "tailoring" obviously raises the question as to whether the survey can be replicated in other contexts.

⁸ See, for example, the importance of things "left unsaid" as highlighted by the qualitative interviews.

II.- Strategies to access the spheres of power and remain in power

The elites' sociodemographic profile has already turned up certain particularities in their strategies to access the spheres of power. One of the pillars is investment in higher education, facilitated when parents have the financial and human resources. This mechanism already gives family origin and entourage a key role in access to the elite circle. Yet the group's formation in a relatively closed configuration does not channel through this path alone. The significant proportion of descendants of the *Andriana*, the highest status group in the day of the kingdoms, tends to point at the same time to an implicit or explicit social reproduction strategy. This status strategy applies from generation to generation, nurturing the persistence of hierarchical distinctions all the more sacred in that they are rooted in the past. Membership of a status group can therefore form a resource to control power by restricting access to birthright heirs.

The first part of this article sheds some light on the strategies that may have been used by the elite class to reach their high position on the power ladder. This second part sets out to explain the mechanisms behind them and measure their effects. Do the elites form a homogeneous self-reproducing group? Is the elite reproduction process really essentially family based? Can a particular career path explain elite access to the spheres of power? Do members of the elite have a large network of contacts or relations in the different spheres of power? And to what extent is this social capital used to climb the ladder? The answers to these questions will provide a gauge of social fluidity, of the nature and reach of elite practices for occupying different fields of power.

IIA. - Elite social reproduction: a growing phenomenon?

First of all, access to elite status may stem more or less directly from parental lineage. In the case of Madagascar, there is clear evidence of a family-based elite social reproduction mechanism. Nearly half (46%) of the elites have at least one parent who is (or was) a member of the elites (Table 8). And note here that these figures are largely underestimated due to the way the survey put the question.⁹ This phenomenon is more marked among the younger generations. Those whose parents are or were members of the elites represent respectively 44% of the 46-55 year olds, 60% of the 36-45 year olds and 63% of the under-35s. This observation can be interpreted in two potentially interrelated ways: either individuals with non-elite ascendants take more time to attain positions of responsibility or this reproduction phenomenon is growing over time.

⁹ The survey asked respondents for their parents' exact occupation. These occupations were coded and the coding used to calculate the column's figures. This calculation in principle underestimates the number of "hereditary elites" due to the fact that occupation is not the only elite membership criterion, particularly among women.

Table 8 Elite reproduction and growth over time

%	At least one parent a member of the elites	Both parents members of the elites
Under 35 years	63.3	27.9
36-45 years	59.8	18.1
46-55 years	44.4	5.4
56-65 years	35.9	4.2
Over 65 years	38.7	2.8
Total	46.1	9.1

Source: ELIMAD survey 2012-2014, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL, authors' calculations.

Nevertheless, a comparison of the weight of “hereditary elites” (descendants of the elite groups) among 56-65 and 46-55 year olds (age brackets old enough to have reached positions of responsibility in their careers) suggests that the reproduction mechanism applies more to the younger category (36% among the 56-65 year olds as opposed to 44% among the 46-55 year olds). This observation tends to lend support to the second hypothesis that the elite reproduction phenomenon is gaining ground with time. Yet whichever hypothesis is taken, access to power in each case proves easier for descendants of elites, corroborating that a family-based reproduction process is indeed at work.

This phenomenon concerns all the spheres of power, even though descent has more of a hand in access to some than others. The reproduction mechanism plays a particular role in access to economic power (52% of elites in business circles are descendants of elites, with the percentage standing at 68% among the under-46s; Table 9). It is also pronounced among elites working in international organisations (respectively 54% descendants of elites and 64% among the under-46s).

Table 9 Elite reproduction by category

<i>Elite spheres</i> (%)	At least one elite parent	One elite parent (for < 46 years)
Public institution	45.1	60.4
Army	38.2	53.8
Civil society	46.2	55.3
Political party	48.7	57.1
Elected office	37.1	57.1
Government	43.8	55.6
Corporations	52.3	68.3
International organisations	53.6	64.3

Source: ELIMAD survey 2012-2014, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL, authors' calculations.

With their investment in school and capacity for a level of education largely above the Malagasy average (including studying abroad), it is relatively easy for the children of elites to attain privileged positions in the different spheres of power. So it is not surprising to find the same family names since independence in the ruling class. There is no shortage of descendants of dignitaries of the First Republic in the political class. Granted, new names appear, but by and large an oligarchy made up of a bourgeois elite, including *côtier*, already in position following independence still holds an important place today (Fremigacci, 2014; Razafindrakoto et al., 2017).

IIB. - Straddling positions of power: a strategy to expand and diversify the spheres of influence?

The hypothesis is that a strategy known as “straddling” positions of power, as illustrated by Médard (1992), might be used to attain and remain in the highest social positions. The survey of elites in Madagascar can test this hypothesis in concrete terms. We take the elites’ paths to analyse the extent to which they simultaneously hold positions of responsibility in different spheres of power.

This straddling strategy is clearly in use among the members of the elite in Madagascar. Nearly half (49%) simultaneously held positions of responsibility in at least two different spheres at the time of the survey and 20% held positions of responsibility in three different spheres (Table 10). When the analysis is extended to entire careers starting with the first position of responsibility, the elites expand and diversify their power by means of their past and present involvement in different spheres: 84% have held high-ranking positions in at least two spheres, nearly two-thirds in at least three spheres and 41% in at least four different spheres. Hence concurrent positions or duties prove not only to be widespread practice, but also appear to go hand in hand with a strategy to diversify their footholds as time goes on.

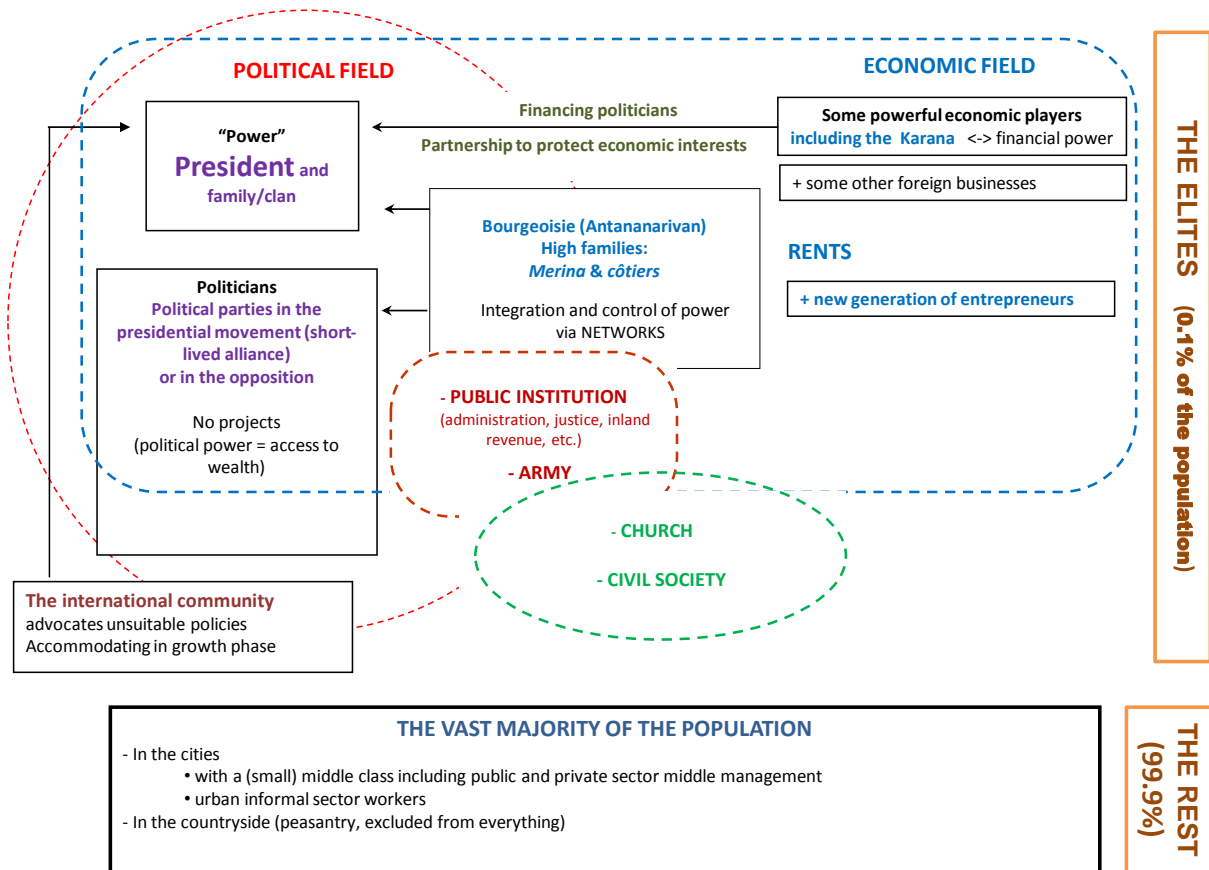
Table 10 Concurrent positions in different spheres of power

Concurrent positions in the past/career		Concurrent positions today	
Involved in past or present in	%	Involved in present in:	%
At least 2 spheres	84.4	At least 2 spheres	48.7
At least 3 spheres	64.5	At least 3 spheres	19.9
At least 4 spheres	40.7	At least 4 spheres	6.8
At least 5 spheres	21.7	<i>One sphere only</i>	44.4
At least 6 spheres	10.7	<i>No spheres</i>	6.9

Source: ELIMAD survey 2012-2014, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL, authors’ calculations.

Whether social capital is used to control, close doors or build solid bridgeheads, it guarantees advancement up the ladder to individuals, and friends and family alike. Use of this straddling strategy lends support to the hypothesis of at least partial elite capture of the spheres of influence. We measure the repercussions of such a strategy on the concentration of power. Its implications are far reaching in that it extends from the positions held by the elites themselves to those held by friends and family, as we will see in the following. Diagram 4 presents a stylised chart of these overlaps between elite spheres in the case of Madagascar.

Diagram 1
Distribution of power and interactions between different groups of players



Source: Authors.

IIC. - Elite network structure and size

The elites typically display a very high rate of participation in associative structures, as clearly shown by a comparison of membership rates across all associations combined. Whereas around just 20% of the population as a whole say they are members of an association (Razafindrakoto et al., 2017), the rate tops 80% among the elites (Table 11). Is this intensity of social activity a specific strategy to access and remain in power? The characteristics of the associations in which the elite class is involved shed some light on the stated and implicit objectives of membership. One-fifth of the elites are involved (or have been involved) in service associations (Lion’s Club, Rotary Club, etc.), 46% are (or have been) in hometown associations¹⁰ and 10% say that they belong (or have belonged) to a Masonic organisation.¹¹ Aside from their engagements and services, these elite choices to join associations confined exclusively to a small circle of individuals – since members can only be co-opted – are not disinterested and exhibit a volition to cultivate their own small world.

¹⁰ Associations based on a shared geographical origin. This origin is generally a hill standing in veiled terms for a status position.

¹¹ In view of the fact that secrecy is the rule of Freemasonry, the elites who answered “don’t know” (rather than give a negative answer) to the question as to whether they belonged to a Masonic organisation implicitly acknowledged being members of one.

Descendants of the *Andriana* stand out with a higher rate of associative participation (83%), especially in hometown associations. In particular, nearly twice as many join Masonic lodges, even though membership only concerns a minority (14% as opposed to less than 8% on average for the “others”). The higher percentage of hometown association members among the “others” may be due to the fact that the majority of these ethnic groups are based in the capital, far from their home regions. Yet this rate could also be an explanatory factor for their position among the elites. Participation in this type of association provides a ticket to approach members who might afford a way in to a position of power.

Table 11 Associative involvement by status group, ethnic group of origin and gender

Member of:	Status group of origin			Ethnic group			Gender		Total
	<i>Andriana</i>	<i>Hova</i>	Others	<i>Merina</i>	<i>Betsileo</i>	Others	Men	Women	
All associations	82.9	70.7	80.9	76.5	82.2	90.6	80.5	81.5	80.7
Service associations	20.0	18.9	17.7	18.2	19.8	20.9	18.3	22.1	19.1
Hometown associations	47.7	33.6	48.9	33.7	60.4	72.4	48.4	38.6	46.4
Freemasonry	13.9	5.7	7.8	10.8	9.3	11.1	10.4	11.8	10.7

Source: ELIMAD survey 2012-2014, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL, authors’ calculations.

Associative enrolment, hence networking, strategies differ by gender. Female members of the elite are found relatively more in service associations (22% vs. 18% for the men) and less frequently in hometown associations (39% compared with 48%).

The elites who have (or have had) a role in the political sphere differ in terms of their much higher rate of involvement in associations in general (87% vs. 81% on average), in hometown associations (67% as opposed to 46% on average) and in Freemasonry (14% compared with 11% on average; Table 12). These findings tend to confirm that there is a specific link between associative participation and access to political power. The elites – especially political elites – consequently appear to be in a position to benefit from support and forms of legitimation by means of their membership in these circles.

Table 12 Associative involvement by sphere and level of power

<i>Elite sphere</i>	Political sphere	Economic sphere	Public institution	Others	Total
All associations	86.6	77.0	76.2	83.3	80.7
Service associations	19.9	26.3	14.7	15.4	19.1
Hometown associations	67.2	33.5	41.0	41.3	46.4
Freemasonry	13.9	12.7	7.5	8.4	10.7

<i>Level of power</i>	Level 1 (max)	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4 (min)	Total
All associations	83.4	75.7	73.1	46.2	80.7
Service associations	20.4	17.4	11.8	0.0	19.1
Hometown associations	48.7	40.2	42.0	38.5	46.4
Freemasonry	12.6	7.0	0.0	7.7	10.7

Source: ELIMAD survey 2012-2014, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL, authors' calculations.

The connection between social engagement and access to power is confirmed above all by the fact that extent of involvement in associations tends to rise with the level of power. A full 83% of the elites on the highest rung of the power ladder (Level 1) are or have been members of an association, while 49% are enrolled in a hometown association and 13% are involved in Freemasonry (compared with 46%, 29% and 8% respectively for those on the lowest rung of the ladder). The question could well be raised as to the direction of the causality, since a high-ranking position may smooth entry into the most exclusive associative circles. Yet given the constraints of associative involvement, it is more than probable that membership meets instrumental goals rather than simply altruistic ends. The associative environment framework strengthens connections that can be used in strategies to get on, stay on and climb the power ladder.

Elite networks are not restricted to the network created by participation in the abovementioned associations. They can be driven as much by individual, family and professional connections as by contacts made at school (alumni association or children's school), religious affiliations, sports, etc. This range of possible places where social capital can be created, sustained and cultivated gives an idea of the relationships on which elites can potentially draw. That is not to say that frequenting the same places necessarily creates a relationship of trust and assimilation of an acquaintance into a close-knit circle. The automatic development of connections is actually less evident here in that the Malagasy population appears to have a low level of interpersonal trust (Razafindrakoto et al., 2017) and the elites, compared with the populace, are even more distrustful (19% of elites say that most people can be trusted, while the equivalent percentage is 26% for the population as a whole).

Is the climate of wariness of others an obstacle to building and cultivating networking connections? The structure and size of the elite networks leaves no doubt as to their actual reach. The elites have at least one elite contact (person in a position of responsibility whom they can potentially call directly) in one of the different spheres of power. For example, 82% have a contact in their phone book who has (or has had) responsibilities in a public institution. A total of 85% have acquaintances who hold or have held a government position (Table 13) and 73% have contacts in the business

world. The contacts in these three spheres are also called upon the most to request and obtain assistance, reflecting the potential use of this network for instrumental ends.

Table 13 Network of elite contacts in different spheres of power

Contacts, friends and family in the following spheres (%)	At least one contact
Government	84.5
Public institutions	82.1
Corporations	73.2
Army	67.7
International organisations	60.2
Civil society	59.9
Political parties	58.3
Elected office	54.3
Religious institutions	54.1
In at least one sphere	100

Source: ELIMAD survey 2012-2014, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL, authors’ calculations.

Note: 85% of elites in general have contacts in government.

In keeping with the previous observation of the political elites’ particular trait of associative involvement, they also have the densest network. The elites who have (or have had) a role in the political sphere differ from the other elite categories in that they have an even richer network. On average, they post a higher number of connections in the elite class, a higher number of close or very close relationships among these connections, a wider range of spheres to which the members of their network belong, more connections with whom they are very frequently in contact (at least weekly), and a higher number of connections who have assisted them at least once.

The importance of social capital in opening the door to the highest-ranking positions of power is also borne out. The higher an individual on the ladder of power, the richer his or her network as defined by the different chosen measurement criteria (number of connections, closeness, range of spheres to which network members belong, frequency of contacts, and assistance provided or not). The average number of connections cited hence increases from 7 on the lowest rung of the power ladder to 16 at the top, and the average number of connections who have provided assistance rises from 6 to 12.5 (Table 14).

Table 14 Importance of the elite network by sphere and level of power

<i>Average number of connections in the elite network</i>					
Spheres	No. connections	No. close and very close	No. spheres	No. connections with at least weekly contact	No. connections who have helped at least once
Political sphere	16.2	14.6	6.4	3.2	12.7
Economic sphere	15.4	12.9	6.1	2.6	11.7
Public institution	13.4	12.1	5.5	2.6	11.3
Others	14.9	12.8	6.1	2.4	11.8
Level of power					
Level 1 (max)	15.8	13.8	6.2	3.1	12.5
Level 2	13.6	12.1	5.6	2.1	10.9
Level 3	10.9	9.5	5.2	1.3	8.3
Level 4 (min)	7.3	6.4	4.3	1.1	5.7
Total	15.0	13.1	6.0	2.7	11.9

Source: ELIMAD survey 2012-2014, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL, authors' calculations.

Here again, the question arises as to the direction of the causality. Is it access to political power, or high-ranking positions, that provides the means to develop and enrich an elite network or is it the richness of the network that facilitates access to the political sphere and advancement on the power ladder? We do not endeavour to test these hypotheses as such (given the endogeneity constraints inherent in this type of question when using econometric models). However, as with the abovementioned question of associative involvement, we can venture that the most probable hypothesis is two-way causality. The network is both a cause and an effect in the process of getting on, staying on and climbing the power ladder.

III.- A system of values and representations conducive to development?

The previous analyses clearly show that the elites in Madagascar form an extremely airtight world largely disconnected from the vast majority of the population. They use all the resources at their disposal to ensure their reproduction as a dominant group at the apex of the social hierarchy. If the system breathes at all, it is essentially internally (between the different spheres of power) as individuals juggle with a certain amount of give between one field and another. However, the elite world's borders are well guarded by strategies designed to limit and control newcomers' access to power. This modus operandi of preserving privilege is in itself already at odds with the principles of meritocracy and equal opportunities on which modern democratic societies are supposed to be founded. The question then is whether this exclusive club is driven by a system of specific, explicitly elitist values or whether it acts behind the scenes, under cover of more collectively shared representations. Basically, what are the elites' stated values in terms of organisation and goals for Madagascar and are they conducive to development?

In line with the previous analyses, here we compare the elites' opinions with the rest of the population on a certain number of key questions: adherence to democracy, the main development obstacles and priorities, and assessment of the different historical periods. This exercise naturally draws on the results of the ELIMAD survey, but compares them here with the CITMAD survey

presented in the introduction. A number of identical questions, with exactly the same wording, were put in mirror fashion by both surveys to identify points of agreement and disagreement between elites and the general public in order to ascertain democratisation and development hindrances and potential drivers.

IIIA. - Mixed attitudes to democratic principles

Attachment to democracy is far from massive even though it meets with the approval of the majority of the elites. A “mere” 55% of elites consider that, “Democracy is preferable to any other form of government.” The percentage even falls to 46% among the business elites (Table 15). A significant proportion feel that, “A non-democratic system may be preferable in certain circumstances,” (36% of all elites and 45% of business elites).

The question as to whether the elites are more attached to democracy than the rest of the population is far from straightforward. On the one hand, 26% of the general public say that the type of government does not matter to them (as opposed to 6% of the elites). These people would appear to expect nothing (any longer) from government. On the other hand, 82% of those who believe the form of government is important look to democracy, which is the case with just 60% of the elites. This suggests that a higher proportion of the elites would be prepared to accept a non-democratic regime.

Table 15 Elite opinions of democratic principles and governance

% of those who feel that:	Political sphere	Economic sphere	Public institution	Others	Total Elites	Rest of the population
Democracy is preferable to any other form of government	64.7	45.8	52.7	55.2	54.9	41.4
A non-democratic system may be preferable in certain circumstances	28.7	45.3	37.2	34.3	36.2	9.3
Type of government does not matter	5.1	5.9	6.5	8.5	6.4	26.2
A. People are like “children” and the government should look after them like a parent (<i>raiamandreny</i>)	17.3	20.2	19.3	20.3	19.2	54.3
B. The government is like an employee and the people should be like a boss in charge of it	63.9	66.8	62.9	63.9	64.3	39.3
Neither A nor B	9.6	8.0	10.7	6.9	9.0	1.7

Source: Surveys *ELIMAD* 2012-2014 & *Afrobarometer* 2013, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL; authors’ calculations.
Note: The total for each of the two questions does not add up to 100% as the “don’t knows” are not reported.

This general question on democracy actually reflects how much the population values the principle of electing the country’s leaders. We have taken this question of democratic attachment further by also asking our respondents which type of relationship they think there should be between the

government and the people. A full 54% of the general public agree with the statement, “People are like ‘children’ and the government should look after them like a parent.” Yet this paternalistic view of the mode of political regulation, consistent with the concept of *raiamandreny* (Razafindrakoto et al., 2017), is defended by just 19% of the elites. The principle of a *raiamandreny* government therefore paradoxically appears to be more acceptable to the public at large than the elites, who could benefit from this type of system. However, this finding is paradoxical in appearance alone. It may well partially reflect the influence of “social desirability” behind the respondents’ answers, tacitly acknowledging that the “right” answer to the question is the people should be in charge of the government. It may also express the fact that the members of the elites, most of whom are not in a position to govern, do not want the government to make decisions that they cannot control.

IIIB. - Poor leadership is the main obstacle to development: an admission of responsibility?

The central role of governance (whether defined narrowly as the management of public monies or broadly as all democratic governance), and upstream of “developmental” (or “inclusive”) institutions, is a key tenet of the work developed by NWW (2009) and other authors examining the divergent paths of nations (Khan, 2010; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). This line of reasoning is largely shared by the Malagasy elites, all of whom consider (irrespective of their sphere) that “poor leadership” is by far and away the main obstacle to Madagascar’s long-run development. A full 99% believe that it plays a significant role and 92% that it is decisive (Table 16). This finding merits two general comments.

First, it confirms that the governance theme is not imported from the West, as sometimes suggested. This spotlight might be seen as a mark of internalisation of a globalised discourse on the issue, at least for the fraction of “westernised” elites. Yet the fact that the population, including the most marginal groups, subscribe to this point of view lends support to the idea of a common and largely endogenous breeding ground. Certain donor denigrators (especially in the South) maintain that governance is advanced by an “international community” struggling to explain the long-run failure of Africa’s development. They accuse these same donors of making “poor” governance a convenient scapegoat in order to deflect the blame from their own intervention strategies onto endogenous factors, i.e. the detrimental effect of rent-seeking elites who pervert the recommended “good policies” (Razafindrakoto et al., 2017).

Secondly, it is paradoxical that the elites would pile such a load of responsibility on their own heads for the failure of development in Madagascar, when it would have been so easy to point the finger at foreign interference, whether political (France’s covert role in the 1972 and 2009 crises; Rakotomalala, 2014) or economic (failure of the structural adjustment policies imposed by the donors). It is then worth asking what is really behind this unanimous condemnation. Are the elites really taking the blame for a negative role in Madagascar’s trajectory or does it reflect the implicit idea that “poor leaders” are always the others, with everyone washing their hands of their own responsibility?

Although the elites see poor leadership as the main obstacle to development, other factors are also incriminated. The multiple choice question put in the survey provides a gauge of these factors. First, 86% of the elites accuse “people’s attitudes” (with 56% of these citing it as a major cause). Although

the questionnaire does not go into this aspect in detail, the qualitative interviews give an idea of what lies behind this catch-all term. A whole host of factors are mentioned, such as the weight of traditions, respect for taboos, poor time management, lack of entrepreneurship and lack of education. These opinions bear overtones of the “culturalist” line of reasoning, with the elite seeing the failings of the masses as the second source of the country’s maldevelopment.

Table 16 Elite opinions of the main obstacles to development

<i>The following situations form obstacles to development (%)</i>	Political sphere	Economic sphere	Public institution	Others	Total Elites	Rest of the population
Poor leadership <i>real obstacle</i>	98.5 89.8	98.7 94.1	98.5 89.4	99.0 93.6	98.7 91.5	82.8 46.2
People’s attitudes <i>real obstacle</i>	81.8 55.8	87.9 57.7	86.6 56.9	86.7 54.7	85.6 56.4	64.2 18.4
Weight of the past (colonisation) <i>real obstacle</i>	65.1 28.4	61.9 25.9	64.3 23.1	71.8 33.2	65.5 27.3	26.1 7.4
Foreign interventions <i>real obstacle</i>	67.4 28.6	59.7 26.9	63.6 24.4	64.5 26.1	63.9 26.5	32.2 10.5
Poor natural resources <i>real obstacle</i>	28.8 15.9	27.7 13.2	27.4 12.0	24.9 11.9	27.3 13.4	45.5 18.3

Source: Surveys *ELIMAD* 2012-2014 & *CITMAD* 2013, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL; authors’ calculations.

The idea that the past and the present-day outside world both weigh negatively on Madagascar is not ruled out either. Far from it, in fact, as nearly two-thirds of the elites hold colonisation responsible (65%), while an equivalent proportion (64%) accuses the donors and foreign firms. The “geographical” theory, however, tends to be dismissed: the prevailing idea is that Madagascar has a wealth of natural resources, and the risk of this wealth generating negative externalities (curse of natural and mineral resources: Dutch disease¹²) does not come into the picture.

It is particularly interesting to compare this elite point of view with the rest of the population. Although there are certain similarities in their answers, it is the differences that prove the most enlightening. The main point of agreement is the predominance of domestic causes and the role of human beings in the Malagasy tragedy – primarily the leaders, slated for negligence by 83% of the population – but also the preponderance of Malagasy attitudes as a source of the country’s woes. This ties in with the observation at elite level: the people appear to be beating themselves up. Yet this phenomenon may also be a mark of a form of awareness (at both elite and population level) of the ambivalence and contradictions (Razafindrakoto et al., 2017) with respect to democracy and “modernity” in general (democratic demands alongside respect for hereditary hierarchies, rejection of state regulations, etc.).

Two significant differences are of note. Firstly, more than twice as many elites see foreign interventions as a sticking point. This finding appears to confirm the NWW theory that external factors, by changing the rules of the game (change to the rules of accession to power, emergence of

¹² Dutch disease refers to the negative economic repercussions often triggered by a sudden surge in a country’s exports of natural resources.

new players and capture of rents), tend to undermine the internal balances between the elites and the rest of the population or between different segments of elites. This is also a good way for the elites to play down their responsibilities, an assertion to which the rest of the population does not subscribe. Secondly, a larger percentage of the rest of the population thinks that poor resources are holding back Madagascar: 46% as opposed to just 25% of the elites. The discovery of mineral resources on a large scale and the launch of mining operations under M. Ravalomanana's presidency would appear to vindicate the elites' opinion.

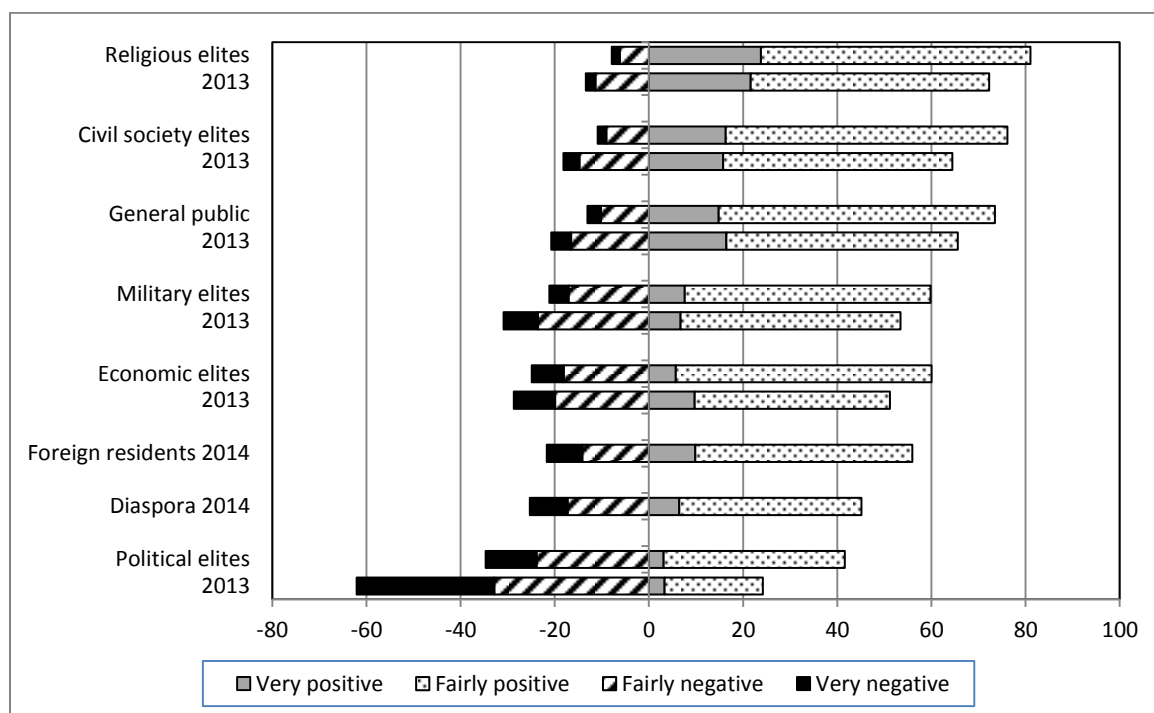
Although no clear self-evident interpretation can be made of this difference, we can speculate as to some of the reasons. The difference between the elites' judgement and the rest of the population could stem from the way natural and mineral resources are managed in Madagascar. These resources are mined by an enclave economy poor in jobs and disconnected from the local productive fabric (Razafindrakoto *et al.*, 2017). This makes mining relatively low profile. Note, moreover, that the majority of the population has very little access to information. This lack of awareness of the scale of Malagasy natural resources most likely works in favour of the population's acceptance of their situation. Another interpretation draws on the idea of the elites' system of representations. The elites might be clued-up as to Madagascar's potential wealth, but believe that they are prevented from benefiting from it by the foreign powers' monopoly over the situation.

The opinion most shared by all in Madagascar, at all levels of the social ladder, is of the disastrous contribution made by the country's leaders. This casts doubt on the elites as a group. Yet it is a disparate group and so they are not necessarily all discredited in the same way. We have sought to find out precisely where the finger points by asking the population about the role of each segment of society in the country's steady downhill slide.¹³

The verdict is damning for the political elites, who are massively censured for their baneful role (Figure 1). Yet all the other groups are seen in a fairly positive light: the economic and military elites, but especially civil society leaders and above all the religious elites. It is interesting to note that the population also sees the general public's contribution as largely positive, an opinion that tempers the abovementioned negative role put down to people's attitudes. From 2013 to 2014, however, the overall situation improves. The changes are slight, with the exception of the political elites whose hugely negative contribution (with a negative balance of opinion of -42 points) becomes slightly positive (+7 points). These results are highly coherent and a guarantee of the quality of the data. The year 2014 marks the end of the political crisis, with the accomplishment of the electoral cycle and a new democratically elected government. It is perfectly logical for the people to give more credit to the new political elites they have just chosen. Given, however, that the role of the other groups does not change as sharply over the period, it is equally logical that their contribution was similar over the two years. Despite this upturn in 2014, the political elites remain the most highly criticised and, unfortunately and predictably, they are once again discredited in 2015. The Governance, Peace and Security survey in effect finds that two-thirds of the general public consider that the members of the political class think only of their own interests (Rakotomanana *et al.*, 2016). This is a perfect illustration of our theories, where "everything changes so that everything can stay the same".

¹³ Unfortunately, we did not ask the equivalent question in the ELIMAD survey (what the elite spheres think of each other).

Figure 17 Contributions of the different groups to development



Source: Afrobarometer Survey 2013 & 2014 (specific questions), COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL; authors' calculations.

Note: The question is worded as follows: How much do you think each of the following categories of people contributes to the country's development? Note that, in 2014, a neutral option (contribution neither positive nor negative) was added to the four response options presented here.

The 2014 survey introduces onto the scene a new player hitherto scarcely mentioned: the diaspora. The population perceives the diaspora's contribution to the Red Island's development as fairly positive (+20 points; Figure 37). Nevertheless, it is the least appreciated group, aside from the political elites of course. Even foreign residents are seen in a much better light (+34 points). The relationship between these two communities of Malagasy back at home and their emigrant compatriots abroad is generally so complex, especially in the case of Madagascar, that it would naturally be absurd to take non-emigrant Malagasy opinions at face value. However, the elements available do show that the Malagasy diaspora, unlike other diasporas (Table 17), including from countries of massive emigration, takes a back seat in the island's long-run dynamics; which also explains why this book does not make it a central player in its analyses.

Two recent studies provide new, albeit as-yet sketchy, elements on the hitherto largely uncharted Malagasy diaspora (FORIM, 2016; Razafindrakoto *et al.*, 2017). With an international emigration rate estimated at 1%, Madagascar ranks 28th of the 48 Sub-Saharan African countries for which data are available, largely behind the continent as a whole (1.7%) and far behind Mali and obviously Côte d'Ivoire (Razafindrakoto *et al.*, 2017). The Malagasy diaspora is small globally, which restricts its potential influence on the home country. In 2015, the number of emigrants was estimated at approximately 170,000 people (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015). However, the Malagasy diaspora displays two specific characteristics that have an inverse effect. First, it lives massively in rich countries: over 90% of the diaspora have moved to an OECD country,

85% to France. By way of comparison, nearly 40% of Sub-Saharan Africa’s international emigration is to other Southern countries. Secondly, it is a particularly well-educated diaspora. One-third of the Malagasy diaspora have a higher education qualification and over 40% of those who have migrated to an OECD country (virtually the entire diaspora) work in a skilled profession. The corresponding figures are lower for the continent as a whole, especially for the diasporas from West Africa. These general characteristics make the Malagasy diaspora a potentially underestimated candidate for the elite world and a subject for further study in the future.

Basically, the Malagasy diaspora’s high purchasing power compared with most of the other Sub-Saharan African diasporas should have been a powerful factor in making it a major player on the Red Island. Yet this is not the case at all. The diaspora may be small in number, but most importantly seems to be less organised and less home country oriented. Further studies are needed to support and hone this diagnosis, as the information on this point is hazy. However, it can be said from the current information available that members of the Malagasy diaspora take a more individual view of assimilation into their host society. This can be gauged, among others, from the fact that diaspora members are much more frequently naturalised than other diasporas. They are also predominantly female, with marriage to host country nationals being an important motive for migration. The diaspora has a definite associative fabric, but it is less dense and relatively more engaged in ex-pat community activities (especially religious and ... sporting events) than driven by a purpose to invest in the country and/or prepare for return migration. A certain number of Malagasy societal characteristics described in this book are found to a degree transplanted (uprooted) abroad, which on balance is not surprising. This also means that the diaspora has great mobilisation potential and initiatives have started to emerge (Collectif Tany, Zama, etc.¹⁴), but here again this is pure “potential” and comes in addition to the other abovementioned assets that the Red Island fails to harness (once again, a Malagasy characteristic).

Table 187 Weight of the Malagasy diaspora compared with some other African countries

	Stock of migrants and destination zones (2015)			Sum of international remittances received (2014)	
	Worldwide (thousands)	In France (thousands)	Percentage in developed countries	Remittances per capita (in current US\$)	Remittances/GDP (%)
Côte d’Ivoire	850	90	21	17.1	1.1
Cameroon	329	81	63	11.0	0.8
Mali	1,006	76	10	54.0	6.6
Senegal	587	118	54	112.0	10.8
Madagascar	170	143	92	18.3	4.0

Source: For the migration data: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015); for the personal remittances: World Development Indicators (2016); authors’ calculations.

¹⁴ Tany is a French non-profit association set up to combat Malagasy citizens and farmers’ dispossession of their lands. Zama (*Zanak’i Madagasikara Ampielezana*) is a French association that organises diaspora actions in support of Madagascar’s development.

IIIC. - Social stability or improvement to living conditions: what are the priorities?

How can the recurring crises be explained when such importance is placed on social peace in Madagascar? Is controlling violence the priority and/or should this take priority over improving living conditions and/or democracy? The same question was put to elites and to the rest of the population to find out their priority aspirations: more traditional ambitions for stability and improving material well-being or democratic aspirations in the form of giving people more say in government decisions and protecting freedom of speech.¹⁵

Of the four options proposed, the elites ranked respectively in first and second place “maintaining order” in the country (37%) and “improving living conditions for the poor” (28%). Only a small minority considered the other two options to be priorities: 12% of the elites opted for “giving people more say in government decisions” while 16% selected “protecting freedom of speech”. Although all the elite spheres share the same priorities as a whole, certain significant differences can be observed. The political sphere and senior management in public institutions pay the least attention to poverty reduction. However, senior administration is the most sensitive to maintaining order. Political and economic spheres are fairly similar at the end of the day, even though business leaders prove more focused on material values and, of these values, on improving the standard of living. All things considered, the most atypical profile is the “civil society and others” category. These individuals are both the most sensitive to improving the population’s living conditions and the most attached to the people’s rights, political voice and also freedom of speech. Yet above and beyond these relative differences, the vast majority of elites are more focused on materialist values than on “postmodern” values, which brings them more in line with their fellow citizens than the populations of developed countries to whom they are much closer in terms of living conditions.

In effect, “improving living conditions for the poor” is unsurprisingly by far the top priority for the public at large at 52%, while “maintaining order” comes in second at 28%, leaving little room for the other options proposed (Table 18). Yet aside from the predominance of these two categories as a whole, the two groups’ respective positions are at odds with one another. Not only do the elites rank “maintaining order” above all else, but they also appear to see no particular pressing need to place poverty reduction at the top of the country’s political agenda. The proportion of those in favour of doing so is nearly half that of the general public (28% vs. 52%).

¹⁵ This question on the main development priorities is borrowed from a standardised version used by modernisation and cultural change theory experts in the World Values Surveys (see Inglehart, 1997). Four categories of response are possible. Two of them – “maintaining order” and “fighting rising prices” are designed to represent the materialist values found in modernising, industrialising societies, while the other two – “giving people more say in government decisions” and “protecting freedom of speech” – stand for the post-materialist values found to be on the rise for decades in most developed countries, which these authors then call “postmodern” societies.

Table 198 Main priority for Madagascar as seen by elites and the rest of the population

%	Political sphere	Economic sphere	Public institution	Civil society and others	Total Elites	Rest of the population
Maintaining order	37.7	38.9	43.9	25.6	37.3	27.9
Improving conditions for the poor	25.7	32.6	23.6	33.5	28.4	51.9
Protecting rights and freedom of speech	18.1	15.5	11.8	19.2	15.9	10.0
Giving people more say in decisions	13.4	7.5	13.2	15.8	12.4	7.4
Civil society and others	5.1	5.4	8.1	5.9	6.0	3.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: ELIMAD 2012-2014 & CITMAD 2013 surveys, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL; authors' calculations.

IIID. - Assessment of the different periods of Madagascar's history

Among the points of view expressed by the elites, their perceptions and judgement of the different periods of history shed light on the systems of governance and episodes that have marked them the most negatively or positively. In a previous work we identified ten historical periods (Razafindrakoto *et al.*, 2017). This breakdown does not include the new term of office (starting in 2014) since the survey was conducted before the elections in late 2013. What is striking from this sweep of history is the absence of any golden age whatsoever in either the elites' collective consciousness (for the earliest periods) or the contemporary elites' experience (for the most recent periods) wherein Madagascar is seen as having clearly chosen a harmonious development path. No matter which period is considered, never more than one-quarter of the elites view it in a very positive light (Table 19). This relative disenchantment merely reflects the previously mentioned poor structural legitimacy of the rulers, irrespective of the regime considered.

Nevertheless, there are huge differences in how each separate period is rated. In order of preference, P. Tsiranana's First Republic is the clear leader (87% of the elites feel it had a positive effect on Madagascar's development). This period is followed by M. Ravalomanana's first presidency (70%) and the precolonial kingdoms (70%). These are seen as the three brightest periods for Madagascar. Yet opinions of M. Ravalomanana's rule plummet between the first term of office (2002-2006) and the second term of office (2006-2009), which receives a mere 41% of satisfactory ratings. This period ranks on the same level as D. Rastiraka's presidency in the late 1990s, with similar levels of discontent leading in both cases to the ousting of the presidents by force. The only periods that fare worse are D. Ratsiraka's long first rule (1975-1990), A. Zafy's presidency and especially what is known as the transitional period (2009-2013). This latter period is perceived as the worst the country has seen in nearly three centuries: just 22% of the elites feel it had a positive effect on the country's development. The fact that even the political elites, some of whom were members of the successive governments following A. Rajoelina's coming to power, take almost as critical a view of the situation clearly spotlights the disastrous nature of this transitional period.

In addition to the general finding, a certain number of significant traits are found when the data is broken down by the different elite spheres. The political elites are virtually systematically at one or the other extreme of the scale of opinions. They (relatively) overrate the Tsiranana, Ratsiraka (socialist and liberal), Zafy and Rajoelina periods and are more deprecating of the kingdoms and the

Ramanantsoa and Ravalomanana periods. This picture reflects the political sphere's greater regional diversity and especially the (relative) overrepresentation of *côtier* elites in the field. These averages are therefore in part an optical illusion as this sphere is the most polarised of all, especially from an ethnic point of view.

Table 19 Elite judgements of the different periods of Madagascar's history

<i>Very positive or positive judgement (%)</i>	Political sphere	Economic sphere	Public institution	Others	Total	Rest of the population
Kingdoms (before colonisation) <i>very positive</i>	60.4 11.7	75.8 9.7	70.9 10.3	77.0 16.3	70.4 11.8	30.59 11.0
Colonisation period <i>very positive</i>	46.2 6.4	52.1 2.1	48.2 5.4	41.8 4.1	47.3 4.6	30.3 8.4
Period under Tsiranana <i>very positive</i>	90.0 30.6	85.8 18.5	88.4 25.4	82.1 21.0	87.0 24.3	55.6 18.2
Period under Ramanantsoa <i>very positive</i>	46.6 4.9	45.3 3.6	51.9 4.9	52.7 6.4	49.0 4.9	35.5 6.4
Period 1 under Ratsiraka <i>very positive</i>	45.0 6.7	27.2 3.0	35.5 4.0	24.8 2.5	33.9 4.2	62.1 16.7
Period under Albert Zafy <i>very positive</i>	35.5 3.4	21.0 1.7	28.9 0.4	25.9 1.0	28.2 1.7	28.2 5.2
Period 2 under Ratsiraka <i>very positive</i>	45.7 7.8	41.1 2.1	41.5 3.3	37.2 2.0	41.7 4.0	48.8 7.4
Period 1 under Ravalomanana <i>very positive</i>	70.3 15.2	83.8 20.4	79.4 20.7	84.4 25.6	79.0 20.1	79.4 30.9
Period 2 under Ravalomanana <i>very positive</i>	32.1 5.6	43.2 3.9	46.9 8.9	43.5 9.4	41.3 6.9	57.7 20.9
Period under Andry Rajoelina <i>very positive</i>	30.0 2.3	16.5 0.4	24.0 1.5	14.0 0.0	21.8 1.1	40.3 7.6

Source: ELIMAD 2012-2014 & CITMAD 2013 Surveys, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL; authors' calculations.

Note: The wording of the question is: *How do you judge the following periods for Madagascar's development, broadly speaking?*

The business sphere's judgements do not appear to be guided so much by ethnic or political considerations, but are rather firmly based on economic performance criteria. This sphere is more critical than the other spheres of the Rajoelina, Zafy and Ratsiraka I (1975-1990) periods, which were the most disastrous for growth. This interpretation is borne out by the majority positive judgement of the colonial period (the business sphere is alone in this), despite the fact that business elites are generally more often *Merina* and of *Andriana* origin. It is also supported by the economic elites' about-face in judgement between the first and second term of M. Ravalomanana's presidency, in a swing that plunges over 40 percentage points. Although the businessman-president's profile may have been good news for the business world during his first term of office, the about-turn in this sphere's opinion marks their deep disappointment and their vilification of the presidential family's

stranglehold on all the markets to expand its empire. The “economic operators” were probably the hardest hit by this unfair practice.

The senior public administration profile looks the most like the political sphere, marking the porosity between the two spheres’ borders. Last but not least, the “civil society and others” sphere is found at the end of spectrum of opinions for most of the periods, reflecting a form of contention already raised between civil society and the political class. This face-off reaches its height over the assessment of the recent transitional period. Just 14% of the elites who belong to neither the political nor the economic sphere and have no responsibilities in public institutions consider this period to be positive (and not one judges it very positively). This proportion is over twice as high (30%) among the political elites. The fact that some of them have held positions in government probably makes them more indulgent.

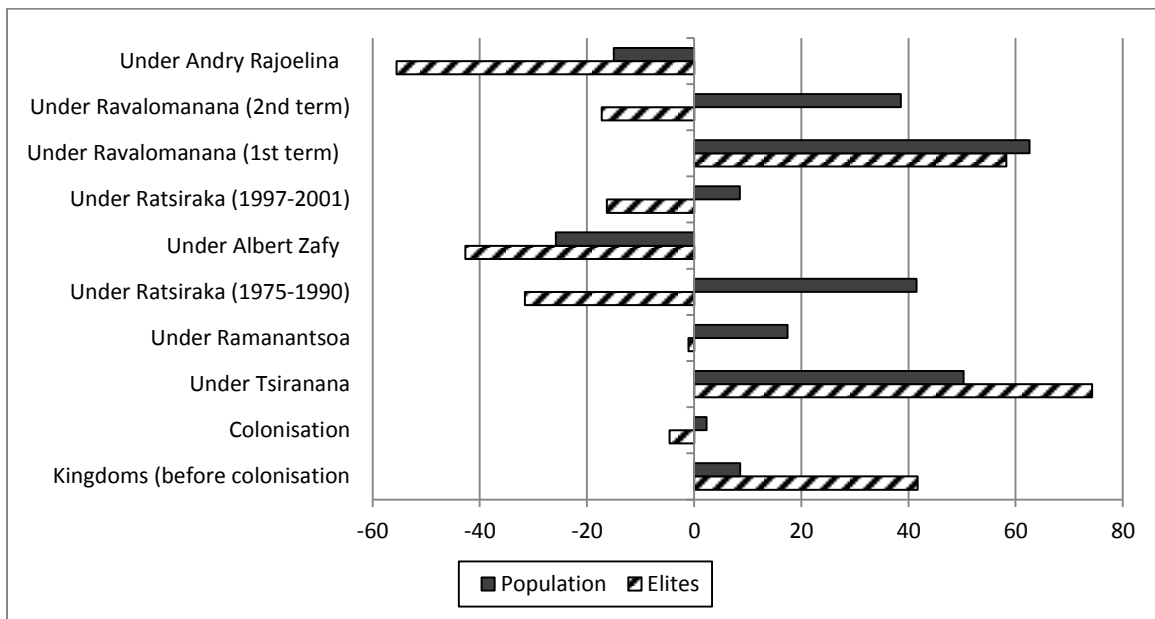
To conclude, there are striking differences between the elite’s judgements and the general public’s opinion, as outlined by the balance of opinion chart.¹⁶

M. Ravalomanana’s first term of office meets with unanimous approval, with a positive balance of nearly 60 percentage points (Figure 2). The First Republic is also viewed largely in a positive light, albeit more by the elites than by the rest of the population (the balances of opinion are respectively +74 and +50 points). However, there is much less agreement over the royal period: 70% of the elites believe it played a positive role as opposed to just 31% of the general public. The positive balance of opinion (9 points) that appears on the chart is due essentially to the fact that four in ten members of the general public did not answer this question. From this point of view, the principle of respect for political leaders and the relative esteem for a “*raiamandreny* state” (Razafindrakoto et al., 2017) are no sign of the population’s wistfulness for the precolonial system of political organisation.

Conversely, two periods are unanimously seen as dark chapters: the Zafy period, disparaged by 70% of the elites and 54% of the population, and the transitional period, rebuffed by 77% of the elites and 55% of the population. There are also periods over which opinion is divided, such as M. Ravalomanana’s second term of office. Whereas the elites are averse, as mentioned above, the population continues to give it some credit albeit with a massive backslide (624 points). Yet the most divergent judgement probably concerns D. Ratsiraka. Irrespective of the periods and their economic and political turnarounds, the balance of opinion is positive for the population and negative for the elites. This divide, particularly diametrical for the first period (1975-1990), underpins the ex-president’s oft-heard grievance of being the man the country’s elites love to hate (Lavrard-Meyer, 2015). Lastly, the colonial period is for the elites and the population a point of both convergence (with a balance close to zero) and divergence (slightly negative for the elites and positive for the population). From this point of view, the balance of opinion is resonant with the “ambiguous colonisation” idea put forward by historians P. Brocheux and D. Hémery (2011) in their book on French Indochina.

¹⁶ The balance of opinion is the difference between the percentage of positive opinions and the percentage of negative opinions. It is therefore expressed in percentage points with either a positive or negative value.

Figure 20 Comparative judgements of the different periods by elites and the rest of the population (balance of opinion)



Source: *ELIMAD* 2012-2014 & *CITMAD* 2013 surveys, COEF Ressources & IRD-DIAL; authors' calculations.

Conclusion

The role of the elites in Madagascar's trajectory, especially in the formation and widening of inequalities as a known source of chronic socio-political instability, calls for closer study of the elite group. This article establishes a sociography of the elites based on statistical surveys, including a new survey focusing on the Red Island's elites. It provides insights into their strategies to attain and remain in power, but also their opinions on the running of society and especially their views of the obstacles to and drivers of the country's long-term development.

A certain number of key findings are of note. Firstly, the majority of elites are from the old aristocracy. Alongside this poor social fluidity is the elites' straddling of the different spheres of power. For example, the vast majority simultaneously hold positions in different spheres of influence such as government, the National Assembly and the Senate, the army, business, public institutions and civil society. Social capital made up of a rich network in terms of its size, diversity and the intensity of the connections established within the elite circle is used as a strategy to access the highest hierarchical positions.

So without necessarily forming a truly united group, the elites have made use of networks and a specific process of reproduction to more or less directly control and keep control of power over the years. The review of the country's long history we made in a previous work (Razafindrakoto *et al.*, 2017) moreover shows that the power the Malagasy elites inherited from the past (before, during and in the wake of colonisation) and that they managed to use to secure their hold in different spheres (political, economic and bureaucratic) has given them the status of key players in public life and, in a way, has enabled them to claim a certain legitimacy to influence decisions.

Last but not least, this dominant class displays rather mixed attitudes to democratic principles. Although they join the population in criticising the poor successive leaderships, they look as if they are trying to extricate themselves somewhat from their share of responsibility, generally claiming other underlying reasons for Malagasy society's maldevelopment and deadlock: exogenous factors – colonial heritage and donor diktats – and the population's culture and reactionary mentality. Yet the main point of disagreement between elites and the rest of the population concerns the order of priorities on the political agenda. Although maintaining order counts most for the elites, the rest of the population prioritises improved living conditions for the poor. This discrepancy between the elite class's position and the wishes of the vast majority of the people is indicative of the divisions between these two groups. The situation is to the people's disadvantage in that the elites have the privilege of power and more easily influence which political options are taken up. So by maintaining the social order's status quo, the elites have basically protected their status since the colonial period, if not the kingdoms, irrespective of the interests of the vast majority of the population.

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