

**UCLA**

**UCLA Historical Journal**

**Title**

British Colonial Policy and the Decision to Abandon Madagascar to the French, 1882-1883

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4vh8w4q9>

**Journal**

UCLA Historical Journal, 2(0)

**Author**

Sethia, Tara

**Publication Date**

1981

**Copyright Information**

Copyright 1981 by the author(s). All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author(s) for any necessary permissions. Learn more at <https://escholarship.org/terms>

Peer reviewed

## **British Colonial Policy and the Decision to Abandon Madagascar to the French, 1882-1883**

Tara Sethia

The French takeover of Madagascar in the late nineteenth century often has been viewed as the British abandonment of that island. There is a general consensus among historians that the British bartered away Madagascar at the Anglo-French convention in August 1890.<sup>1</sup> The convention was the logical outcome of a treaty between Germany and England signed in July 1890, whereby Germany was given Heligoland in the North Sea for recognition of an undisputed British protectorate over Zanzibar. The subsequent Anglo-French convention was an extension of this treaty. At this meeting, Lord Salisbury, the British Prime Minister, solidified the British claim to Zanzibar by recognizing the French protectorate over Madagascar in exchange for similar French recognition of Britain's claims to Zanzibar.

*Tara Sethia received her B.A. and M.A. in History from the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, India. She also received an M.A. in History from the University of California, Los Angeles. She is currently working on a Ph.D. at the University of California, Los Angeles, concentrating on Nineteenth Century British Imperialism.*

The British abandonment of Madagascar has been interpreted in many ways. It has been seen by some, particularly by the members of the London Missionary Society, as a "premature" move on the part of the British. The basis of this interpretation is that the British gave up Madagascar at the Anglo-French convention which took place five years before the actual French conquest of the island in 1895. William Edward Cousins--a British missionary who served in Madagascar in the late nineteenth century--typifies this point of view. Showing his dismay over British recognition of the French protectorate over Madagascar, he explained that "[t]he English have taken but a languid interest in Madagascar affairs, or such a cool giving away of people who had always regarded us their friends would have been impossible."<sup>2</sup>

Subsequently, Sonia E. Howe, in *The Drama of Madagascar* (1938), suggested that when British and French interests collided over Madagascar in 1882, Britain was too preoccupied in Egypt to give serious attention to Madagascar affairs. In short, Howe believes the problem confronting the British was "one of Madagascar versus Egypt--there could be no doubt where the emphasis lay."<sup>3</sup> Hence, when the Malagasy ambassadors arrived in London to seek support from Her Majesty's Government against French aggression, they received a cold response. Nonetheless, according to Howe, things remained unsettled until 1890 when Britain and France "fixed the price to their mutual satisfaction" and recognized each other's respective claims to Madagascar and Zanzibar.<sup>4</sup>

A more recent and better-documented work by Phares M. Mutibwa presents an interpretation which differs only slightly from that of Howe. This "representative of the Malagasy viewpoint" interprets the fate of Madagascar as a part of the phenomenon of the "scramble for Africa." According to Mutibwa, the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 had left the French frustrated and angry. This state of affairs tied the hands of the British who could not alienate France "on such secondary issue as Madagascar," and thus they could not aid the Malagasy ambassadors. Yet no specific commitments were made by Britain until the 1890 Anglo-French convention when Britain ended this thorny problem by giving up all claims to Madagascar in exchange for French recognition of British claims to Zanzibar. Mutibwa concludes, "there was no doubt that it was Zanzibar in particular and Britain's overall interests in the Far East in general, which forced Salisbury's hand in acquiescing to French ambitions in Madagascar." The British desertion of Madagascar, to Mutibwa, was all the more striking in that Britain previously had been Madagascar's best friend and ally in Europe.<sup>5</sup> Similar views are presented in works by Richard Lovett, Jean Valette, Norman Goodall, and Mervyn Brown.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the persuasive cases presented by some of the

above authors, for all practical purposes British abandonment of Madagascar took place by 1883--well before the Anglo-French formalities of 1890. This *de facto* British repudiation of its interests in Madagascar, which facilitated the eventual establishment of the French protectorate, was as much a result of the policies pursued by the Liberal government in England from 1880 to 1885, as of the French Republic's feverish craving for colonies. This study, however, will focus on the British role because it was Britain's action (or inaction), more than the French designs on Madagascar, which proved decisive in the eventual establishment of the French protectorate over Madagascar. These actions bore, to a large extent, an imprint of the personality of Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary, but they were also guided by Britain's overall international policy considerations. The most important shifts in British attitude toward Madagascar occurred between October 1882 and February 1883. It was during this period that the British attitude became increasingly ambivalent toward both France and Madagascar. And while the French were in a position to take advantage of this by establishing their control over Madagascar, the Malagasy people had no choice but to become victims of it.

Belying the ease with which the British yielded to the French in the early 1880s were long-standing British interests to promote British trade and extend the "civilizing influence" in Madagascar. Madagascar was a market for Manchester cotton goods. Even after the French conquest of the island, British cotton imports in Madagascar totaled more than that from all other countries combined. There were also vast sugar plantations owned by British subjects in Madagascar.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the London Missionary Society had a very strong hold over the Hova people, who constituted about fifty percent of the total population of Madagascar. The missionaries introduced compulsory education in most of the Malagasy towns and villages by 1880, and they built a great number of churches and educational institutions.<sup>8</sup>

The French, on the other hand, also had long-term, if imprecise, claims to Madagascar. Occasionally the French claimed sovereignty over parts of the island, and they did secure acceptance of their sovereignty over the neighboring islands of Sainte Marie and Nossie Bé. Strengthening French claims, the Réunionese colonists regarded Madagascar as an El Dorado, a promised land. Nonetheless, under British pressure, in 1843 France renounced colonial ambitions in Madagascar "publicly and by name."<sup>9</sup> The French subsequently accepted the British proposal that "one government should do nothing in Madagascar without consulting the other." This understanding was reaffirmed several times prior to 1882.<sup>10</sup>

This policy of balance was most effective as long as the trade route to India passed by Madagascar. But with

the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Madagascar lost much of its earlier importance. Though this change was not perceived for some time, the opening of the canal, in effect, "sounded the death knell of Madagascar's independence" because a strategic balance of power in that area was no longer necessary.<sup>11</sup> Madagascar became one more minor pawn to be used in world-wide colonial struggles.

The opening of the Suez Canal, however, was not the only factor which disturbed the status quo of the island. The French deeply regretted losing the Indies, Canada, and Louisiana to the British, and for over a hundred years this had been a festering wound in French pride. To salve the wound, French colonial policy in the 1880s was characterized by an aggressive pursuit of influence, power, prestige, and glory.<sup>12</sup> As a result, it was not difficult for the French to find grounds to press for political as well as territorial gains in Madagascar. One such ground was the Malagasy preference for the British Protestant missionaries over the French Catholic missionaries--a preference viewed by the French as a political move engineered by the Malagasy government in league with the British "to elbow them [the French] out of the country altogether."<sup>13</sup> The French bore various such grudges, both real and imagined, and they were looking for opportunities to avenge their humiliation. The early 1880s provided France with such an opportunity in Madagascar. Aiding these desires was the nature of the British government during the 1880s.

The Liberal government of 1880-1885 in Britain was ineffective as a governing body, especially in matters concerning foreign and colonial relations.<sup>14</sup> Prime Minister Gladstone was a follower of Lord Aberdeen, who rejected an aggressive foreign policy and strove to acquire French friendship. Compounding Aberdeen's meek foreign policy was Gladstone's poor health and his lack of mastery of foreign affairs. Attacks of influenza left him low and weak, and internal cabinet factions became more assertive when Gladstone admitted his limited knowledge of foreign matters.<sup>15</sup> If anything really engrossed him, it was Ireland. In affairs such as Madagascar, his knowledge was so shallow that he was often accused of giving wrong information and making contradictory statements in the House of Commons.<sup>16</sup>

The Foreign Office was headed by Lord Granville, who occupied the post of Foreign Secretary with consummate uninterestedness. His diplomatic abilities were limited. His nickname was "Puss."<sup>17</sup> The radical Cabinet members, Sir William Harcourt and Joseph Chamberlain, had little interest in Madagascar. Lord Derby's paralyzing influence merely added to the tendency of Cabinet meetings to be typified by prolonged discussions without any decisions.<sup>18</sup>

The Liberal government of 1880-1885 was a match nei-

ther to the ambitious French Republic, nor to the diplomacy of Germany's Bismarck. Even though the British annexation of Egypt in 1882 had indicated that the Liberal government could be as aggressive as its Conservative counterpart, the Gladstonian government's aversion to territorial acquisitions was genuine and guided by the principle of economy in its colonial policy. In foreign policy, however, the Liberal government sought a "steady concert with France" to maintain stability on a continent faced with the increasing power of Germany under the ascending star of Bismarck.<sup>19</sup> This was particularly true because the British Navy was no longer invincible, and the Liberal government was well aware of this fact. Although the French smarted from earlier British colonial gains, England still looked at France as a continental friend. Furthermore, at this time a British friendship with Germany would have been almost impossible. Free trade, the English parliamentary system, and the ideas of English Liberals in general were anathemas to Bismarck.<sup>20</sup> Hence the Anglo-French tête-à-tête became the predominant concern of the British foreign policy. The Dual Control by Britain and France of Egypt was formed to this effect, but when the British occupied Egypt the Dual Control came to a bitter end, and a shift in the British attitude toward France took place. The British annexation of Egypt created difficulties in maintaining French friendship. Yet since close cooperation with Germany was not possible, Britain still pursued a policy of appeasement toward the French, basically to prevent formation of a Franco-German entente. It was this concern which kept the Liberal government from taking a strong stand on the Madagascar question when France pressed for greater control of the island.

In this context the Liberal government's interests in Madagascar became subordinate to its larger interest of retaining a balance of power on the Continent. The Egyptian affair was a cause of concern not because Britain had greater interests involved there than in Madagascar, but because British control in Egypt had already become a source of irritation to France. Thus, active British intervention in the affairs of Madagascar could have added fuel to the fire. This fear haunted the Liberal ministry of 1880-1885.

The British may not have desired the total alienation of France; nevertheless, the Liberal government was actively interested in maintaining Malagasy independence. This British attitude was obvious until early 1882 when the French, who were dismayed by British activities in Egypt, began to pressure the Liberal government. Indicative of French sentiments, the *Odre* charged England with the intention of acquiring a protectorate over the port of Majunga on the French-dominated northwest coast of Madagascar as a station for ships engaged in repression of the slave trade.<sup>21</sup> Other papers in both England and France

carried similar reports. Eventually, the uproar led to a debate in the House of Commons where Sir Charles Dilke, the Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, denied the validity of such statements and reaffirmed the friendly understanding between France and England regarding Madagascar.<sup>22</sup>

Such reports as those that brought the issue to the House of Commons contained implicit elements of a different kind of truth. This truth lay in the French thirst to recoup international prestige lost in the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and in the earlier French cessions of colonial territories to England.<sup>23</sup> It is in this light that the French interpretation of the visit of Rear Admiral Gore Jones, the British Commander-in-Chief of the East India Station, to Madagascar should be understood. Although this event took place in July 1881, it had lasting repercussions.

The naval visit of Rear Admiral Jones was meant to encourage the dominant Malagasy Hova dynasty to extend its rule throughout the island and thus to strengthen Madagascar's independence. Jones was not only accompanied by his staff but also by Her Britannic Majesty's consul. As no British ambassador had visited Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar, since the coronation of Radama II in 1862, the visit of the Admiral was viewed with unusual interest and curiosity.<sup>24</sup> At their meeting, the admiral not only suggested that the Hova Queen establish her sovereignty over the northwest coast of Madagascar, which was ruled by the Sakalava tribe, but he also promised to help her in the endeavor.<sup>25</sup> The British government was eager to downplay this event so as not to alarm the French and described Jones's trip as an "official visit in response to the wish expressed by the Hova Queen" to discuss the question of establishing her authority over the Sakalava territory.<sup>26</sup> From Jones's advice to the Home Government, however, it became clear that this mission was to neutralize the French influence which was dominant in northwestern Madagascar. "Our placing the Hovas in force on the West coast would be an act of great political importance," Jones stated bluntly. "[I]t would at once shut up the French claims of sovereignty to any part of this island, and it should have an amazing effect in developing legitimate commerce and stopping the slave trade."<sup>27</sup> The British government concurred, and the Hova Queen's authority was established over the northwest coast of Madagascar.

This action was resented by French authorities for several reasons. First, the French colony of Nossie Bé lay exactly opposite the Sakalava territory. Second, the northwest coast was regarded as the "nursing mother" of Réunion.<sup>28</sup> The French Foreign Minister Duclerc, aware of the English role in the affair, quickly sent a dispatch to London through the British embassy to Paris stating that the area was "subject to the protectorate of France in

virtue of existing treaties."<sup>29</sup> The legal bases of the French "protectorate" were questionable, but the French government was determined to resist encroachments on French "rights" and to make the most of its agreements of the 1840s with the Sakalava chieftains.<sup>30</sup> When the British embassy in Paris, upon receiving Lord Granville's reply to the French dispatch, inquired about the nature of these treaties, the French authorities did not deign to respond.<sup>31</sup>

In the meantime, public opinion among the British in Madagascar became quite tense. Apprehensive of the French plans and their consequences to commerce, trade, and general safety, British subjects were alarmed. One report from Antananarivo alleged that the French were attempting to coerce the Malagasy government to accept French claims. Such coercion was seen by the British as damaging to trade and commerce, and, in turn, endangering British interests in Mauritius.<sup>32</sup> Eventually the Foreign Office in London established from an official source (the British consul in Madagascar) that the French designs on the island of Madagascar could no longer be taken as a "surmise of conjecture," but had to be accepted as "a matter of fact."<sup>33</sup>

In view of these reports and the concern of the British interests in Madagascar, Granville sent another dispatch to Paris recognizing the Queen of Madagascar as an "absolute Monarch" of the whole island except for Mayotta and NossieBé on the West Coast--the French territories. Granville hoped this would secure a similar recognition from the French in accordance with the mutual understanding that the two countries maintain identical attitudes toward Madagascar. The French statement accepting the British recognition of the Queen as absolute monarch of all except the French territories would reinforce Malagasy independence as well as the French and British status quo on the island. Granville further added that any advancement of territorial claims by France in Madagascar "might be calculated to disturb the understanding between the two countries."<sup>34</sup>

While this move by the British government was clearly directed toward perpetuating the existing understanding in Madagascar, shortly thereafter, the British suddenly shifted their stance on the matter. Within two weeks of Granville's dispatch to Paris, the British adopted a strikingly weaker policy on the issue. They did not insist on pursuing the "mutual understanding," and, remarkably, even appeared to have yielded totally to the French point of view. What *The Spectator* reported on October 21, 1882, is illustrative of the changed attitude:

Of British interests in the matter, it would be nonsense to urge Britain to defend Madagascar; if the French got entangled in Madagascar, they would not profit from it. . . . Our interest is



not to give France a sense of being throttled by Great Britain in all directions. The English people are not going to annex Madagascar; and it is not their business to protect the Malagasy against an invasion which will probably fail, and which if it succeeds, is certainly no worse than the French conquest of Cambodia. . . . As to the cry that the French in Madagascar will endanger our alternate route in India, we are sick of the argument. England could not clash with France for the sake of Madagascar. England cannot forfeit an alliance essential to the good order of the world. . . .<sup>35</sup>

As time went on, this new attitude became a part of the policies pursued from Whitehall and clearly emerged in the speeches, dispatches, and private correspondence of the British Cabinet. For example, on October 27, 1882, important members of the Cabinet representing military and foreign services met with Lord Granville. The Madagascar question was one of the purposes of the meeting. Against the strong protest of Sir Charles Dilke, now the former Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Granville, Hartington, Kimberley, and Northbrook decided "to put no difficulty in the way of the French."<sup>36</sup> Subsequently, the new policy became public in the government's response to the requests of a committee representing British interests in the area, the Madagascar Committee, and in response to the pleas of the Malagasy embassy--which was on visit to London to seek the friendly intervention of Britain in the Franco-Malagasy dispute.<sup>37</sup>

Approximately one month after Granville's Cabinet meeting, the Madagascar Committee visited Granville and Dilke at the Foreign Office. The Committee represented nearly all the interests likely to be affected by a French protectorate over Madagascar, and it included a large number of the members of the Parliament; members of the Society for the Suppression of the Slave Trade; the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel; the British and Foreign Bible Society; and the London Missionary Society. These groups pleaded that Her Majesty's Government should act against the French claims in Madagascar. The Committee pointed out that British subjects outnumbered the French by five to one in Madagascar, and that English trade with the island was four times that of the French. Moreover, British Mauritius received a large proportion of its food from Madagascar, and British religious and educational agencies were very active on the island.<sup>38</sup>

Granville's reply to the deputation clearly marked the changing British attitude toward France and Madagascar. Having sympathized with the concerns of the Madagascar Committee, he explained governmental policy in a way which amounted to a virtual British acquiescence to French domination in Madagascar:

I may adopt as a principle generally received here, that it is not the business of this country to intervene in the affairs of other nations unless our honour and our interests are seriously concerned. It is not our business to act as police over the whole world, and what has been especially marked by those who have spoken is the desire that this country should maintain the most cordial feeling of friendship with regard to the great and near neighbour on the other side of the channel.<sup>39</sup>

This statement was apparently in accord with the concerns expressed at a Cabinet meeting the previous day. Regarding that meeting, Dilke had noted in his diary that "the Cabinet of Nov. 28th, 1882 had been much frightened at the prospect of trouble with France."<sup>40</sup> Granville's statement to the Madagascar Committee, then, was aimed at easing that fright.

Thus the Liberal government, which never had any inclination to formally annex Madagascar but had supported its independence for a long time, was now unwilling to accept any responsibility for the fate of the island. But even beyond this, in a dramatic switch, rather than being a mildly disinterested party, the Liberal government appeared eager not to alienate the French even at the expense of Malagasy independence.

Granville anticipated being faced by pressures similar to those caused by the Madagascar Committee in the forthcoming encounter with the Malagasy ambassadors who were seeking English support against the French. Again with the intent of avoiding French misunderstanding, Granville sent a dispatch to Paris anxiously asking the current French attitude toward Madagascar "as some guide to the language I should hold to the [Malagasy] . . . ambassadors."<sup>41</sup>

Newspaper reports point to the extreme delicacy of the British situation.<sup>42</sup> With the end of the Dual Control of Egypt by unilateral British action and the subsequent British bombardment of Alexandria in September 1882, French colonial policy was in a feverish condition. The difficulties springing out of the Egyptian-British problems compelled the British government "to steer as clearly as they can of Malagasy entanglements."<sup>43</sup>

By the time the Malagasy ambassadors called upon Lord Granville, British policy toward Madagascar had hardened. It was, to a large extent, based on the directives received from the French Foreign Minister, who desired that the language used by Her Majesty's Government be of "a nature to prevent the Malagasy embassy to entertain any false ideas as to the observance and proper interpretation of the [French] treaty engagements of the Hova

government."<sup>44</sup> Consequently, although the Malagasy embassy had received a warm welcome from Queen Victoria, the Madagascar Committee, and the London public at large, its request that Her Britannic Majesty use her "friendly offices" to insure for the Queen of Madagascar sovereign rights against French encroachments received a very cold response.<sup>45</sup>

During the discussions, Lord Granville, who remained in constant touch with the British ambassador in Paris, compared the views of the French government with those of the Malagasy ambassadors. Not surprisingly, Granville arrived at the conclusion that the differences between France and Madagascar were not of an unbridgeable nature and could be settled "with a little good will and moderation" on the part of France. Granville sent these recommendations on behalf of the Malagasy embassy for the consideration of the French government while at the same time he sought French directives for the British attitude toward the Malagasy embassy.<sup>46</sup> Britain, then, no longer had a clear policy concerning Madagascar except to know the trend of French opinion and act in accordance with that. Obviously, for Granville the concern to avoid the hostility of the French carried greater weight than the British interests involved in Madagascar.

Despite such setbacks, the Malagasy envoys remained in London, seeking public support against the French encroachments. The envoys met Lord Granville again on December 9, 1882, and submitted a written outline of their difficulties with the French.<sup>47</sup> This time they hoped for a more favorable response from the British government due to support from the Madagascar Committee and the backing of Sir Charles Dilke.

Regardless of its powerful composition, the Madagascar Committee proved as unsuccessful in pleading the Malagasy case as they had been in promoting their own objectives with Lord Granville. Dilke, on the other hand, who had accused the French of wantonly interfering with Madagascar--with which they had no significant trade--, claimed to have been constantly "fighting for my Malagasy friends" with Lord Granville. Granville, according to Dilke, was "frightened of the French." Nonetheless, for his stubborn insistence on British intervention in Madagascar against the French, Dilke was, as he complained, snubbed by Lord Granville and other officials, such as Undersecretary for the Colonies Leonard Henry Courtney. Courtney advised Dilke to get rid of the Malagasy envoys as soon as possible.<sup>48</sup>

Other British government representatives shared the desire not to create further problems with the French, especially over Madagascar. In a long address on December 14, 1882, to the Manchester Reform Club, Lord Derby, who had just joined the Cabinet as the Colonial Secretary,

spoke of the French policy in Madagascar. Derby even went so far as to virtually offer Madagascar to the French on a platter:

Now it is always unpleasant to look on and see things done which seem to us unjust, and if friendly mediation can prevent an invasion of Madagascar we shall be quite right to try it. But it is not a question which would justify anything beyond friendly mediation; and if, as seems likely, the matters in dispute between France and Madagascar are a mere pretext and the seizure of a part of that territory is a foregone conclusion, there is nothing for us to do. So far as the English interests are concerned, it would be a great mistake for us to object to French creating for themselves a colonial empire. Even if we regard them in the right of the rivals--which I do not for I conceive no possible reason why they and we should quarrel. . . .<sup>49</sup>

Lord Derby's speech, which amounted to governmental policy, caused a stir among the members of the government. Lord Granville, who had held Derby in high regard,<sup>50</sup> objected to Derby's "giving away Madagascar."<sup>51</sup> Although Lord Granville did not actively support Madagascar, Derby's speech, as his colleagues put it, "spoiled his [Granville's] play by allowing his French adversary to look over his hand and see how bad the cards were."<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Prime Minister Gladstone, who shared Derby's views, nonetheless regretted the speech. Gladstone wrote to Granville, "I do not disapprove of the opinion and an independent Peer could be open to no objection in stating it; but if it were viewed from one virtually in office, the renunciation beforehand of title or intention was a matter of regret."<sup>53</sup> The Queen also resented Derby's position, which favored a "free hand for France in Madagascar."<sup>54</sup>

This attitude coincided with the French determination to have their own way in Madagascar. Replying to the British offer of "friendly mediation" in the Franco-Malagasy dispute, French Foreign Minister Duclerc suggested "a settlement could be effected if the Malagasy embassy came back from London with the conviction that they would not be supported by Great Britain in putting forward unreasonable pretensions."<sup>55</sup> This amounted to French desire for total non-interference by the British in the Franco-Malagasy dispute.

Lord Granville was neither in favor of active British intervention in Madagascar, nor of French control of the island. Yet he was unsure of what to do. Confiding in his friend the American Ambassador to England, James R. Lowell, Granville expressed his frustration and laid out

the reasons for not interfering in the Franco-Malagasy dispute. The British government, Granville explained, wanted to "avoid even the appearance of any hostile combination against France," and he suggested that while England could do little to stop French designs on Madagascar, the United States stood in a favorable position to intervene and protect Malagasy independence. Granville's unhappiness with the situation was evident in his conclusion that while "the French had conducted themselves in a very high-handed, inconsistent and unjust way," nonetheless, Britain could not interfere because no sensible man entertained the idea that "whenever a foreign power occupied any port that might block the door to India, England should intervene to prevent it."<sup>56</sup>

Despite efforts not to alienate the French, they misunderstood the British offer of "friendly mediation." French Foreign Minister Duclerc expressed his regret for the British desire to mediate even in a friendly manner:

Je ne sais ce que le Gouvernement Anglais entend par "to press their good offices upon the French government"; mais nous cette expression est intraduisible en Francais: car le mot que donnerait la traduction literale serait absolument inadmissible.<sup>57</sup>

This churlish tone of Duclerc's dispatch was matched by Gladstone's petty observation that the French had been unable to translate the phrase "to press their good offices upon the French government." On a more substantive level, however, Gladstone complained that Duclerc "need not have growled about [the British offer] when he must have seen that the intent was friendly."<sup>58</sup>

This dispatch, which seems to have been brought about by a complete misapprehension of an English phrase, shattered Granville's expectations of bringing about a peaceful solution to the Franco-Malagasy problem. Granville could not take a stronger position than to offer his "good offices," and these Duclerc ungraciously rejected.<sup>59</sup> Subsequently, Duclerc acknowledged that French and English cooperation in Madagascar had ended: "[T]he government of the [French] Republic does not believe that any useful purpose would be served by communicating a fresh statement of its views to the Malagasy embassy by the intermediary of Her Britannic Majesty's government."<sup>60</sup> With no alternatives left, Granville openly informed the Malagasy ambassadors that while the British government was genuinely interested in Malagasy welfare, "as the French government had not encouraged them [the British] to be a means of communicating," it was impossible "to discuss for the present details of the existing differences." Thus, Britain had abandoned Madagascar for all intents and purposes as a price of a reconciliation with France.<sup>61</sup>

The Anglo-French convention of 1890, then, as Lord Salisbury, the British Prime Minister at that time, pointed out in the House of Lords, was geared toward formally determining the British and the French spheres of influence in Africa. Even though France acquired a considerable chunk of Africa, Salisbury nonetheless considered the agreement to be a "fair one" because much of the French land was in the Sahara and of little value. The convention, however, was merely a rubber-stamp for France's position in Madagascar and Britain's position in Zanzibar. As Lord Salisbury himself explained:

I need not say that these two acts regularizing the two Governments in Zanzibar and Madagascar will not have much practical effect one way or the other. Practically, our influence in Zanzibar would have remained the same if the Treaty of 1862 had not been modified, and practically the position of the French in Madagascar would have remained the same if the Treaty of 1886 had not been recognized by us. But the result of the mutual exchange of the declarations that have taken place is to put *the situation of both the Governments on a more regular footing.* [Emphasis added.]<sup>62</sup>

Hence it is clear that the convention of 1890 was a mere formality, and although the conquest of Madagascar was not completed by France until 1895, the island was earmarked for her by the Liberal government of Gladstone as early as 1882-1883.

#### NOTES

1. Few scholars dispute this date. See, for example, Sonia E. Howe, *The Drama of Madagascar* (London: Mathuen, 1938); Phares M. Mutibwa, *The Malagasy and the Europeans* (London: Longman, 1974).
2. William Edward Cousins, *Madagascar of Today* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1895), p. 154.
3. Howe, *The Drama of Madagascar*, p. 255.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
5. Mutibwa, *The Malagasy and the Europeans*, pp. xiv, 231, 318-321.
6. Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society* (London: H. Frowde, 1899); Jean Valett, *Malagasy Foreign Relations in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. by Shelby Williams (Tananarive: Imprimerie Nationale, 1964); Norman Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954); Mervyn Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered* (London: Damien Tunacliffe, 1978).
7. The total value of British cotton imports into Madagascar was £146,657 as compared to £133,998 from the United States, France, Germany, British India, and other countries combined. See, *The I.U.P. Series of the British Parliamentary Papers, Papers Relating to Africa, 1802-99* (Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1971), vol. 8, p. 99.
8. Levi P. Morton to the Secretary of State, Paris, Nov. 30, 1882, *Despatches from the United States Ministers to France, 1789-1906*, vol. 91, Nov. 31, 1882-April 16, 1883, microfilm (Washington D.C.: The National Archives and Records Service, 1959), roll 94, no. 260. Hereafter cited as *DUSMF*.
9. George Nevile Sanderson, "The European Partition of Africa: Coincidence or Conjecture?" *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 3 (Oct. 1974): 19.
10. Mutibwa, *The Malagasy and the Europeans*, pp. 30-31.
11. Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, p. 222.
12. Morton to the Secretary of State, Paris, Nov. 30, 1882, vol. 91, *DUSMF*, roll 94, no. 260.

13. Mutibwa, *The Malagasy and the Europeans*, p. 185.
14. Assessing the reputation of the Liberal government, Algernon Cecil rightly observed, "The Whigs filled no place in either great school of British Foreign Policy. . . . They framed no system, embodied no principle and have left no lasting mark upon the diplomatic history of Britain." See *British Foreign Secretaries, 1807-1916* (London: G. Bell, 1927), p. 230. A relatively recent article describes the Gladstonian government of 1880-1885 as "a collection of disparate elements." See John S. Galbraith and Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot, "The British Occupation of Egypt: Another View," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9 (1978): 473, 478-480.
15. Paul Knaplund, *Gladstone's Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935), pp. 3-28.
16. *Hansard Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, March 25, 1884, vol. 286, pp. 795-798.
17. Galbraith and Marsot, "The British Occupation of Egypt," p. 480.
18. Knaplund, *Gladstone's Foreign Policy*, pp. 73-76.
19. Prime Minister Lord Gladstone to Foreign Secretary Lord Granville, Sept. 13, 1881, quoted in Cedric James Lowe, *The Reluctant Imperialists* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), vol. 2, p. 15.
20. Knaplund, *Gladstone's Foreign Policy*, p. 77.
21. Reported in *The Times*, Dec. 31, 1880, p. 3a.
22. *Hansard Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, June 28, 1881, vol. 257, p. 1626.
23. Henri Brunschwig, "Anglophobia and French African Policy," in *France and Britain in Africa*, ed. by Prosser Gifford and WM Roger Louis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 6-7.
24. *Antananarivo Annual and Madagascar Magazine*, 2:5 (1881-1884): 93.
25. *The Times*, Jan. 14, 1882, p. 10e.
26. *Hansard Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, March 9, 1882, vol. 267, p. 460.
27. Rear Admiral Gore Jones Report, quoted in Mutibwa, *The Malagasy and the Europeans*, p. 200.
28. *The Times*, Jan. 14, 1882, p. 10e.
29. Viscount Lyons to Lord Granville, Paris, Aug. 16, 1882, *British and Foreign State Papers*, vol. 75, ed. by Sir Edward Hertslet, C.B., and Edward Cecil Herblet, Esq. (London: William Ridgway, 1891), pp. 149-150.
30. In addition to Sainte Marie and NossieBé, the French claimed vaguely defined rights of protectorate over the Sakalava people, who lived in Cape d' Ambre in the North down to the Bay of Baly, just north of Cape St. André. These rights were based, the French claimed, on certain treaties concluded by France with the Sakalava chiefs in 1843-1845. But since the Sakalava chiefs were not independent of the central government in Antananarivo, these treaties had no meaning as they were never recognized by the Hova ruler, who was considered to be the sovereign of the whole island of Madagascar. For more details, see Mutibwa, *The Malagasy and the Europeans*, pp. 188-200.
31. F.R. Plunket to Lord Granville, Paris, Aug. 28, 1882, *State Papers*, vol. 75, p. 150.
32. *The Times*, Sept. 5, 1882, p. 5d.
33. Thomas Condy Pakenham to Lord Granville, Antananarivo, May 30, 1882, quoted in Mutibwa, *Malagasy and the Europeans*, p. 207.
34. Granville to Plunket, Foreign Office, Oct. 7, 1882, *State Papers*, vol. 75, p. 151.
35. *The Spectator, A Weekly Review of Politics, Literature, Theology and Art*, vol. 55, Oct. 21, 1882.
36. Stephen Gwyn and Gertrude M. Tuckwell, *The Life of the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles W. Dilke*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1977), vol. 1, p. 539.
37. The Malagasy government sent an embassy to Europe in July 1882 to negotiate on the question of the Franco-Malagasy dispute. The Malagasy government thought that the French government may not have been aware of the extravagant demands made by their representatives, and it was hoped that some understanding could be reached directly with the French Republic. The visit was also meant to draw the attention of other European nations, particularly England, in the hope that their influence might favor the Malagasy cause. See the *Antananarivo Annual* 2:7 (1881-1884): 298. While the Malagasy embassy was negotiating with the French government in Paris, a rupture between the two occurred. On November 26, 1882, the envoys received an ultimatum from the French, which mandated, (1) Hova recognition of the French protectorate over the West Coast of Madagascar, and (2) the granting of a ninety-nine year lease to the French. The envoys were given six hours to sign the agreement with the threat that their refusal would have serious consequences. "Nothing but complete surrender to the French demands would be accepted" or "French cannons will teach them what it is to trifle with France." Since the envoys were not empowered to negotiate on these terms, their refusal was met with insult: the Malagasy flag from their hotel was removed, and they were informed that they were no longer welcome in Paris. See, Morton to Secretary of State, Paris, Nov. 30, 1882, *DUSMP*, roll 94, no. 260.
38. The Madagascar Committee seems to have been organized by Proctor, the

- Malagasy consul in London, at the advice of Sir Charles Dilke. See, Mutibwa, *The Malagasy and the Europeans*, p. 227.
39. *The Times*, Nov. 29, 1882, p. 10c.
40. Quoted in Gwynn and Tuckwell, *Life of Dilke*, vol. 1, p. 539.
41. Granville to Lyons, Foreign Office, Nov. 29, 1882, *State Papers*, vol. 75, p. 152.
42. See, for example, *The Times*, Nov. 30, 1882, p. 10f, and Dec. 1, 1882, p. 3d.
43. Norton to Secretary of State, Paris, Nov. 30, 1882, *DUSMF*, roll 94, no. 260.
44. Granville to Lyons, Foreign Office, Dec. 4, 1882, *State Papers*, vol. 75, pp. 157-164.
45. Malagasy ambassadors to Granville, London, Dec. 4, 1882, *State Papers*, vol. 75, pp. 157-164.
46. Granville to Lyons, Foreign Office, Dec. 5, 1882, *State Papers*, vol. 75, pp. 165-166.
47. Malagasy ambassadors to Granville, London, Dec. 9, 1882, *State Papers*, vol. 75, pp. 166-169.
48. Gwynn and Tuckwell, *Life of Dilke*, vol. 1, p. 539.
49. Quoted in *The Times*, Dec. 14, 1882, p. 10abc.
50. Lord Granville, who was not able to attend Derby's welcoming at the Manchester Reform Club, sent a written note: "Few men," the note read, "can speak with greater authority on public affairs than Lord Derby, and I am happy to believe that his views are not unfavourable to the policy which Her Majesty's Government has pursued under difficult circumstances. . . ." See *The Times*, Dec. 14, 1882, p. 10a.
51. Edmond Fritzmairice, *The Life of Lord Granville*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, 1905), vol. 2, p. 316.
52. Quoted in Gwynn and Tuckwell, *Life of Dilke*, vol. 1, p. 540.
53. Gladstone to Granville, London, March 10, 1883, in Agatha Ramm, ed., *The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville, 1876-86*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), vol. 2, p. 37.
54. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 468, n. 2.
55. Lyons to Granville, Paris, Dec. 13, 1882, *State Papers*, vol. 75, p. 169.
56. James Russell Lowell to Secretary of State, London, Dec. 16, 1882, Confidential. *Despatches from the United States Ministers to Great Britain*, vol. 146, microfilm (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1954), roll 142, no. 464.
57. The French explained that there is no French equivalent for the English phrase, "to press their good offices upon the French government," and if they were to translate this literally, it would amount to something unacceptable to the French Republic. See Duclerc to Tissot, Paris, Jan. 4, 1883, and Tissot to Granville, Jan. 5, 1883, *State Papers*, vol. 75, pp. 172-173.
58. Gladstone to Granville, Jan. 13, 1883, quoted in Ramm, ed., *Correspondence of Gladstone and Granville*, vol. 2, p. 8.
59. Granville to Lyons, Foreign Office, Jan. 17, 1883, *State Papers*, vol. 75, p. 173. Also see, Lyons to Granville, Paris, Jan. 25, 1883, *ibid.*, pp. 174-175.
60. *The Times*, Feb. 1, 1883, p. 3c.
61. Lyons to Granville, Paris, Jan. 25, 1883, *State Papers*, p. 174. Also Granville to Lyons, Feb. 9, 1883, *ibid.*
62. *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, House of Lords, Aug. 11, 1890, vol. 348, pp. 456-457. Looking back in 1895 on the entire Madagascar affair of the 1880s, a British missionary in Madagascar observed that the blame for abandoning the island should be placed squarely on those in office in the 1880s rather than in the 1890s. He remarked that "if there had only been a man, as a true farseeing British statesman--not to say an Oliver Cromwell or a 'Pam'--at the British Foreign Office from 1880 to 1885, instead of kindly old gentleman Earl Granville, . . . things would have been very different from what they are today." See, Mathews to Thompson, Antananarivo, May 9, 1895, *London Missionary Society Records: Madagascar Letters*, microfilm (London: R.B. Fleming and Co., 1955), roll 215.



**The Earl of Clarendon, Hamon L'Estrange,  
and the Riot at St. Giles on July 23, 1637:  
A Study In Methodology**

Thomas R. Peck

Charles I, King of England and Scotland, pursued two policies during the 1630s: absolutism in government and uniformity in religion within the Church of England. Toward the latter goal, King Charles required the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, to devise a new *Book of Common Prayer* for use in all religious services in England and Scotland. On July 23, 1637, the new *Book of Common Prayer* was introduced into Scotland. The event caused a riot at St. Giles Church, Edinburgh, where the *Book* was first read. The disturbance spilled into the streets, and the rioting continued for three days. As a result, the Privy Council of Scotland suspended the use of the new *Book*. It was never used again in Scotland.

With the suspension of the new *Book of Common Prayer*, Charles I received the first substantial check to his religious policy. In an attempt to reverse this, Charles began a series of maneuvers which led to civil war in both Scotland and England, the abandonment of the policies of absolutism and religious uniformity, and ultimately to the execution of the King himself.<sup>1</sup>

There are nine accounts of the riot at St. Giles.<sup>2</sup> This article attempts to determine which is the most accurate. Each of the nine accounts relates a different tale, and it is impossible to reconcile them all. Furthermore, none of the accounts is by an eyewitness. Since the riot was a significant event, it is

Thomas R. Peck received his B.A. from the University of San Francisco in 1971 and his M.A. from the same school in 1974. He is currently working on a Ph.D. at Ohio State University, concentrating on English History and Demography from 1550 to 1850.