

= Andriamanelo =

Andriamanelo ( 1540 ? 1575 ) was King of Alasora in the central highlands region of Madagascar . He is generally considered by historians to be the founder of the Kingdom of Imerina and originator of the Merina royal line that , by the 19th century , had extended its rule over virtually all of Madagascar . The son of a Vazimba mother and a man of the newly arrived Hova people originating in southeast Madagascar , Andriamanelo ultimately led a series of military campaigns against the Vazimba , beginning a several @-@ decade process to drive them from the Highlands . The conflict that defined his reign also produced many lasting innovations , including the development of fortified villages in the highlands and the use of iron weapons . Oral tradition furthermore credits Andriamanelo with establishing a ruling class of nobles ( andriana ) and defining the rules of succession . Numerous cultural traditions , including the ritual of circumcision , the wedding custom of vodiondry and the art of Malagasy astrology ( sikidy ) are likewise associated with this king .

= = Early life = =

Andriamanelo was the oldest son of the reigning Vazimba queen ( alternately given in the oral histories as Rafohy or Rangita ) and her Hova husband Manelobe , who may have had origins in the Zafiraminia people of Anosy . At the time of the marriage between Rafohy and Manelobe , the Hova were a minority clan who had recently moved into the Vazimba @-@ dominated highlands from their ancestral homeland in the southeast . The marriage produced two sons , Andriamanelo and his younger brother Andriamananitany , as well as a sister named Rafotsindrindramanjaka . In a bid to counteract further fracturing of their kingdom , Rafohy and Rangita decided that while the Vazimba had historically been ruled by queens , Andriamanelo would inherit the crown upon his mother 's death and would be succeeded not by his own child but by his younger brother . This system of succession , ordered by the queens to be followed for all time , was called fanjakana arindra ( " organized government " ) and applied to families as well : in any instance where there was an elder child and a younger one , the parents would designate an elder child to assume authority within the family upon their death , and that authority would be handed to the designated younger child in the event of the death of the elder child . The queen gave the village of Alasora to Andriamanelo to rule as his territory while she still lived , while Andriamananitany was given the village of Ambohitrandriananahary .

= = Reign = =

Among the distinguishing features of Andriamanelo 's reign was the expansion of his territory around the sacred hill of Alasora through a military campaign against the Vazimba to push these legendary , primitive first settlers of Madagascar toward the west of the island . After Andriamanelo had successfully expanded his kingdom to include Alasora to the south and Merimanjaka to the north , the continued presence of a Vazimba stronghold at Analamanga ( located between the two halves of his realm and effectively separating them ) posed too great a threat to the unity of his kingdom to allow the situation to stand . He resolved to capture Analamanga and drive the Vazimba from his territory , an ambition partially realized during his reign . Popular legend attributes Andriamanelo 's military successes to several innovations , including the discovery of iron smelting and propagation of the iron @-@ tipped spear against the Vazimba who fought with weapons of clay . He also fortified his capital at Alasora by creating hadivory ( dry moats ) , hadifetsy ( defensive trenches ) and vavahady ( town gates protected by a large rolled stone disc acting as a barrier ) , thereby rendering the town more resistant to Vazimba attacks . However , his attempt to establish Merina dominance in the central Highlands was thwarted when he proved unable to seize Analamanga ; this Vazimba stronghold would not fall until at last conquered by Andriamanelo 's grandson , Andrianjaka .

Warfare was not the only strategy by which Andriamanelo sought to expand the territory under his control . Several years into his reign ( after the death of his younger brother ) Andriamanelo married

a maternal cousin named Ramaitsoanala ( " Green Forest " ) who was a princess through her astrologer father , King Rabiby ( for whom his capital , the village of Ambohidrabiby , is named ) , and her mother Ivorombe who is described in legends as a Vazimba water goddess . Through this union Andriamanelo ensured he would become master of the lands around Ambohidrabiby upon the death of his wife 's father . Ramaitsoanala took the name Randapavola upon her marriage and then became known as Queen Rasolobe upon the birth of the couple 's seventh and final son , Ralambo ? the only one of Andriamanelo 's children to survive to adulthood . Six earlier pregnancies ended in stillbirth or the death of the child in infancy .

Andriamanelo is typically portrayed as a civilizing king in contrast to the primitive Vazimba against whom he waged war . As such , oral history credits him with discovering such diverse arts as silversmithing and astrology ( sikidy ) in addition to iron working . He reputedly introduced knowledge about the construction and use of pirogues , and was the first in the highlands to transform lowland swamps into irrigated rice paddies through the construction of dikes in the valleys around Alasora . The Merina rite of circumcision , described by Bloch ( 1986 ) in great detail , continued to be practiced by the Merina monarchy through the end of the 19th century in precisely the way first established by Andriamanelo generations before . Many elements of these rituals continue to form part of the circumcision traditions of Merina families in the 21st century .

Many of the innovations attributed to Andriamanelo were not his personal invention . Rather , their origins can be traced back to the southeastern part of the island that the Hova had left behind as they migrated into the central highlands . Astrology , for instance , had been introduced early to the island by way of trade contacts between coastal Malagasy communities and Arab seafarers . Similarly , archaeological evidence proves the existence of iron implements in Madagascar at least four centuries prior to the war between Andriamanelo and the Vazimba , suggesting that while the technology was not discovered during his reign , Andriamanelo may have been among the first sovereigns in Imerina to make wide @-@ scale use of it in military campaigns .

= = = Rules of succession = = =

Andriamanelo 's antecedents , Rafohy and Rangita , had jointly decreed a system of social order whereby the designated heir should have a younger sibling who would succeed him . However , this decree proved challenging upon the first instance of its application . According to oral tradition , upon Rafohy 's designation of elder son Andriamanelo as her successor , her younger son Andriamananitany initially claimed to accept her decree . However , Andriamananitany soon began building a new village immodestly named Ambohitrandriamanitra ( " Village of God " ) and copied the system of fortifications introduced by his older brother at Alasora , reportedly constructing them even faster than Andriamanelo . Word spread that Andriamananitany wished to undermine his older brother 's rule . Upon learning of Andriamanelo 's consequent wrath , Andriamananitany promptly abandoned his " Village of God " and sought permission from his brother to build a village called Ambohimanoa ( " Village of Submission " ) where , according to one version of the oral history , he may have imprudently attempted to construct another defensive trench . Due to this provocative behavior , Andriamanantany was murdered by a group of Hova , possibly at Andriamanelo 's command .

Consumed with remorse , the king sought to rectify the situation by arranging a marriage between his brother 's orphaned son and Andriamanelo 's own sister ( the orphan 's aunt ) , Rafotsindrindramanjaka . He declared that the child from this union would , if female , be wed to his own son Ralambo ; if male , he would become Ralambo 's successor . A girl was born , and she was promised to Ralambo as his future wife with the stipulation that the child born of their union would rule after Ralambo . In this way Andriamanelo established a tradition of succession that indirectly respected the queens ' decree by ensuring that a child of his brother 's line ( and his own ) would rule after him . Because of this decree , Ralambo 's first son by his second wife was passed over in the line of succession in favor of Andrianjaka , Ralambo 's son by Rafotsindrindramanjaka . Andriamanelo was also reportedly the first to formally establish the andriana as a caste of Merina nobles , thereby laying the foundation for a stratified and structured society . From this point forward

, the term Hova was used to refer only to the non @-@ noble free people of the society which would later be renamed Merina by Andriamanelo 's son Ralambo .

= = = Vodiondry = = =

The marriage tradition of the vodiondry , still practiced to this day throughout the Highlands , is said to have originated with Andriamanelo . According to oral history , after the sovereign had successfully contracted a marriage with Ramaitsoanala , sole daughter of Vazimba King Rabiby , Andriamanelo sent her a variety of gifts including vodiondry ? meat from the hindquarters of a sheep ? which he believed to be the tastiest portion . The value placed on this cut of meat was reaffirmed by Ralambo who , upon discovering the edibility of zebu meat , declared the hindquarters of every slaughtered zebu throughout the kingdom to be his royal due . From the time of Andriamanelo forward , it became a marriage tradition for the groom to offer vodiondry to the bride 's family . Over time the customary offerings of meat have been increasingly replaced by a symbolic piastre , sums of money and other gifts .

= = Death and succession = =

Andriamanelo ruled until his death at an advanced age around 1575 and was succeeded by his only surviving son , Ralambo . He was buried in Alasora in an earthen ditch . According to oral tradition , the placement of his tomb may have been to the south @-@ east of the royal compound rather than to the north as was customary . This anomaly may have been intended to symbolically indicate Andriamanelo 's " otherness " as a man of mixed ethnic background . A similar tomb to the north of the Alasora compound may have been that of Andriamanelo 's mother . These two earthen tombs are considered the oldest known royal @-@ style tombs in Imerina .