Empire in the Age of Enlightenment: The Curious Case of Baron Benyowszky

David Allen Harvey, New College of Florida

While the period between the Seven Years’ War and the French Revolution marked an ebb tide for the fortunes of French imperialism, colonial issues loomed large in the political and philosophical discourse of the age. Statesmen such as the duc de Choiseul sought to compensate for the loss of Canada with new colonies elsewhere, sponsoring Bougainville’s voyage around the world and the ill-fated Kourou settlement in Guyana. Meanwhile, Enlightenment thinkers debated whether it was in France’s interest to seek new colonies to replace those lost to Britain and reflected upon the ethics of cross-cultural encounters, most famously in Diderot’s “Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville.” The relationship between the Enlightenment and colonialism has been the subject of a good deal of debate among subsequent generations of scholars, with Michèle Duchet denouncing the “humanism of conquest” of the philosophes, and Sankar Muthu arguing that the Enlightenment was instead exceptional for its anti-colonialism. I would argue that the truth lies somewhere between these positions. While most Enlightenment thinkers were sharply critical of violent, destructive acts like the conquest of America, many of them favored more peaceful means of spreading French influence around the world, such as trade, missionary outreach, cultural assimilation, and the seductions of consumer society. The Histoire des deux Indes, edited by the Abbé Raynal and in large part ghost-written by Diderot, is the most prominent example of this ambivalent stance.

3Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes (Amsterdam, 1770). See also Anatole
Sunil Agnani has recently used the term “douce colonisation” (gentle colonization) in reference to the *Histoire*’s vision of a kinder, gentler colonialism, which unlike the brutal conquest of the Americas would be based on commerce and mutual interest, and thereby beneficial to the colonized as well as the colonizer. This Enlightenment vision of “douce colonisation” reflected many of the prevailing assumptions of the eighteenth century, such as its faith in the power of great lawgivers, such as Solon and Lycurgus, to shape the customs and institutions of societies still in their infancy through the crafting of laws, customs, and manners (often subsumed under the general label of *moeurs*), and its assumptions of a common human nature and of the universal attraction of rational self interest, which would lead the benighted “savages” of the globe to recognize the superiority of civilized European ways of life. “What more noble expense can a sovereign make,” Charles de Brosses entreated Louis XV in 1756, “what greater object can he propose himself, than that of creating nations, so to speak, and giving them the greatest possible good? […] Could one do a greater service to humanity than that of bringing humanity itself to fruition?” This vision of colonialism as “civilizing mission,” derived from Enlightenment principles, would go on to shape the republican imperialism of the late nineteenth century.

During the late eighteenth century, however, Enlightenment debates about colonialism had very little to do with what actually happened on the ground, particularly in the most remote outposts of empire. This paper examines one of the strangest episodes in French imperial expansion during the period, the baron Benyowszky’s expedition to establish a permanent colony on Madagascar. Benyowszky’s story, which reads as a disturbing blend of the *Adventures of Baron Munchhausen* and *Heart of Darkness*, is almost the polar opposite of the ideal of enlightened colonialism endorsed by many of the leading thinkers of the age. The conditions for this costly, misguided, and tragic colonial venture gone badly wrong were created by the lack of oversight resulting from the ministerial upheavals in the period between the Maupeou “coup” and the failure of Turgot’s

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reforms, the great distances separating the metropole from the Indian Ocean, and the wide gulf between enlightened rhetoric and colonial realities.

Baron Moritz August von Benyowszky served the Polish confederation as an officer for several years before being captured by Russian forces. Exiled first to Kazan and subsequently to Kamchatka, he somehow managed to escape, commandeering a small ship along with his fellow prisoners in the spring of 1771. The party of exiles meandered along the northwestern Pacific before turning up at Macau. Through the assistance of sympathetic French officials, Benyowszky and the surviving members of his party were able to make their way around the world to France, arriving in July 1772. The baron no doubt greatly exaggerated both the extent of his exploration of the Pacific and the strategic value of the information that he could provide, and some French officials were concerned that he might give that information to a hostile power if he were not given a military commission. From the beginning, Benyowszky seems to have inspired both admiration and skepticism from the French officials he encountered on his return from the Far East. The chevalier Desroches, who helped to facilitate the baron’s voyage to France, described him as having “an agreeable physiognomy that sparkles with wit” and a body marked with scars and injuries that “nonetheless conserved a great air of health and vigor,” remarked that he “spoke willingly, but never addressed topics he did not wish to explain, and said no more than he meant to say,” and concluded, “On the reports that this foreign officer has made to me, I could say a great many other things, but it is not appropriate to confide them to paper at such a great distance.” While Desroches’s impression of Benyowszky was generally favorable, he evidently felt some doubts, which he nonetheless chose to keep to himself.

The colonial ministry concluded that Benyowszky could be most useful to French interests in the Indian Ocean and recommended the creation of a volunteer corps, which could be stationed at the Isle de France to provide manpower for a new colonial venture to the island of Madagascar. Benyowszky, the ministerial report concluded, “had learned through his travels the manner in which to deal with savage peoples, and he appears to have all of the talents, and especially the gentility of character that is required for such a design.” Subsequent events would prove this latter assessment spectacularly wrong, and Benyowszky, whose only previous interactions with “savage peoples” had been a

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8Biographical information taken from Prosper Cultru, *Un empereur de Madagascar au XVIIIe siècle: Benyowszky* (Paris: Augustin Challanel, 1906), and from the documents on the Benyowszky expedition in the French colonial archives, C5A 3 through C5A 8, Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer (hereafter ANOM), Aix-en-Provence.

7Letter of Desroches to de Boynes, 20 March 1772, C5A 3, ANOM. All translations are by the author.

830 December 1772 report, C5A 3, ANOM.
pair of very brief landings on Formosa and on the Kurile islands, was soon on his way for a sensitive mission to Madagascar.

Benyowszky arrived in France at a time when the colonization of Madagascar, despite repeated failures, was again on the agenda. Since the first Portuguese voyages to the Indian Ocean in the early sixteenth century, Madagascar had been integrated into international trade networks, a development which contributed to the rise of the Sakalava kingdoms in the seventeenth century, coastal states which provided European merchants with livestock and slaves, mostly captives from the island's interior, in exchange for Western goods, particularly firearms. The first French attempt to colonize Madagascar, in the final decade of the seventeenth century, had ended in tragedy, when angry Malagasy had overrun the French settlement during a mass and slaughtered its inhabitants. A more recent attempt, led in 1768 by Louis Henry Laurent de Fayd'erbe, the comte de Maudave, had begun more auspiciously and with suitably enlightened intentions, but had failed due to a lack of resources and the unrealistically optimistic goals of its leader. Maudave confidently predicted that the Malagasy would recognize the self-evident superiority of French cultural norms, and would welcome the chance to become civilized and to embrace the variety of commodities which the French could offer them, writing, “Gradually these peoples will become accustomed to a domination which they will find mild and profitable. The daily advantages that they will derive from them will serve as new chains.” Pierre Poivre, a physiocratic philosopher who served as intendant of the Isle de France, was skeptical of these plans, writing to the naval ministry that the Malagasy’s “indolence and indifference to all the commodities of life will long make them unsusceptible to all of M. de Maudave’s advances” and concluding that “to succeed, he will need to operate a revolution in the spirit of these peoples, which can only be the fruit of time.”

While previous efforts to colonize Madagascar had failed, the island remained a valuable source of livestock, rice, and slaves for the Isle de France. When the collapse of the Compagnie des Indes in 1769 ended its monopoly over Indian Ocean trade, French merchants rushed into the area, destabilizing relations with the Malagasy, evading the fisc (import tax) through smuggling, and creating a glut in the local market for bartered goods. The naval minister de Boynes reflected that, although previous efforts at colonization had failed, “One cannot deny that the island of Madagascar holds great riches, and it would be

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10 Comte de Maudave, “Journal de ce qui s’est passé au Fort Dauphin dans l’île de Madagascar depuis le lundi 5 septembre 1768 jusqu’au 11 décembre suivant,” 7 November 1768, C5A 2, ANOM.
11 Letter from Poivre to de Praslin, 29 July 1768, C5A 2, ANOM.
useful to have an establishment there.” Rather than the extensive project for colonization and assimilation which Maudave had envisioned, however, de Boynes argued that what was needed was “a simple post through which we can form useful alliances with the principal chiefs of the country, establish with them a barter system of trade, and put an end to the abuse of trading in hard currency.”

Benyowszky and his followers set off for the southern hemisphere in the spring of 1773 and arrived in late September to the Isle de France, where the baron soon quarreled with the island's chief administrators. Feeling that the expeditionary force he had led from France was insufficient, he requested permission to levy a new company of volunteers from among the colonists of the Isle de France. The governor, de Ternay, approved this request on the condition that Benyowszky cover the added expense himself, but soon thereafter, the baron presented the intendant Maillart with a bill for ten thousand livres, which the latter refused to pay. Benyowszky angrily refused to take orders from the Isle de France administrators, thundering, “It is not His Majesty's intention that I should take orders from you for my mission, certainly not!” In response, Maillart prophetically warned the Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies (Naval and Colonial Ministry), “I do not hesitate to inform you that not only will this officer not accomplish anything useful in his service, but he will cost a great deal in men and money to the King.”

Benyowszky rejected de Ternay’s well-meaning advice to delay his departure for Madagascar until April, when the “mauvais saison” (rainy season) would be over, and compounded this error by placing his camp in “the most swampy and pestilential place on the entire island.” These twin errors led to catastrophic death rates among the members of the expedition, which Benyowszky sought to conceal by prohibiting his followers from writing letters, even as he sent repeated requests for reinforcements to the Isle de France. Despite this prohibition, news soon leaked out regarding the poor state of the colony, as Ternay and Maillart wrote, “We learn from private letters... that the epidemic diseases that reign in Madagascar have already carried off 180 men and more then ten officers, that disorder is widespread in all areas of administration, and that everything which has been sent there up to the present has been lost or consumed.” The baron also quickly set aside the orders that limited his activity

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12Letter from de Boynes to de Ternay and Maillart, 19 March 1773, C5A 3, ANOM.
13Letter from Benyowszky to Maillart, 24 December 1773, C5A 3, ANOM.
14Letter from Maillart to de Boynes, 27 December 1773, C5A 3, ANOM.
15Letter from de Ternay to the Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies, 6 September 1774, C5A 4, ANOM.
16Letter from de Ternay and Maillart to the Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies, 16 August 1774, C5A 4, ANOM.
to the construction and maintenance of a trading post. His early reports already spoke of grandiose plans for subduing the native peoples of the island, cultivating and exporting vast quantities of coffee, spices, and other tropical commodities, and creating a military bastion that would make Madagascar the linchpin of French power in the Indian Ocean. A ministerial report from 1774 warned that “M. Benyowszky has lost sight of the true purpose of his enterprise; he has given free rein to...flights of fancy as false in their principles as impossible in their execution.”\textsuperscript{17} Similarly, Ternay and Maillart alerted the ministry that Benyowszky’s attacks on Malagasy villages had led to the collapse of the trade relations on which the settlement depended, and warned that Benyowszky’s demands were becoming ever greater and more ominous, now including a large ship for slave trading, six twelve-pound cannon, and two twelve-inch mortars along with their munitions.\textsuperscript{18}

The philosopher and statesman Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot briefly held the post of naval minister in the summer of 1774 before being called upon by the new king Louis XVI to head the government. Turgot was alarmed at what he read of Benyowszky’s defiance and rejection of his original mission, and he wrote several sternly worded letters, one to call on de Ternay and Maillart to keep Benyowszky on a firmer leash, and another to the baron himself, reminding him that “it is not a colony, but a simple post that you are to establish” and warning him that “All that you propose is impossible to execute, or would demand enormous expenditures that the king will not incur.” Turgot further reminded Benyowszky of his responsibility to report his activities to the governor of the Isle de France and to the ministry, telling him, “There was never any intention to leave you as the absolute master of the establishment of Madagascar.”\textsuperscript{19}

Unfortunately for all those involved in the affair, once Turgot was named controller-general, he did not share his misgivings regarding Benyowszky with his successor as naval minister, Antoine de Sartine, nor did he issue definitive orders restraining the abuses of authority in the colony. In fact, Prosper Cultru has suggested that Turgot’s letters on Madagascar may never have been sent, and languished forgotten in some clerk’s desk.\textsuperscript{20} As a result, the sorry spectacle was to drag on for several more years, and to drain still more in French blood and treasure.

Meanwhile, the always tense relations between Benyowszky and the administrators of the Isle de France had completely deteriorated. De Ternay refused Benyowszky’s subsequent requests for reinforcements, noting that his

\textsuperscript{17}Report (no date or signature), C5A 4, ANOM.
\textsuperscript{18}Letter from de Ternay and Maillart to the Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies, no date, C5A 4, ANOM.
\textsuperscript{19}Letter from Turgot to Benyowszky, August 1774, C5A 4, ANOM.
\textsuperscript{20}Cultru, 127-9.
own colony’s defenses were stretched thin, and questioned Benyowszky’s decision to grant the exclusive privilege to export rice, beef, and slaves from Madagascar to a merchant named Savornin, noting that the latter owed debts of five hundred thousand livres and that his belongings had been confiscated, and warned that “if he comes here, we will arrest him.” Maillart made a similar decision in February 1775 to cut off Benyowszky financially until further order from the ministry, and warned the baron “not to issue any more letters of change or money orders on the treasury of the Isle de France, which will not repay them.”

The explorer Louis de Kerguelen, who landed on Madagascar in early 1775 to allow sick crew members to recover on land and to seek food and provisions, gave an unfavorable report on conditions and prospects there. One of his officers reported that the Malagasy called Benyowszky a “mauvais Blanc” (“mean white man”) and were awaiting an opportune moment to attack. As Kerguelen prepared to depart from Madagascar, Benyowszky informed him that his fort had come under attack, and asked him to assist in a punitive expedition, to which the explorer reluctantly agreed. Kerguelen subsequently defended Madagascar’s utility to France, but suggested that the nation’s interest would be served by a lighter footprint on the ground, declaring, “It is mad to employ forces that the climate and the trickery of the islanders can only destroy.” While he suggested that warships off the coast could ensure native compliance in case of conflict, Kerguelen suggested a gentler approach, writing that “One must little by little win over the inhabitants, and place in each village agents who will take care to make themselves useful and loved, and who little by little will take over the authority of the chiefs of each village.”

Other contemporary critics of Benyowszky’s mission echoed Kerguelen’s recommendation to use gentle persuasion and the force of example rather than coercion to spread French civilization to the Malagasy. De Lessart, an initial backer of the mission, wrote to Sartine that “I have heard it said that he [Benyowszky] is a charlatan, and I have reason to believe it.” Arguing that Benyowszky, by his own admission, had escaped from a Russian prison through “a brave, but ferocious action,” de Lessart expressed doubt that he was the man to bring “gentle manners and a peaceful administration” to Madagascar. De Lessart concluded that “Madagascar is an unknown land for us, and we must advance step by step, with probe in hand. We should especially beware of engaging ourselves on the word of an adventurer who, having no profession but the command of light troops and brigands, knows neither the principles of civil government, nor the art of civilizing men, nor the true purpose of the

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21Letter from de Ternay to Benyowszky, 30 October 1774, C5A 4, ANOM.
22Letter from Maillart to Benyowszky, 22 February 1775, C5A 5, ANOM.
23Kerguelen, “Mémoire sur l’île de Madagascar,” 12 April 1775, C5A 5, ANOM.
establishment that we seek to form in Madagascar.”24 Meanwhile, Maillart, reporting Benyowszky’s illegal confiscation of the cargos of private ship captains, complained that the baron “establishes despotism as his principle (and) ignores laws, customs, and agreements.”25 In fact, the body of correspondence regarding Benyowszky offers a revealing perspective on many of the key eighteenth-century debates on political theory, progress, and the right of conquest, with the baron’s conduct exemplifying precisely what enlightened observers felt should not be done.

Despite his setbacks, cost overruns, and growing complaints from the Isle de France and from visitors to Madagascar, Benyowszky continued to defend his project. Accusing de Ternay and Maillart of using “the most ignominious slander to tarnish my reputation,” Benyowszky assured the ministry that he had achieved “the perfect conquest of the country: the entire island is submitted to our government, and the last war which I was forced to pursue against the inhabitants of the southwest of the island has rendered us absolute masters.”26 Benyowszky further gave a self-aggrandizing report of his own civilizing labors, arguing that he had put an end to the practice of infanticide, “a barbarous and abominable custom” through which infants born on inauspicious days were frequently put to death to ward off the evil omens presaged by their birth.27 The baron also continued to have defenders in the naval ministry. A report from the Bureau de l’Inde in the summer of 1776 recounted an anecdote of Benyowszky’s battlefield heroism during the previous year, in which he supposedly led his small force to defeat a much larger army of Malagasy warriors. Calling the baron “a rare and extraordinary man, made for revolutions and worthy of creating a colony,” the report declared that “A man such as M. de Benyowszky must be absolute in his government,” and concluded that, if he were given adequate support and a free hand, “the King would in twenty years become master of all the island of Madagascar.”28

Given that Madagascar, an island larger than California, had more than a million inhabitants, and its conquest a century later would prove challenging to the large, well-trained army of General Joseph Gallieni, such promises of easy, even inevitable success can only be considered fantastic.29

With such wildly conflicting reports, colonial minister Antoine de Sartine was understandably confused. To clarify the matter, he decided to make use of two newly designated administrators, Bellecombe and Chevreau, who were about

24Letter from de Lessart to Sartine, 5 May 1775, C5A 5, ANOM.
25Letter from Maillart to Sartine, 7 July 1775, C5A 5, ANOM.
26Letter from Benyowszky to Sartine, 21 October 1775, C5A 5, ANOM.
27Letter from Benyowszky to Sartine, 17 August 1775, C5A 5, ANOM. For the practice of infanticide in precolonial Madagascar, see Randrianja and Ellis, 61.
28Bureau de l’Inde report on Madagascar, 30 June 1776, C5A 6, ANOM.
29Randrianja and Ellis, 156-7, 214.
to be dispatched to direct the remaining French possessions in India. As their journey would require them to round the tip of Africa and cross the Indian Ocean, Sartine instructed them to make an official inspection visit of Benyowszky’s colony at Madagascar. Sartine announced their coming visit in a rather stern letter to Benyowszky, writing that “His Majesty’s intention is that you should be directly under their orders during their visit” and that “their report will greatly influence the decision that His Majesty will take on the subject of the establishment at Madagascar.”

Departing from Lorient in March 1776, the two inspectors arrived at Madagascar on September 16 and spent three weeks on the island before continuing their journey to India. They found old trading posts nearly abandoned and the native population living in misery, their once profitable trade with passing French ships now vanished, French storehouses in ruins and their contents, including gunpowder, exposed to the elements and vulnerable to theft. The future Pacific explorer Jean-François de La Pérouse, who transported the inspectors from Isle de France to Madagascar, was struck by the contrast between such penury and the prosperity he had seen at Madagascar three years earlier. La Pérouse attributed these changes to “the different wars that have devastated the land…and annihilated all the resources for subsistence which it provided” since Benyowszky’s arrival, and lamented that “there has never been such famine in this unhappy country.”

After touring the island for four days, the inspectors were finally able to meet with Benyowszky on September 21, and presented him with a list of questions to answer. They observed that his capital of Louisbourg was surrounded by pestilential swamps that would be very expensive and labor intensive to drain, and were shocked to discover that the colony had already cost the treasury nearly two million livres. They found Benyowszky himself alternately resigned and belligerent, declaring one minute that the colony should be abandoned, and soon thereafter threatening to take his project “to the emperor, the king of Prussia, or the Grand Moghul” if France rejected it. They also met with an assembly of Malagasy chiefs, and asked them if they were happy to have a French settlement on their islands. The inspectors’ report noted the hesitancy of their response:

They remained a long time without responding, looking at one another, and occasionally turning their eyes to M. le baron de Benyowszky, who observed them carefully. Finally one of them

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30Letter from Sartine to Benyowszky, 18 February 1776, C5A 6, ANOM.
31La Pérouse, “Rapport sur les résultats fâcheux de l’établissement de Benyowszky,” 1776, C5A 6, ANOM.
32Journal ou notes détaillés sur les opérations de MM de Bellecombe maréchal de camp et Chevreau commissaire général de la marine, tous deux inspecteurs et commissaires pour Sa Majesté dans l’isle de Madagascar,” 1776, C5A 7, ANOM.
[...], said that they were quite pleased to see the French among them, and that they desired to continue to trade as before, that they were upset by the divisions and troubles that had shaken these cantons, and they begged us to forget the past, that they would be more obedient to the government in the future and would seek its protection in all occasions.\textsuperscript{33}

Not surprisingly, the inspectors questioned the sincerity of this response, and concluded that France’s interests would be best served by abandoning plans to conquer and colonize the island and returning to the informal trading relationships which had existed prior to Benyowszky’s arrival, observing that, to pursue Benyowszky’s plans of conquest, “we would have to renounce the principal objective, which is trade.” They concluded, “Let us limit ourselves to coming, cash in hand and with goods for trade, to seek [...] slaves, rice, and livestock, and let us renounce forever the chimera of establishing a colony of Europeans four thousand leagues from the metropole, which will always be the tomb of Frenchmen for the poor air that is breathed there.”\textsuperscript{34} To that end, Bellecombe and Chevreau reassured the Malagasy chiefs that their goal was to restore peace and tranquility and to continue the trading relationships of the past, ordered the colony’s financial officer to limit expenses to ten thousand livres per month, and resolved to recommend the dissolution of the colony.

As the inspectors prepared for their departure, Benyowszky, pleading bad health, requested their permission to convalesce at the Isle de France during Madagascar’s unhealthy season. They granted this request, but the baron instead returned to the metropole to press his case for the continuation of the colony and to request additional compensation in the form of back salary, a promotion to brigadier general, and a Croix de Saint-Louis. Though virtually all of his demands were met, Benyowszky subsequently requested and was granted permission to return to the Habsburg Empire to put his affairs in order, where he appears to have made good on his threat to offer Madagascar to the Empire. As this extravagant offer was declined, Benyowszky subsequently traveled to North America, arriving too late to participate in the American War of Independence, but succeeding in selling his mad scheme to a consortium of Baltimore merchants seeking a new source of slaves. He returned to Madagascar at the head of a small private army in 1785. After raiding a French trading post, he was killed in a retaliatory strike by French troops on May 24, 1786.\textsuperscript{35} Among the papers discovered after his death was a report of a native assembly supposedly held ten years earlier, which proclaimed Benyowszky as emperor of all Madagascar and

\textsuperscript{33}\textsuperscript{33}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{34}\textsuperscript{34}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{35}\textsuperscript{35}Information on Benyowszky’s post-1776 activities is taken from Cultru, \textit{Un empereur de Madagascar}.
granted him “absolute and irrevocable authority” to negotiate with European powers on the island’s behalf.\textsuperscript{36} Benyowszky’s supposed memoirs, published posthumously in London and almost completely fictional, offered an even more fantastic version, claiming that an old Malagasy woman had recognized the Polish baron as the legitimate descendant of Madagascar’s Rohandrian ruling family.\textsuperscript{37}

Equal parts tragedy and farce, the Benyowszky expedition ranks among the great colonial fiascos of the late Old Regime. Why was this unknown Slavic adventurer so long able to deceive French officials into believing in a mirage? The Benyowszky expedition began during the Maupoue “ministerial revolution” and reached its conclusion after the accession of Louis XVI and the rise and fall of Turgot. Because of rapid turnover in the naval and colonial ministry resulting from these changes, officials in Paris failed to recognize the Benyowszky expedition as a disaster until it was too late. The great distance between France and the Indian Ocean was also a factor, as it took six months to reach the Isle de France from France’s Atlantic ports. The frustration of the royal commissioners sent to inspect the Madagascar colony in 1776 is palpable even two centuries later. Lacking the authority to dissolve the ill-conceived colony on the spot, they lamented, “One must wait at least a year before the orders of the court arrive here or at the Isle de France for the establishment to be disbanded. This is surely a misfortune for the King’s subjects who are condemned to wait; many of them will pay with their lives the tribute demanded by Madagascar, this fatal climate.”\textsuperscript{38}

Finally, the Madagascar expedition demonstrates the disparity between colonial theory and practice in Enlightenment-era France. Enlightened theories of the acculturation of savage peoples and the transformation of primitive lands allowed Paris-based French officials to see in Benyowszky what they wanted to see. Some of the best known names of pre-Revolutionary French colonial policy – Turgot, Poivre, Kerguelen, La Pérouse – endorsed an approach in line with the “douce colonisation” of the Abbé Raynal, which aimed to win over the Malagasy through a combination of humane treatment, mutual self-interest, the seductions of consumer goods, and the comforts of civilized society. Such a policy, however, was not to be. Instead, the barriers of distance and lack of communications allowed the colonial tail to wag the metropolitan dog.

\textsuperscript{36} Acte du serment des Roys, princes, et chefs de l’isle de Madagascar, consommé le 1 octobre 1776, dans la plaine de Mahavelou, pour statuer l’élection de Maurice Auguste Comte Beniowsky au rang de l’Ampansacabé, ou chef suprême de la nation,” CSA 6, ANOM.

\textsuperscript{37} Memoirs and Travels of Mauritius Augustus Count de Benyowsky (London: T. F. Unwin, 1893), 515-6, 605-6.

\textsuperscript{38} “Journal,” cited above.