



Fig. 8a, b, c: *Rebiky*: dancers representing the "red" and "white" rulers. Antognibe (for the *ampanjaka* Zafinimena, Avoria, and Anatrôna), c. 1935? (Photographie du Service Photo-Cinéma de la Direction de l'Information; TY 13, no. 138, 140, 141)

### 5. The *rebiky* as an Historical Document

The *rebiky* depicts the Sakalava royal ancestors as warriors, but they are fighting with one another, not with outsiders. The *rebiky* represents the military leadership that led to the expansion of the Sakalava monarchy along the west coast during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, but also the "battles among kin" (*ady milongo*), the succession battles that Sakalava hold responsible for the eventual collapse of the monarchy in the nineteenth century.

The main solution to *ady milongo* in the precolonial period was segmentation. Failed successors to power went off to found their own monarchies ever further north, though it did not always prevent them from returning with reinforcements; one ruler is renowned for butchering all his rivals. The growing strength of the Hova, then the French conquest, closed these avenues. Furthermore, they made the *doany* increasingly untenable as a politico-religious center for living rulers identified with the *Vy Lava Tsy Aroy Manjaka Tokana*, the "Long Knife Without Equal [unpaired] that Rules Alone". During the decades following the collapse of the Northern Sakalava kingdom of Boina in the early nineteenth-century, the royal cemetery seems to have been elaborated as a more secure alternative repository for the royal ancestors, and Sakalava monarchy developed the dual form now characteristic of the Northern and Southern Bemihisatra of the northwest coast, divided between the *doany* and *mahabo*. In other words, the many pairs that are now considered essential to the symbolic and social organization of Sakalava royal service in the Analalava region may have resulted from the historical diminution of Sakalava royal power.

So far I have found no precise evidence of



Figs. 9a, b, c, d: *Rebiky*: dancers representing the "red" and "white" rulers, heading northeast toward the open air council house (*fantsina*) where the spirits are sitting (just outside the frame on upper right). Their followers are outside the frame to the right, and just beyond them to the east is the burial compound. Northern Mahabo on Nosy Lava, Analalava region, 12 May 1973 (Alan Harnik)