

**MISSIONARY ATLAS PROJECT**  
**CENTRAL, EASTERN & SOUTHERN AFRICA**

**MADAGASCAR**

Snapshot Section

**Country Name:**

*Republikan'i Madagasikara*

French: *Republique de Madagascar*

English: Republic of Madagascar

**Country Founded in:**

Madagascar became a French colony in 1896. In 1959, Madagascar adopted their first constitution, and on June 26, 1960, Madagascar gained its independence from France.

**Population:**

19,448,815 (July 2007 est.)

**Government Type:**

Multiparty Republic

**Geography/location in the world:**

Madagascar is an island in the Indian Ocean just off the eastern coast of South Africa. It lies just east of Mozambique.

**Number of people groups:**

There are 40 people groups that make up the population of Madagascar. The largest of these is the *Merina*, which have a population of 4,821,104.

**Picture of flag:**



## Religion Snapshot

Major Religion and % of population: Traditional Ethnic Beliefs (44.77%)

All religions and % for each:

Traditional Ethnic Beliefs (44.77%)

Roman Catholicism (20.7%)

Christianity (47.63%)

Protestant (27.58%)

Independent (2.45%)

Anglican (1.76%)

Marginal (0.22%)

*Note: The percentage of Christian adherents includes numbers for Roman Catholic following as well. Also, some adherents are doubly affiliated, which accounts for the total percentage being greater than 47.63%.*

Islam (7%)

Baha'i (0.12%)

Chinese/Buddhist (0.07%)

Non-religious/other (0.41%)

Government interaction with religion: The constitution provides for a policy of religious freedom in Madagascar and the government respects this right for the most part.

“On September 16, 2005 the Government banned the New Protestant Church in Madagascar (FPVM), led by Pastor Randrianatoandro, for illegally occupying churches assigned to the mainstream Reformed Protestant Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM); the ban was implemented in November. The FPVM broke away from the FJKM church in 2002 and took approximately 300,000 worshippers with it. The FPVM claimed the owners offered the buildings, most of which were wood and thatch huts, to the church. The FPVM challenged the ban in court, which refused to rule on the ban, charging that only President Ravalomanana could overturn the decision to ban a church. President Ravalomanana was a lay vice president in the FJKM, and some observers charged that the closure of the church was politically motivated. The FPVM appealed, and on April 19, 2006, the Supreme Court issued an order requiring the Government to provide proof of the basis for the ban by May 19, 2006. As of June 15, 2006, the Government had not replied to the Supreme Court's order. “

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/71310.htm>

### Sources consulted:

*Operation World*. 21<sup>st</sup> Century. 2001.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madagascar>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ma.html>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/countries.php>

<http://www.peoplegroups.org/MapSearch.aspx?country=Madagascar>

## Country Profile

### Basic Facts

#### Country Name:

Repoblikan'i Madagasikara  
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#### Demographics:

The population of Madagascar has seen considerable growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as it has risen from 15.2 million to 19.4 million people in seven years. The July 2007 estimate for population was 19,448,815 people. Of that, 43.9% were between 0 and 14 years of age, 4,297,985 male and 4,243,369 female. 53% of the population was 15 to 64 years of age with 5,117,174 being male and 5,190,032 being female. The remaining 3.1% of the population is 65 years of age and older with 270,411 males and 329,144 females. The overall male to female ratio for the entire population is 0.992 male/female.

Madagascar consists of 40 individual people groups, but these can be grouped mostly into two primary ethnic groups of Malagasy origin. These two are the Malayo-Indonesian group, which consists of the people that live in the central highland plateau regions, and the Cotiers, which consists of the coastal inhabitants. Those included in the Malayo-Indonesian group are the Merinas and the Betsileo. In the Cotier group are the Betsimisaraka, Sakalava, and Tsimihety, among others. These two groups make up 95.9% of the total population. Other ethnic groups represented on the island include French, Indian, Creole, and Comoran.

The median age of Madagascar inhabitants is 17.8 years, 17.6 years for males and 18 years for females. Madagascar has a birth rate of 38.6 births / 1,000 population and a contrasting death rate of 8.51 deaths / 1,000 population. Thus, the result is a 3.008% population growth rate. The fertility rate of women is 5.24 children born / woman, and the total infant mortality rate is 57.02 deaths / 1,000 live births. The life expectancy among the Malagasy is 62.14 years, 60.23 years for males and 64.1 years for females.

There is a high risk of infectious disease in many areas of Madagascar. In 2003, there was a 1.7% prevalence rate of the HIV/AIDS virus resulting in 140,000 people living with the disease, and 7,500 people died from it that same year. Food or waterborne diseases that are prevalent in areas include bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever. Vectorborne diseases include malaria and plague. There were instances of schistosomiasis, a water contact disease, in 2007.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ma.html>

<http://www.britannica.com/new-multimedia/pdf/wordat122.pdf>

#### Language:

The national language of Madagascar is Malagasy, which is of the Malayo-Polynesian language family rather than an African language family. Linguists believe that Malagasy is most closely associated with the Maanyan language spoken in southeast Borneo. For this reason, historians believe that Madagascar was originally settled by Malay seafarers either in route to or in route from Africa.

Other official languages of Madagascar include French and English. Malagasy is the common language among the people, but French became an official language on the island due to its being under French control from 1896 to 1960. English is still rare in Madagascar, but there are efforts to teach English in schools and it is becoming more widely spoken.

<http://countrystudies.us/madagascar/16.htm>  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madagascar#Language>

### **Society/Culture:**

The beginnings of life on Madagascar remain a mystery. It is believed that the island remained uninhabited until between 1500 and 2100 years ago when Malay seafarers discovered the island while traveling to Africa. Following that time, many groups of African, European, and Arabic descent migrated to the island and had influences there. As a result, there is a large mixture of influences visible in different parts of the island, but the large majority is of Southeast Asian and African descent. The Malagasy language itself is evidence of a Southeast Asian influence, being in the Malayo-Polynesian language family.

The culture of the Malagasy is marked by an intense focus on ancestry. It is a universally held belief among the different Malagasy ethnic groups that death is not the end of one's existence, but that that person continues to be an active participant in the lives of the living. For this reason, the dead are honored and respected very highly. Often times, one's ancestral burial tombs are more costly and more lavishly decorated than their home. In a ceremony known as *famadihana*, the descendants of the dead remove their bodies from a temporary tomb, rewrap their bones in a new shroud, and move them to the sacred tomb called the *tanindrazana*. When one dies, they are placed in a temporary tomb near where they lived until the time of this ceremony when they are moved to the permanent sacred tomb. This is a very costly ceremony, usually because of housing and food costs, but no expense is spared for it because it is so important not to anger the dead.

Daily life among the Malagasy is generally very simple. Most groups engage in farming, although the higher educated, such as the Merina, typically obtain jobs as doctors, lawyers, or politicians. The Malagasy do not strive to have abundance or have means to engage in a variety of activities; they are generally content to relax and not do much of anything. Therefore, there is not as much of an emphasis on obtaining higher education and making more money, as is emphasized more in Western culture.

In each village, there is a magician, called the *ombiasy*, which is involved in all aspects of the people's lives. Whether one is to be married, or having a child, or wants to know the future of the village or of their own particular life, the *ombiasy* is always on hand for these occasions. He is also the one who treats illnesses. The magician will use astrology, which is considered to be very important as well.

In fact, most homes in Madagascar are built on the north-south axis, with the door facing east. This is considered honoring to the ancestors. The north is more favorable than the south, and the east is more favorable than the west; therefore, the northeast is considered to be the best location in the home. This is where the bed traditionally is located. The greeting place for guests is typically in the northwest corner, the cooking hearth in the middle of the western side, and the chickens in the southwest corner, the worst position of the house. Often, the Malagasy house is composed of only one room.

Food in Madagascar is centered around the main dish of rice. Usually, a meal consists of rice accompanied by some kind of a side dish, whether that side dish be a meat or a vegetable of some kind. These sides are generally to provide the rice with some flavor, and meals may not be nutritious at all.

Water is the common beverage at meals, although *rano ampango*, water boiled in the rice cooking pot, may sometimes be served. Breakfasts consist of rice and tea, or rice cakes, or maize porridge. Meals are usually prepared fried, grilled, boiled in water, or cooked in coconut juice.

Coconut is also common in Malagasy meals. Vegetables such as carrots, cauliflower, cabbage, potatoes, peppers, and zucchini are available year-round, but due to the impoverished state of most inhabitants, they are unable to afford these items and most of the population is undernourished.

There are some food taboos that are passed down along ancestral lines and vary from group to group. These are known as *fady*. For the Sakalava, eel and pork are taboo to eat. Sea turtles and cows without horns are taboo for the Antandroy.

Rites of passage in Malagasy life involve circumcision of the male whenever he becomes an adolescent. When this occurs, the grandfather then eats the foreskin of the circumcised. This is in hopes that he will produce many offspring in order that they might worship the ancestors.

The family unit in Madagascar is important. Children are taught very early that they are to respect their elders, as ancestor worship is central in Malagasy culture. The chief aim of families is to produce lots of children for the sake of both worshipping the current ancestors and in hopes that the children will produce many children in order that they may be worshipped as ancestors. Domestic family units usually contain a male head, a female head, and the children. It is common to find a female headed, single-parent home, while male headed single-parent homes are very uncommon. There are also extended family units where there is an older male or female head with their unmarried children

and their grandchildren. Traditionally, it was seen as a sign of success for a man to have multiple wives. Still, 50% of men will have more than one wife at some point in their life.

Education is compulsory for children ages 6-14. This is not always enforced, however, especially in the more rural areas. Children's importance to the agricultural labor force within the family often trumps education. They receive education in the form of learning the wisdom of the elders as much as in the form of formal schooling. Higher education is not an option for many Malagasy youth. It is seen as not useful and unattainable. However, the 5% who are able to pursue higher education will go to France for schooling as the education system in Madagascar is not very good.

In the arena of social etiquette, it is customary to greet people with a hello or a handshake. Close friends may greet each other with two kisses, one on each cheek. With each other, they are fairly communicative, but with strangers, they tend to be reserved and not talk very much. They will rarely initiate a conversation with a stranger. At meal time, it is customary for the eldest to eat first and the men are served the choicest food. However, with the children the youngest may eat before the older children in order to allow that they receive an adequate amount of food. Traditionally, it was common for all to eat food from a community pot, but now this practice is giving way to more a Western style.

In their free time, the Malagasy enjoy soccer and basketball. They also enjoy engaging in such sport as cock-fighting.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Madagascar.html>  
[http://www.tsujiru.net/compass/compass\\_1994/reg/ito\\_atshito.htm](http://www.tsujiru.net/compass/compass_1994/reg/ito_atshito.htm)  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madagascar>

### **Government:**

Government in Madagascar has been a picture of instability since its 1960 independence from France. Following independence, Madagascar's first president, Philibert Tsiranana, led the nation for 12 years under a socialist regime. In 1972, however, anti-government demonstrations caused him to resign from the presidency and two more presidents cycled through the position within a period of three years.

The first of these, General Gabriel Ramanantsoa, resigned as well and within six days his successor, Lt. Col. Richard Ratsimandrava, was assassinated. After a short period of military rule, Didier Ratsiraka took office and formed a new government in June, 1975.

Ratsiraka practiced a policy of socialism for 16 years and he developed a system of high centrality in the government, and even the press was not allowed to directly criticize him. In the late 1980's, however, Ratsiraka was forced to ease up and make some reforms due to the failing economic status in the country. With the relaxing of his policies came peaceful demonstrations and opposition against the president. After an incident where his troops fired on one of these peaceful demonstrations, killing 30 people, Ratsiraka agreed to the formation of a transitional government.

In 1992, a new constitution was drawn which significantly decreased the power of the presidency. Under this new constitution, Madagascar has found more stability and governmental fluidity in the ruling of the nation.

The current president of Madagascar is Marc Ravalomanana. He took office in 2001, replacing Didier Ratsiraka, who had returned to the presidency under the new constitution. The president is elected by direct universal suffrage to serve a term of five years. Each president is allowed to serve no more than three terms, as he can be reelected twice.

The president appoints a prime minister, who is in charge of government operations. The president stands as a symbol of national unity and the leader of foreign policy, but all of his decrees must be countersigned, and he is not allowed to force his hand in government operations, as that realm is to be handled strictly by the prime minister.

An important unwritten law regarding the president and prime minister has to do with the relations between the central highland people and the coastal cotiers. If a highland president is elected, then he must appoint a cotier prime minister, and if a cotier president is elected, then a highland, or Merina, prime minister must be appointed. The prime minister serves a length of time equivalent to the president.

The government of Madagascar consists of three branches: the executive branch, the legislative branch, and the judiciary branch. The executive branch consists of the president and the prime minister along with the cabinet, whom is appointed by the prime minister. The prime minister and his cabinet manage the day-to-day operation and management of the government. The current prime minister under president Ravalomanana is Charles Rabemananjara.

The legislative branch is a bicameral legislation made up of the National Assembly (Assemblée Nationale) and the Senate (Senat). The National Assembly consists of 127 seats, which is a reduction from 160 seats set by the national referendum in April of 2007. Currently, the TIM, or I Love Madagascar, party holds 106 of these seats while the Fanilo party holds 1 and independents hold 20. The representatives of the National Assembly are elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms.

The Senate consists of 100 seats. Two-thirds of these seats are filled by regional assemblies. The other one-third of the seats is filled by appointments of the president. The regional assemblies are representatives of the six autonomous provinces that make up Madagascar. These provinces are the central capital region of Antananarivo, the northern region of Antsiranana, the northeastern region of Toamasina, the northwestern region of Mahajanga, the southeastern region of Fianarantsoa, and the southwestern region of Toliara. Representatives to the Senate also serve four-year terms.

The judiciary branch is the third branch of government operating in Madagascar and it operates entirely independent of either the executive branch or the legislative branch. The judiciary branch is broken up into a complex system of courts. The highest of these is the

Supreme Court, or the Cour Supreme. Beneath this is also the High Constitutional Court or Haut Cour Constitutionnelle. This judicial system is very concerned with the governance of laws and sets forth explicit guidelines as to the freedoms of the press and of people.

Madagascar has a number of political parties, each with a primary representative, which is usually the candidate for the presidency. These parties include the Association for the Rebirth of Madagascar party, or AREMA, led by Pierrot Rajaonarivelo; the Democratic Party for Union in Madagascar, or PSDUM, led by Jean Lahiniriko; the Economic Liberalism and Democratic Action for National Recovery party, or LEADER/Fanilo, led by Herizo Razafimahaleo; the Fihaonana Party, or FP, led by Guy-Willy Razanamasy; the I Love Madagascar party, or TIM, led by Marc Ravalomanana; and the Renewal of the Social Democratic Party, or RPSD, led by Evariste Marson. Political pressure groups and leaders in Madagascar include the Committee for the Defense of Truth and Justice or KMMR, the Committee for National Reconciliation or CRN, led by Albert Zafy, and the National Council of Christian Churches or FFKM.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ma.html>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics\\_of\\_Madagascar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Madagascar)

[http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country\\_studies/madagascar/GOVERNMENT.html](http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country_studies/madagascar/GOVERNMENT.html)

### **Economy:**

In the economic realm, Madagascar always has and continues to suffer although recent governmental policy changes have helped Madagascar to reach an upswing in its economy. The basis for the economy is agriculture. This includes both fishing and forestry. Its major agricultural exports include vanilla, coffee, sugarcane, cloves, cocoa, rice, cassava, beans, bananas, and peanuts.

As the world's leading producer of vanilla, Madagascar's economy has been heavily influenced by the demand for the product. In 1985, when Coca-cola introduced a new product which used less vanilla, Madagascar's economy suffered remarkably. With the return of Coca-Cola Classic, the economy also returned to its previous levels.

Madagascar is one of the poorest countries in the world. This is in spite of the fact that it has such rich soil and biodiversity. A number of factors have contributed to why Madagascar remains so poor under these conditions. A major one of these is the rapid deforestation and erosion that is taking place annually in Madagascar. Approximately 90% of the forests are gone and a majority of the island is burned every year for agricultural purposes. The population continues to cripple itself with its slash-and-burn approach to cultivating the land. Other factors contributing to the poor state of the country have to do with its relatively small population, lack of infrastructure, geographic isolation, and poor educational system.

Since the introduction of Marc Ravalomanana as president, major structural policies have been put in place to help the economy. He has diligently worked to attract foreign investors for the sake of boosting the economy. Factories have been set up in export



processing zones, or free trade zones, which have focused on the production of clothes targeting the U.S. and European populations. With the institution of policies to help restrict inflation, the economy has begun to see steady growth since 2002.

In 2007, Madagascar's GDP totaled \$19.95 billion. This reflected a real growth rate of 6.3% from the previous year. The GDP per capita was \$1,000. By sector, the GDP was composed of agriculture (27.3%), industry (15.8%), and services (56.8%).

As of the year 2000, 7.3 million people were in the labor force, and in 2004 half of the population fell below the poverty line. In 2007, budget revenues totaled \$1.22 billion and expenditures were at \$1.555 billion. Industry grew 6% with major industries in meat processing, seafood, soap, breweries, tanneries, sugar, textiles, glassware, cement, an automobile assembly plant, paper, petroleum, and tourism.

Export commodities include coffee, vanilla, shellfish, sugar, cotton cloth, chromite, and petroleum products bringing in \$1.027 billion f.o.b. (free on board). Export partners are the United Kingdom, accounting for 32.1%, France at 25.3%, Germany at 5%, and Italy at 4.1%.

Import commodities include capital goods, petroleum, consumer goods, and food, costing a total of \$2.005 billion c.i.f. (cost, insurance and freight). Major imports came from the United Kingdom (14.5%), France (12%), China (9.3%), Iran (5.6%), and Mauritius (4.7%).

The Madagascan currency is the Malagasy ariary (MGA) which had an exchange rate of 1,880 MGAs / 1 U.S. dollar in 2007.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madagascar#Economy>

[http://news.mongabay.com/2005/0522-rhett\\_butler.html](http://news.mongabay.com/2005/0522-rhett_butler.html)

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ma.html>

### **Literacy:**

Defined as the population of age 15 or greater that can read and write, 68.9% of Madagascar was literate in 2003.

### **Land/Geography:**



Geographic Coordinates: 20°00'S, 47°00'E

Madagascar is an island in the Indian Ocean 250 miles off the east coast of Africa. It is the fourth largest island in the world, following Greenland, New Guinea, and Borneo. The Mozambique Channel runs in the 250 mile strip that separates Madagascar and Africa.

Madagascar's geography can be classified into five main regions. These regions are the east coast, the Tsaratanana Massif, the central highlands, the west coast, and the southwest. These regions are distinguished by the various massifs in the region and they have unique geographical characteristics.

The east coast has a long, straight shoreline that has a narrow strip of beach before running into a high escarpment. The Tsaratanana Massif contains the highest point of the island, Maromokotro, at 2,876 meters. The central highlands are characterized by a long north-south running plateau where the capital city of Antananarivo is located. It also contains the largest body of water contained in Madagascar, which is Lake Alaotra. The west coast is a gradual descent from the central regions, which is a sharp contrast from the east coast. It has a wide strip of alluvial plains that runs from the coast inland. The coastline has a lot more indentations than the east coast and it provides for a great number of natural harbors. The southwest region is characterized by the Mahafaly Plateau and a desert occupied by the Antandroy people. It is bordered by two massifs, the Ivakoany Massif to the east and the Isala Roiniforme Massif to the north.

Madagascar has many rivers that run both to the east and to the west. The rivers that hit the east coast are shorter and faster moving because of the nature of the topography. With the steep escarpment being so near the east coast, the rivers run swiftly, making a series of spectacular waterfalls. The rivers that flow to the east coast are the Mananara and the Mangoro, which originate in the central highlands. The Maningory River originates at Lake Alaotra, also in the highlands, and travels east to the coast. The Bemarivo, Ivondro, and Mananjary rivers also travel to the east coast.

The rivers that run west to the coast are longer and slower moving because of the more gradual descent and sloping towards the west. These rivers include the Sambirano, the Mahajamba, the Betsiboka, the Mania, the North and South Mahavavy, the Mangoky, and the Onilahy. There are also two important lakes in Madagascar aside from Lake Alaotra, Lake Kinkony in the northwest and Lake Ihotry in the southwest.

Madagascar has been called the “Great Red Island” due to the fact that it has a red lateritic soil in many places. Due to deforestation problems, the soil is very erosive which causes the rivers to have an incredible red color as well. Astronauts have commented that it looks as though Madagascar is bleeding to death.

The soil is very rich in minerals and there is a great variety of flora and fauna that are present in Madagascar. In fact, many species found in Madagascar cannot be found anywhere else in the world. There are 900 different species of orchids found in Madagascar. A great deal of tropical plants such as bananas, mangoes, coconuts, and vanilla are grown as well.

Many of the animal species found in Madagascar are native to the island. There are sixty-six land mammal species that are unique to Madagascar. The typical African animals are not found on Madagascar and neither are the large variety of venomous snakes that can be found in Africa. There are about 800 different species of butterflies and 40 different species of lemurs.

The climate of Madagascar varies in different locations on the island. Along the coast, the climate is tropical. Inland it is temperate, and south it is arid. The island is characterized by southeastern trade winds that come in from the Indian Ocean.

Madagascar has two seasons, a rainy season from November to April that is hot and a dry season from May to October that is cooler. Rainfall varies greatly over the island. The southeast trades bring up to 150 inches of rain to the east coast annually, while the southwest portion, near Toliara, lies in a rain shadow and receives an annual rainfall of 14 inches. In the central highlands, rainfall is moderate, with annual amounts of around 50 inches of rain. The northwest portion of the island receives a larger amount of rain due to the monsoon winds which bring an annual rainfall of 83 inches.

Temperatures are fairly stable year round. The hottest month is in December, with temperatures between 61 and 84 °F (16 and 29 °C). The coolest month, July, has temperatures ranging from 50 °F (10 °C) to 78 °F (26 °C). There is a cyclone season from December to March when tropical cyclones periodically hit the island from the Indian Ocean and bring torrential rain and floods.

Madagascar has a total area of 587,040 sq km. 581,540 sq km are land and the remaining 5,500 sq km are water. Comparatively, Madagascar is almost twice the size of Arizona or as large as California, Oregon, and Washington together. It has 4,828 km of coastline and 0 km of boundaries, as it is an island. It claims 12 nautical miles of territorial sea, 24 nautical miles of contiguous zone, and 200 nautical miles of an exclusive economic zone.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography\\_of\\_Madagascar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Madagascar)  
<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-23461/Madagascar>  
<http://www.wildmadagascar.org/conservation/threats.html>  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ma.html>

## **History**

It is suspected, due to archaeological evidence, the first inhabitants of Madagascar arrived between 200 and 500 A.D. These people were of Austronesian descent, travelling the distance of 3,700 miles, following the trade winds and currents from Borneo, in outrigger canoes. The Malagasy language has very close ties to that of the Ma'anyan language that is spoken in Southern Borneo.

Between 900 and 1200 A.D. Arab peoples arrived in the northern regions of Madagascar and set up some trading posts. Their records provide the earliest written history of the country. Bantu settlers from Africa arrived about the same time. Words from all of these different groups were incorporated into the Malagasy language. These groups also made other contributions to the Malagasy culture allowing them to be distinctive from their native ancestors in Indonesia. The Bantus introduced musical instruments that are common in Malagasy music, such as the jejolava and the valiha. The Arabs introduced their religion, Islam, as well as practices like circumcision and a communal grain-pool into the culture.

It was not until 1500 that Europeans knew of Madagascar. In an effort to prevent the Muslims from having control over the spice trade, European nations began to send their cargo ships around Africa's Cape of Good Hope in order to get to India, rather than send them through the Middle East as had been done before.

In 1500, one such ship, captained by Portuguese Diogo Dias, blew off course in its journey to India. Dias "discovered" Madagascar as the result. For the next two hundred years, European nations tried to establish colonies in the island, but they all failed due to the combination of a hostile greeting from the natives, disease, and an inability to survive the climate of the region. Only a French colony at present day Fort Dauphin was able to survive for thirty years until it suffered an eighteen-month siege from the Antanosy tribe and was abandoned. Not until the late 17<sup>th</sup> century were the French finally able to establish some trading posts along the east coast.

From 1680-1725, Madagascar became a stronghold for pirate operations. Pirates such as William Kidd, Henry Every, John Bowen, and Thomas Tew set up bases at Antongil Bay and Nosy Baraha, which are off the northeast coast of the island. These pirates would raid merchant ships in route to and from India, whether they were from Europe, the Arabian Peninsula, or other Indian Ocean ports. Low paid merchant seamen rarely put up a fight and often joined forces with the pirate crews.

During this time, the Malagasy natives often waged deadly wars between the various tribes using gunpowder and muskets provided by the pirate colonies that resided nearby.

The tribes with the closest connection to pirate strongholds were the most powerful. The Betsimisaraka and the Sakalava proved to be the strongest, subduing the other tribes and selling their prisoners to the Arab slave-traders.

The Merina people, another Malagasy ethnic group, lived relatively isolated from other groups in the central highlands of Madagascar. There were different clans of the Merina group, and they were not united until the late 1700's when Andrianampoinimerina, a self-made king of one of the clans, married the princesses of the other clans and warred against their princes. He was able to subdue all the other clans and unite them as a single Merina group with his capital at the city of Antananarivo. After declaring, "*Ny ranomasina no valapariako*," which means "the sea is the boundary of my rice-field," he ambitiously began the task of conquering all the other native tribes around him and pushing the boundaries of his kingdom to the shores.

Andrianampoinimerina codified laws, built structures to increase arable land around Antananarivo, introduced the metal spade, and portrayed superior military leadership. He died in 1810 before he was able to conquer the whole island, but after he had conquered the tribes of the Bara and the Betsileo. His son, Radama I succeeded him on the throne.

Radama I shared his father's ambition and continued the campaign to make the Merina kingdom extend throughout the entire island of Madagascar. However, to aid in this task, Radama I employed the aid of the British. In exchange for outlawing the slave-trade in Madagascar, the British announced Radama I as King of Madagascar and gave him an annual sum of gold, silver, gunpowder, flint, muskets, and British army uniforms.

Radama I admitted Protestant missionaries into the country and allowed Christianity to spread across the island. The British knew that this act would spread British influence across the island and weaken the existing French influence. Radama I continued the campaign for rule over the entire island. He defeated the Betsimisaraka with the help of the British and exclaimed, "Today, the whole island is mine! Madagascar has but one master." Radama I died in 1828 and his wife, Ranaivalona I took over his throne. Radama had succeeded in gaining control of the entire island with the exception of the Sakalava in the south.

Queen Ranaivalona I continued the Merina monarchy, but ruled in a very different manner than the previous two kings. She outlawed Christianity on the island and persecuted many of the Christians that remained. She expelled the missionaries and repudiated the treaties that the former king had signed with Britain. She re-installed the power of the sorcerers and endeavored to return the island to the native religion of the Malagasy, installing the twelve sampy, talismans attributed with supernatural powers, in the palace at Antananarivo.

Ranaivalona killed foreigners and political opponents and expelled all foreign influence from the island. She was nicknamed Ranaivalona the Cruel and her time in power is remembered as the 'time when the land was dark.' At the end of her 33-year reign, Madagascar was isolated from European influence.

Radama II, the son of Ranavalona I, took the throne and continued the Merina monarchy after his mother's death in 1861. He had secretly attended Catholic mass during the reign of his mother, and when he assumed power, he re-opened the island to trade and missionaries. His reign was short, however, because the Prime Minister, Rainivonanahitriniony, engineered a plan to have the king strangled in 1863.

The remainder of the Merina monarchy would be ruled by Rainivonanahitriniony or his brother, Rainilaiarivony, from behind the scenes while their wives, Queen Resoaherina, Queen Ranavalona II and Queen Ranavalona III were on the throne.

The Merina monarchy came to an end in 1896 after France defeated Madagascar in the Franco-Hova War of 1883 and again at Antananarivo in 1895. Britain had ceded all of its claims in Madagascar to the French and the French made a surprise attack on Antananarivo from the west after landing a flying-column in Mahajanga and marching south and west along the Betsiboka River. Defeating the capital city of Antananarivo, France gained control of Madagascar and voted to annex it as a French territory in 1896.

The time of French control in Madagascar between 1896 and 1945 is referred to as the colonial period. Joseph-Simon Gallieni was the French military commander sent to overthrow the Malagasy Queen. He then took control of the government and became the acting governor general.

Under his control, slavery was abolished, roads were built, teaching French in school was made compulsory, and a railroad began construction between Tamatave and Antananarivo. Gallieni replaced the native officials with French officials and the economy of Madagascar began to improve. This economic development increased under successive French officials as more roads, cities, and seaports were constructed and improved. Trade with France provided helpful economic benefits for Madagascar as well as France.

In 1946, the new constitution of France made Madagascar an overseas territory of the French Union. In response, there were violent uprisings from political groups that desired Malagasy autonomy on the island. This led to the deaths of many thousands of Malagasy (estimates vary from 11,000 to 90,000). In 1956, France decided to allow their overseas departments to decide for themselves whether they would remain under French control or not, under the *Loi Cadre* (Overseas Reform Act).

October 14, 1958, Madagascar chose to become an autonomous state within the French Union and then Madagascar adopted a constitution and declared independence on June 26, 1960. Philibert Tsiranana became the first president of Madagascar.

Under Tsiranana, the Malagasy Republic remained faithful to Western governmental policies, resisting the trend toward communism. Opposition against Tsiranana grew, and he was forced to step down from the presidency in 1972. Power was given to General Gabriel Ramanantsoa and policies shifted in favor of the Soviet Union and communism.

Ramanantsoa only had power for three years and his successor, Colonel Richard Ratsimandrava was assassinated after only six days in the presidency. Power then shifted to Gilles Andriamahazo for only a few months before Didier Ratsiraka, a Lieutenant-Commander, took power in a coup in June 1975. Ratsiraka held power for 17 years until he was forced to submit his power to a new democratic constitution in 1992 that would call for an elected official that same year.

Didier Ratsiraka nationalized the country of Madagascar during his reign of power and had a policy of socialism. He cut all ties with France and French immigrants began to leave and take all of their skills with them. This left Madagascar in an economic decline. Ratsiraka, however, remained in office due to the fact that his political party was the only one in existence for the next set of elections. He extended his presidential control over the government ensuring his continued seat of power.

In 1986, due to horrible economic conditions, Ratsiraka changed laws and moved toward a free market economy. France forgave a debt of four billion francs. Under Ratsiraka, the economy continued to fail, as it did under the next president, Albert Zafy, and again under Ratsiraka after the 1996 presidential elections.

The economy sunk to an all time low following the 2001 presidential elections between Ratsiraka and Marc Ravalomanana, due to the crisis of the elections themselves. There was no clear winner of the elections, but Ravalomanana declared that the results of that election had been tampered with and thus, he declared himself the rightful winner of the election. He began setting up his administration, but supporters on both sides rose up to fight each other over the issue. Eventually, Ravalomanana's supporters were able to defeat those of Ratsiraka and Ratsiraka fled the country to France. Marc Ravalomanana took office during the country's time of biggest economic and stability crisis.

Marc Ravalomanana immediately began to address the issues of economic crisis, and after efforts to bring foreign investors and donors to the country; Ravalomanana began to win the support of his own people. In the following years, Madagascar has seen its first upturn swing in the economy.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Madagascar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Madagascar)  
<http://www.wildmadagascar.org/history/>  
<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-23449/Madagascar>

### **Christian History**

Efforts to Christianize Madagascar came about rather slowly following the European "discovery" of the island by Diogo Dias in 1500. Settlements did not last long on the island due to climate hardships and hostile contacts with the native peoples. Likewise, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, efforts to send missionaries to the island to establish missions were unsuccessful. Success in this area was not made until the reign of Radama I of the Merina monarchy who opened the country to foreign immigrants and missionaries.

The first mission to arrive in Madagascar was a Protestant mission, the London Missionary Society (LMS). It arrived in 1818, and by 1836, it had taught 30,000 people to read and seen 2,000 converts to Christianity. Likewise, the Bible had been translated to the language of Malagasy. That Bible translation is still used today.

In 1836, all missionaries were expelled from the island due to the mandate of Queen Ranavalona I (Ranavalona the Cruel). They were not allowed to return until her son succeeded her on the throne in 1861. Her son, Radama II, had secretly attended mass during his mother's reign, and upon her death, he restored Radama I's policies and reopened the country to missionary involvement. It was at this time that the Jesuits came to Madagascar and the Malagasy Catholic Church was established. By 1875, there were 15,000 Catholics.

Following the persecution of Ranavalona I, the LMS returned to Madagascar to find 5,000 people who had retained their faith throughout the queen's reign. For the remainder of the Merina monarchy, there would be waves of Christian converts with membership rising to 13,000 in 1867, 230,000 in 1870, and 455,000 in 1895. At this time, there were also 112,000 baptized Catholics and 275,000 catechumens.

Following the annexation of Madagascar into the French community, the French Jesuits took control of many of the schools that had been established by the missions. Other mission societies entered the country and reached a comity agreement in 1913. At this time, the LMS released 1,290 schools and 500 churches to these other societies. Then, in 1968, these united to form the largest Protestant church in Madagascar, the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar. The second largest is the Malagasy Lutheran Church, formed by the Norwegian Missionary Society and two American Lutheran groups in 1950.

The Protestant movement was focused mainly in the central highlands among the Merina population; therefore, the Catholic Church focused its efforts on the poorer, coastal groups. That trend has continued to today, but, Catholicism has had its influence in schools and intellectual groups.

As of 2000, the Holy See does have diplomatic relations with Madagascar and is represented in government by a pro-nuncio that lives in Antananarivo.

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## **Religions**

### **Non Christian**

*Traditional Ethnic Religion (44.77%):*

Although approximately only half the population still holds this ethnic belief system as their primary religion, virtually all Malagasy people retain significant ties to this religion because it is such an integral part of their way of life.



The Malagasy culture is centered on a respect for ancestors, due to the belief that the dead play a significant role in the lives of the living. Under this religious system, there is a strong connection between the living and the dead. Although there is a Creator God, *Zanahary*, it is believed that dead ancestors have control over events that happen in the lives of the living. Therefore, the Malagasy people spend much of their time trying to please their past ancestors.

The most important ritual that takes place is called a *famadihana*, which means “turning of the dead.” During this time, one removes the bones of their ancestor, wraps them in a new shroud, and moves them to the sacred burial tomb of their family. Sometimes, during these ceremonies, the corpses are fed and danced with.

Malagasy etiquette and special events such as weddings and births are also determined according to what is considered pleasing and honorable to past ancestors.

Christianity has a significant presence among the Malagasy as the claimed religion, but many of those who profess Christianity also practice their native beliefs in conjunction with Christian beliefs. So although, the percentage of the population that is practicing this religion seems to be declining, it still remains very important and very significant in the lives of a majority of the Malagasy population.

*Islam (7%):*

Arabs immigrated to Madagascar as refugees following the death of Muhammad in 632. The Muslim faith, however, did not arrive in Madagascar until the last wave of Arabic immigrants, the Antalaotra, arrived from East Africa. The Arabs have had a significant influence on the Malagasy culture as many Arabic words have found their way into the Malagasy language.

The Arabs were the first to transcribe the Malagasy language into a written language using the Arabic alphabet, Sorabe. The Arabs also brought many customs with them that have become commonplace in the Malagasy culture as well. These include circumcision, the communal grain pool, and even the patriarchal system, which is counter to the original native system of matriarchy, practiced by the Indonesians.

As evidenced by the many influences of Arabic culture in Madagascar, there is a significant concentration of Arabic heritage in Madagascar. Most of these are located in the northwestern part of the island in the Majunga region. There is a sizable group in the southwest as well.

Although the Islam faith only represents 7% of the population, there has been a large growth trend of Islam in recent years. In the southwest, the Malagasy have called for a return to their native religion of Islam and many have responded to that call. One such incident saw a 17,500 en-masse conversion to Islam. Among the Sakalava and Antankarana in the northwest, there is also a large concentration of Islamic followers.

*Baha'i* (0.12%):

The Baha'i faith was founded in Madagascar in 1955. Since that time, the number of local spiritual assemblies has grown from 3 in 1964 to 48 in 1995. The number of Baha'i adherents continues to grow rapidly in Madagascar.

*Hinduism* (0.1%):

Hinduism entered Madagascar with the arrival of the Gujarati Indians from the Saurashtra region of India. This group arrived in small sailing boats and landed at the port of Mahajanga in the northwest. From there, they spread across the entire country. Initially, the Gujarati represented a very poor population in Madagascar, but since independence in 1960, they have been able to step into prominent positions in the economic sector. The Gujarati group retains their language and culture, speaking Hindi or Gujarati and practicing Hinduism. The younger Gujarati generation, however, has begun to learn the Malagasy language as well as French or English, and it has begun the process of assimilation into the Malagasy culture.

*Chinese Folk Religion* (0.1%):

The Chinese folk religion has elements of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. It is centered around the idea of maintaining harmony.

*Buddhism* (approximately 3,000 in 1995):

Practiced by the Han Chinese population in Madagascar.

*Judaism* (approximately 200 in 1995):

Judaism in Madagascar, being representative of such a small group in Madagascar, is promoted primarily by one man, Raherimasoandro Andriamamonjy, nicknamed Hery. He visited Israel in 1991 and began a group in 1992 called "Club Shalom Madagascar." The group struggles to learn more about the religion, neither knowing the Hebrew language nor having much in the way of written materials or religious paraphernalia. Hery continues to do research concerning Jewish history and practice and has organized a Sabbath worship group that meets in a home of one of the members in Antananarivo. No Jews are native born to date although the Antaimoro tribe descends from a Jewish tribe that fled Mecca and arrived in Madagascar in 1497.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam\\_in\\_Madagascar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Madagascar)

<http://www.30-days.net/muslims/africa-southern/madagascar/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism\\_in\\_Madagascar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism_in_Madagascar)

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=103690&rog3=CH>

<http://www.kulanu.org/madagascar/madagascar.html>

*Témoins de Jehovah* (Jehovah's Witnesses): This group was established in Madagascar in 1933. As of 1995, they had 225 congregations and a membership of 10,441 with 35,000 affiliates. In Malagasy, this group is known as Vavolombelon'i Jehovah. They were banned in 1970, but by 1995 had 1,438 adult baptisms.

*Eglise Catholique au Madagascar* (Roman Catholic Church): The Catholic Church of Madagascar was established in 1540 but suffered under the persecution of Queen Ranavalona I of the Merina monarchy. However, it was reestablished in 1861 after the death of Ranavalona I and the ascension of Radama II to the Merina throne. Catholicism has been focused on the coastal regions for spreading and bringing in converts, but more recently, Catholicism has begun to penetrate intellectual circles in the schools.

The Catholic Church has 21 dioceses in Madagascar and 4 archdioceses. The archdioceses are at Antananarivo, Antsiranana, Fianarantsoa, and Toliara. The dioceses under the archdiocese at Antananarivo are at Ambatondrazaka, Antsirabé, Miarinarivo, Moramanga, and Tsiroanomandidy. Those under the archdiocese of Antsiranana are Ambanja, which is vacant, Fenoarivo Antsinanana, Mahajanga, Port-Bergé, and Toamasina. Those under the archdiocese of Fianarantsoa are Ambositra, Farafangana, Ihosy, and Mananjary. The last three dioceses are under the archdiocese of Toliara: Morombe, Morondava, and Tôlagnaro. The Holy See maintains diplomatic relations with Madagascar.

*Eglise Orthodoxe Grecque* (Greek Orthodox Church): The Greek Orthodox Church was established in 1927. Its 3 congregations of 378 people are Greek and the Church is located in Majunga. There is no priest.

*Eglise Orthodoxe Russe* (Russian Orthodox Church): The Russian Orthodox Church was established around 1970 and in 1995 had 3 congregations of 1,599 members.

### **Christian or Evangelical**

*Assemblées de Dieu* (Assemblies of God): The Assemblies of God church in Madagascar was established around 1968. It was a schism of the former *Fiangonana Protestanta Malagasy* (French Reformed Church) and a mission of the Swedish Free Mission. As of 2001, there were 115 Assemblies of God congregations with 10,000 total members and 21,000 affiliates in Madagascar.

*Eglise Apostolique de Madagascar* (Apostolic Church of Madagascar): The Apostolic Church of Madagascar was established in 1968 as a schism of the Episcopal Church and a mission of the Anglican Orthodox Church. American Missionaries started it. As of 1995, there were 123 congregations in Madagascar with 14,000 members and 25,000 affiliates. In addition, the Apostolic Church had 5 native clergy, 1 Bible School, and 1 Seminary.

*Eglise Baptiste Biblique à Madagascar* (Bible Baptist Church in Madagascar): This church was established in 1930 by American missionaries of the Conservative Baptist

Foreign Missionary Society and as a schism of the prominent London Missionary Society. In 2001, this church had 50 congregations with 1,652 members and 5,500 affiliates.

*Eglise de Jésus-Christ à Madagascar* (Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar): In Malagasy, this church is the *Fiangonan'i Jesoa Kristy eto Madagasikara (FJKM)*. This church's roots go back to the first missionaries to arrive in Madagascar in 1818 connected with the London Missionary Society. The church in its present state was not established until 1968 when the Malagasy Friends Church, the French Reformed Church, and the London Missionary Society all agreed to combine to form the FJKM. It is the largest Protestant Church in Madagascar with a current membership of 1.2 million and 2.5 million affiliates in 5,800 congregations. The church operates 75 schools, 4 seminaries, and participates as a cooperative founder of a fifth seminary. President Marc Ravalomanana is a member of this church, which has led to concerns about matters of church and state separation. The New Protestant Church in Madagascar was formed in 2002 from a schism where 300,000 members left the FJKM.

*Eglise Adventiste du Septième Jour* (Seventh-Day Adventists): The Seventh-Day Adventist Church was established in Madagascar in 1926. As of 2001, there were 255 congregations with a total membership of 53,871 and 75,000 affiliates. The church is a part of the Indian Ocean Union Mission, the general conference of Seventh-Day Adventists that covers all of South Africa. In Madagascar, the church had 31 total clergy members in 1995, both national and expatriate. There is one Seventh-Day Adventist clinic and one Adventist operated printing press. The Adventists have 5 schools and had an annual baptism of 520 in 1995.

There was a meeting held at Mahamasina (Sacred) Stadium in Antananarivo in May 2007 when Madagascar president, Marc Ravalomanana spoke to 30,000 Seventh-Day Adventists, encouraging them to spread and live out their faith in Madagascar and to continue to help and develop beneficial environmental programs in Madagascar.

<http://news.adventist.org/data/2007/1178644101/index.html.en>

*Eglise du Réveil des Disciples du Seigneur* (Soatanana Revival Church): This church is the product of revivalism in Madagascar. The first Malagasy revival took place in the village of Soatanana in 1895. In 1955, revival gave birth to the FFSM, the Soatanana Revival Church. It is a church attended primarily by the Betsileo tribe. It had 104 national clergy in 1995. At that time, there were 400 congregations with 10,000 members and 27,000 affiliates.

*Eglise du Réveil Spirituelle Malgache* (Malagasy Spiritual Church of Revival): This church was established in 1958 from a schism of the Malagasy Lutheran Church. In 1995, it had 300 congregations with 12,000 members and 25,000 affiliates.

*Eglise Episcopale de Madagascar* (Episcopal Church of Madagascar): Malagasy: *Ekllesia Episkopaly Malagasy*. This church was established in 1864 as a mission of the Anglican

Mission Agency, USPG. In 2001, they had 1,100 congregations with 100,719 members and 280,000 affiliates.

*Eglise Evangélique Libre* (Free Evangelical Church): This church was established about 1965 and had 186 congregations with 14,865 members and 33,000 affiliates in 2001.

*Eglise Neo-Apostolique* (New Apostolic Church): This church was established in 1965 as a mission of the Neuapostolische Kirche, which has its headquarters in Zurich. In 1995, there were 150 congregations with 17,000 members and 25,685 affiliates.

*Eglise Luthérienne Malgache* (Malagasy Lutheran Church): Malagasy: Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy (FLM). This church was established in 1866 by missionaries of the Norwegian Missionary Society and missionaries of the American Lutheran Church. It is the second largest Protestant Church in Madagascar behind the FJKM. In 2001, it had 7,212 congregations with 375,000 total members and 1.5 million affiliates. This church operates 6 Bible Schools and 1 seminary.

*Eglise Malgache du Réveil* (Malagasy Revivalist Church, Jesus Saves): This Pentecostal Church was formed in 1962 and was banned in 1970. In 2001, this church had 146 congregations with 29,279 members and 65,000 affiliates.

*Eglise Malgache Luthérienne Evangile* (Lutheran Gospel Church): Malagasy: Fiangonana Ara-pilazantsara Loterana Malagasy. This church formed around 1960 out of the FLM. In 1995, it had 10 congregations with 1,500 members and 3,000 affiliates.

*Eglise Pentecostale Unie* (United Pentecostal Church): This church is a Unitarian church that was established in 1969 as a mission of the United Pentecostal Church of America. In 2001, this church had 400 congregations with 27,000 members and 40,000 affiliates.

*Eglise Pentecôtiste en Madagascar* (Pentecostal Full Gospel Church): This church was founded in 1961 by M. A. Daoud of Lebanon. He was later deported. In 1995, there were only 5 congregations with 500 members and 1,000 affiliates.

*Eglise Protestante Malgache TA* (Malagasy Protestant Church): Malagasy: Antranozozoro Malagasy Church (FMTA). This church was founded in 1894 by the London Missionary Society. In 1967, they applied to join the World Council of Churches. This church operates 1 seminary in Madagascar. In 2001, the FMTA had 120 congregations with a total membership of 50,000 and 100,000 affiliates.

*Eglise Protestante Témoin à Jésus* (Protestant Witness to Jesus Church): Malagasy: Fiangonana Protestanta Vavolombelon'i Jesosy. This church was established in 1967 as a schism from the FJKM. In 1995, it had 106 congregations with 9,500 members and 19,000 affiliates.

*Eglise Réformée Evangélique de Madagascar* (Reformed Evangelical Church of Madagascar): This church was established in 1955 and was a part of the London

Missionary Society. It operates 1 Bible School and 1 seminary. In 2001, there were 350 congregations with 52,500 members and 105,000 affiliates.

## People Groups

### 15304

#### **Antakarana (139,869)**

The Antakarana people are a Malagasy tribe that lives on the northern tip of Madagascar near the town of Antsiranana (or Diégo-Suarez) in the province of Antsiranana. Their name, Antakarana, is sometimes seen in different variations (i.e. Antankarana, Tankarana, Takarana) and they are sometimes known as the “People of the Rocks.” This is due to their location of inhabitation, which is very rocky. In fact, they are cut off from the southern regions of Madagascar by the Tsaratanana mountain range.

The Antakarana are of a mixed ancestry, Austronesian, African, and Arab. These people were traders that settled the northern region during the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and were known as the Antalaotra (“people of the sea”). The Antakarana speak their own dialect of the Malagasy language.

They are primarily cattle farmers and only grow a few crops in small numbers. These include maize, rice, and cassava. The burial rituals of the Antakarana reveal that they leave the coffins above ground rather than burying them in the ground, similar to the neighboring Betsimisaraka and Tanala tribes.

An interesting historical story related to the Antakarana explains their identity in religion, which is primarily Islam. During the Merina conquest of the island in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Antakarana were in danger of being wiped out by the Merina. In attempts to escape, the Antakarana, under their king, Tsimiaro I, hid in caves for over a year. During this time, Tsimiaro I prayed that, if his people should survive, they would embrace Islam. They did survive the Merina onslaught, and the king held to his vow. The Antakarana have a strong Muslim influence mingled with their Malagasy practices.

As a result of the efforts of the London Missionary Society, the Bible has existed in the Malagasy language since 1835. Outreach to the Antakarana is sparse, and many hold to their beliefs in Islam though these are syncretistic with their native Animistic beliefs. Peoplegroups estimates that approximately 13.4 % of the Antakarana’s 140,000 population adhere to Christianity and only 5.97% of those are evangelical, with a total Antakarana evangelical population of 0.8%. There are weekly Christian radio broadcasts available to the people, but only a few hours each week.

<http://www.worldmissioncentre.com/ANTANKARANA.html>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rog3=MA&rop3=100378>

[http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/Flags/mg\\_antak.html](http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/Flags/mg_antak.html)

**15289****Antambahoaka (58,713)**

The Antambahoaka tribe of Madagascar is one of the 18 primary tribes dwelling on the island. The Antambahoaka reside in the southeast of Madagascar around the Mananjary region in the Fianarantsoa province. A variance for their tribe name is Tambahoaka, and they are known as the “People of the People.” The Antambahoaka speak a dialect of Malagasy.

The Antambahoaka claim Raminia as their ancestor. Raminia was a king who came from Mecca in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and settled in the southeast portion of Madagascar. There is a larger group known as the Zafindraminia, meaning “descendants of Raminia,” which all claim a line back to Raminia. It is believed that some of these migrated north to become part of the Merina ruling class during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These had skills in astrology, divination, and medicine.

The Antambahoaka are known for a practice called “The Sambatra.” Every 7 years, all of the Antambahoaka people come together in the same village. During a ceremony that lasts 4 weeks, all of the boys ranging in age from 1-7 (since the celebration is held every 7 years) become circumcised and initiated into manhood.

The primary religion of the Antambahoaka is the native Animistic religion practiced by most of the Malagasy tribes. Only 15% of the tribe adheres to Christianity and only 0.7% is evangelical. The Bible is available in the Malagasy language although the Antambahoaka dialect varies slightly.

**15290****Antanosy (513,582)**

The Antanosy, sometimes known as the Tanosy, dwell in the far south of the island near Taolagnaro in the province of Toliara. Their name means “People of the Island.” The Antanosy are another one of the primary 18 ethnic tribes of Madagascar. Their primary language is Malagasy.

Their primary religion is Animism, the native religion of the Malagasy. However, almost half of the population adheres to Catholicism at 49.7%. 7.4% of the Antanosy are evangelical.

The Antanosy get their name, “People of the Island,” from a small island that sits in the middle of the Fanjahira River. Their primary economic means consist of cattle herding and farming. The structure of the Antanosy tribe is that of clans with a king holding the greatest amount of power or authority over the clan.

Within the Antanosy tribe, there are many fady (taboos), which govern relational and other practices within the tribe. There are strict rules governing relationships between male and female correspondence within a home as well as food portioning during the

meals. A boy may not sit on or step over his sister's mat. A pregnant woman should not eat brains. Additionally, it is fady for funeral gravediggers to wear clothes and to stand up while digging the corner postholes for a new house.

**15286**  
**Antaifasy (134,406)**

The Antaifasy also dwell in the southeast part of Madagascar. They live around the city of Farafangana, at the south end of the Canal des Pangalanes. Their name means "People of the Sands." Their means of survival is through cultivating rice and fishing in the nearby lakes and rivers. The Antaifasy are one of the 18 primary Malagasy tribes of

They speak Malagasy and traditional religion as their primary belief system. Only 15% of the Antaifasy adhere to Christianity and 1.1% are evangelical.

**15287**  
**Antemanambondro (45,667)**

The Antemanambondro people live in the southeast of Madagascar in the province of Fianarantsoa. They occupy the lower regions of the Manambondro, Isandra, and Iavibola Rivers. The Manambondro River is especially important to this people and is where they derive their name, which has many variations (i.e. Antaimanambondro, Temanambondro) and means "People of the Manambondro River."

The Antemanambondro people are generally classified as part of the Antesaka tribe of the Malagasy, but they claim different and distinct origins from all other representatives of the Antesaka. Their origins, birth, and death all revolve around the Manambondro River.

The story of where the Antemanambondro came from goes back 350 years. In the region of Ikongo, which lies 200 km north of where the Antemanambondro now reside, a man named Andriamaroary lived in a village by a river named "Manambondro". After being devastated by a storm, some villagers left their home, led by Andriamaroary. They took with them a gourd of water from the Manambondro River. Travelling south through the rainforest, these people arrived at the mouth of a large river and decided they would settle there. Andriamaroary found a half-deserted village on an island in the middle of the river upstream of where they settled. Conquering the residents of that village, Andriamaroary decided to settle there on the island, known as Antokonosy. He emptied his gourd of water into the river, and renamed it "Manambondro" after the river of his previous home. The river retained the name and is seen by the Antemanambondro as the symbol by which the people tie themselves to their oldest ancestors.

The Manambondro River also has a significant role in the birth and burial of each Antemanambondro person. When born, the umbilical cord of the baby is thrown into the middle of the Manambondro River and the father of the child says these words: "We announce to you ancestral water the throwing away of the umbilical cord of [child]. Whether having gone north, gone south or gone west then [if s/he] becomes attached to



the land there only you water of the Manambondro will s/he not forget.” Likewise, in death, the person is taken to the same place where their umbilical cord was thrown into the river, put in a canoe on a bier, and launched out into the middle of the river where it is then taken downstream to the ancestral tomb of the Antemanambondro.

The Antemanambondro have a political system which follows ancestry and “house-groups.” The larger classification is that of ancestry, which is traced through the father back to the grandsons of Andriamaroary who settled the regions around the Manambondro River. Within the ancestry classification is the house-group classification, which has similar rites and ceremonies. Often, the Antemanambondro prefer to marry within relatives.

[http://epress.anu.edu.au/austronesians/poetic/mobile\\_devices/ch02s02.html](http://epress.anu.edu.au/austronesians/poetic/mobile_devices/ch02s02.html)

The Antemanambondro is a tribe of the Malagasy people group, although they are not recognized as one of the 18 primary ethnic tribes of the Malagasy. As mentioned above, the Antemanambondro lose their identity as being part of the Antesaka tribe. The primary language of the Antemanambondro is a dialect of Malagasy.

Their religion is the same as that of other Malagasy tribes, which is an ethnic Animism. 24% of the Antemanambondro tribe adheres to Christianity and 3.5% are evangelical.

### **33360**

#### **Antemoro (747,426)**

The Antemoro are another one of the primary 18 tribes of the Malagasy inhabiting Madagascar. They reside on the southeast coast near the city of Manakara. Their name means “People of the Coast.”

The Antemoro were originally ruled by five Arabic families who arrived in Madagascar in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They are one of a very few Malagasy tribes that practice Islam as their religion, but they have largely intermingled their Islamic practices with their indigenous beliefs. The Antemoro were also the only tribe for many years that were literate and they were the first to record their history and culture in Madagascar. In fact, the Malagasy alphabet is Sorabe, translated in the Arabic form based off of the Antemoro dialect.

The Antemoro live in densely populated villages, which are very close to one another. These villages are located along the river valleys of their region. They grow rice and crops and are cattle-herders. Some of the Antemoro, which live in swampy areas along the coast, are known for their fishing abilities and their large square-sailed canoes.

The Antemoro practice the native Animism as their primary religion although many practice Islam. 43.9% adhere to Christianity and 4.68% are evangelical.

<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9007743/Antaimoro>

### **15288**

### **Antesaka (1,226,040)**

The Antesaka are another of the primary 18 Malagasy tribes of Madagascar. Their name means "People who come from the Sakalava." It is no surprise, then, that they claim their origins as being that of the Sakalava. Prince Andriamandresi of the Sakalava left his home in the Mangoky region to settle on the banks of the Mananara River. The Antesaka remain largely concentrated in this area near the village of Vangaindrano south of Farafangana in the province of Fianarantsoa.

The Antesaka have similar burial customs to that of the Antemoro. The *kibory*, which is the ancestral tomb, is usually built in some high-elevated place such as a hilltop and holds a large number of people.

The Antesaka are a large group and they speak Malagasy and practice Animism as their primary religion. However, 23.5 % of the population adheres to Catholic and Orthodox groups. 03.6% are evangelical.

### **00000**

#### **Antetsimatra (27,000)**

The Antetsimatra speak Malagasy and practice Animism. An estimated 40% adhere to Christianity.

The Antetsimatra live in the southeast of Madagascar around the Matitanana stream. This is in an area of high Arabic influence. No more information could be found about this tribe.

### **15315**

#### **Arab, Ta'izz-Adeni (39,110)**

The Ta'izz-Adeni is a Muslim people group that originated in Yemen. They migrated to Madagascar in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and are responsible for the first Malagasy alphabet provided through Arabic characters. The Muslim have had many other significant influences culturally for the inhabitants of Madagascar.

This people group has spread to various parts of the island and maintains their language (Ta'izzi-Adeni Arabic) and religion (Sunni Islam). They are one of the least reached people groups of Madagascar with no known Christian adherents. With such strong ties to their native religion, they remain very guarded and hard to reach with the gospel.

### **15293**

#### **Bara (700,438)**

The Bara people are another one of the 18 primary Malagasy tribes. They, along with the Sakalava, are considered to be the most "African" of all the Malagasy tribes. They share similar physical features with those of African descent and also share some African

cultures as well. The meaning of their name, Bara, is uncertain. Some think that it is derived from a Bantu word. The Bara refer to themselves as *Baralahy*, which means “strong males.”

The Bara originally dwelt in the southwest of Madagascar near Toliara, but now they occupy a large region in the south central part of Madagascar in the provinces of Fianarantsoa and Toliary. They are primarily cattle herders although their diet consists of rice and vegetables; their cattle are used primarily in ritual sacrifices and important ceremonies.

The Bara are known for being a very fierce tribe of warriors. They are also known for cattle-rustling. A Bara boy must steal cattle in order to prove his manhood and courage. Until this occurs, he cannot be considered to be a man and will not be eligible for a wife. It is traditional for the groom’s family to give the bride’s family a certain number of cattle in exchange.

The zebu is the cattle of the Bara, which looks similar to a cow but has a hump on its back just behind the neck. It is a symbol of power and strength and sometimes believed to be omnipotent. The Bara have all of their livelihood in their herd of zebu. All of their prestige is associated with the number of zebu they have in their herd.

The Bara are separated into families called *raza*. These families all have a common ancestor. Within a *raza*, the people distinguish themselves with various earmarks on their cattle, names, and traditions, but all share their common identity with the ancestor and origins.

The Bara speak a dialect of Malagasy which varies even within their own people group. They also practice Animism. 43.2% of the Bara adheres to the Catholic faith, but only 2.3% are evangelical.

[http://www.joshuaproject.net/profiles/text/t101030\\_ma.pdf](http://www.joshuaproject.net/profiles/text/t101030_ma.pdf)

### **33361**

#### **Betanimena (873,209)**

The name *Betanimena* means “People of the Red Soil.” This group is a subgroup of the Betsimisaraka tribe, and they reside on the east coast of Madagascar.

The Betanimena practice the Malagasy ethnic religion of Animism and they speak the northern Betsimisarakan dialect of Malagasy. The Bible is available in the language of Malagasy, but not specifically in the northern Betsimisarakan dialect. It is unknown how many Christian adherents there are among the Betanimena, but they are not among the least reached people groups of Madagascar.

### **15294**

#### **Betsileo (2,496,644)**

The Betsileo tribe of Madagascar is the third largest in terms of population. They are the neighbors to the south of the Merina people who make up the greatest portion of the population around the capital of Antananarivo. The Betsileo live primarily in the province of Fianarantsoa, and the capital city of Fianarantsoa is in the middle of the Betsileo territory. The Betsileo are considered to be another central highland tribe similar to that of the Merina. They are of Malayo-Indonesian appearance and origin.

The Betsileo name means “The Many Invincible Ones.” The Sakalava kingdom known as the Menabe was a fierce and powerful kingdom in Madagascar before it was subdued by the Merina kingdom in 1834. Early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, its king, Ramitraho, tried to expand his kingdom and conquer his neighboring tribes. However, when he attempted to subdue the tribe of the Betsileo, he was unable to conquer them. As a result, the Betsileo gave themselves this name, “the many invincible ones.”

The Betsileo tribe began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as an administrative division of the Merina government. Prior to this time, the Betsileo consisted of many different kingdoms that existed independently of one another. They were all conquered by Radama I and he reorganized them and united them into a single tribe. The Betsileo are primarily agricultural, raising a variety of crops on hillside terraces. They live in huts made of vegetable fibers or wood and more recently have begun to build homes of mud and brick. They are known for their abilities as wood carvers.

Among the Malagasy tribes, the Betsileo have one of the highest numbers of Christian adherents as the Christian influence is strongest in the central highland region of the country. An estimated 90% of the Betsileo adhere in some way to Christianity and 35.6% of the Betsileo population is evangelical Christian. There is still a major animistic influence among the Betsileo.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Betsileo>

## **15295**

### **Betsimisaraka (1,092,727)**

The Betsimisaraka make up the second largest ethnic group inhabiting Madagascar. They reside on the east coast along a narrow strip reaching from the Bemarivo River in the north to the Mananjary River in the south. This strip covers lands in the provinces of both Toamasina and Fianarantsoa.

The Betsimisaraka was originally separated into three distinct ethnic groups, the Tsikoa in the south, the Varimo in the center, and the Anteva in the north. All of these had distinct cultures prior to being united under the name Betsimisaraka.

In 1710, a son of a British pirate and an Anteva princess, Ratsimilaho, managed to unite these three groups and gave them the name Betsimisaraka, which means “the Many Inseparables.” They became very powerful for a while and formed the Confederation of the Betsimisaraka under their leader Ratsimilaho. However, following his death in 1751, the confederation quickly became very weak and the Merina kingdom easily overcame

them. Today, the Betsimisaraka still remain a single group made up of three subgroups: the Northern Betsimisaraka, the Betanimena, and the Southern Betsimisaraka.

The Betsimisaraka make their livings as traders, sailors and fishermen. They also cultivate crops in the tropical regions where they reside.

They speak a distinct dialect of Malagasy and practice Animism as their primary religion. Approximately 18% of the population adheres to Christianity and 2.7% are evangelical.

## **15296**

### **Bezanozano (166,034)**

The Bezanozano tribe is another one of the primary 18 tribes of Madagascar. They live in a valley sandwiched between the two largest tribes of the Malagasy, the highland Merina tribe and the coastal Betsimisaraka. Compared to their surrounding neighbors, the Bezanozano territory is open and has a few sparsely forested areas. Some people believe that this is actually how the name Bezanozano was derived for this group.

Bezanozano means “many small braids.” It is uncertain where this name came from. Many people believe it is in reference to how the people wear their hair as both male and female typically have their hair in braids. However, the word *zanozano* can also refer to small trees or brushwood. The area in which the Bezanozano live is streaked with patches of small trees and very little dense foliage, so some think that the name is derived from this characteristic of their territory.

The Bezanozano are skilled carpenters as they build their homes out of wood yet without any nails, bolts or screws. They use lashing and pegging techniques to construct the home and build the roof out of straw and flags. Likewise the women are crafty and often fashion bowls and jewels which they will sell or barter for necessary goods.

This group both raises cattle and farms the land, primarily for rice. Groups will come together to help plow a rice field, and they will make a festival out of it. Sometimes as many as 150 oxen will be brought for the purpose of plowing a field. At the harvest, the Bezanozano bring threshing mats to the fields and they beat the grain with sticks, leaving the stalks in the fields and taking the grain back home. They are known for beating so furiously that the rice grains rebound into their eyes with such force that they are rendered blind in that eye. There can be seen regularly a person who has a blind eye.

Beliefs and customs are similar to those held among all of the Malagasy, including the orientation of the home and the partitioning of food and favor. The Bezanozano speak Malagasy as well, although it is a distinct dialect with most of its similarities being with the Sihanaka tribe, which neighbor the Bezanozano to the northwest. Also the tribe has a very strong belief in ancestors and ancestor-worship and practices the native Malagasy Animistic beliefs.

26% of the Bezanozano are adherents to Catholic or Orthodox groups, but only 03.8% are Christian evangelicals. The Bible is not available in the Bezanozano dialect of Malagasy although it is available in the Malagasy language. Gospel recordings and radio broadcasts, however, are available.

*The Antananarivo Annual and Madagascar Magazine No. IV.-Christmas 1878*

### **15297**

#### **British (2,740)**

The British population in Madagascar comes from a gradual migration to the country for various reasons. There is a British influence due to the relations that Madagascar has had with Britain in the past. Radama I worked with Britain and trained his army under the British style during his reign. He allowed a great British influence in the country. During that time, British people moved to the island. Also, British missionaries came to the island. The London Missionary Society was the first great missionary influence on the island, and they are the ones responsible for translating the entire Bible into the Malagasy language.

The British on the island speak English and retain Christianity as their primary language. Only 0.79% is evangelical.

### **15301**

#### **Chinese (52,191)**

The Chinese community of Madagascar forms one of three main Chinatowns in all of Africa. The other two are on the neighboring Mauritius and in South Africa. These have such a presence in these countries because they all had major receiving ports for Chinese immigrants in the past. The Chinese came to Madagascar as labor workers to work on the Tananarive-Tamatave railroad. There is a Chinese community located in Antananarivo and called Quartier Chinois.

The Chinese of Madagascar retain their language and religion, speaking Mandarin Chinese and practicing Buddhism. 0.7% of the Chinese population of Madagascar is evangelical Christians.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinatowns\\_in\\_Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinatowns_in_Africa)

### **15298**

#### **Comorian (92,639)**

The Comorian community of Madagascar resides mainly in the major cities of Antananarivo, Mahajanga, and Antsiranana. They migrated from Comoros, slightly northwest of Madagascar to find better living conditions and also to escape political strife in their home country. Most Comorians are engaged in the merchant business.

The Comorians speak Comorian and practice Islam as their primary religion. This group makes up one of the least reached people groups of Madagascar due to their resistance of Christianity. Less than 0.01% are Christians and there are few if any evangelicals. The Bible, Jesus film, and gospel recordings are all available in their language.

### **15299**

#### **French (123,954)**

The French were in control of Madagascar and annexed it as a French province in 1896. It remained in their control until 1960 when Madagascar gained their independence. During the time of French control, many French came to live on the island of Madagascar.

They retain their French language and their religion. They are primarily Christian, but they are Roman Catholic, not Protestant. Only 0.87% are evangelical Christians.

### **15300**

#### **Gujarati (66,544)**

The Gujarati people group migrated to Madagascar from the state of Gujarat in eastern India. They first arrived around 1900 A.D. and they have since spread their community to all parts of the island. Initially, the Gujarati were very poor, with the exception of about five prominent families; however, since independence from France and the revolutions of 1972-75, the Gujarati have seen openings in the merchant and trading sectors that has allowed them to become quite prosperous. It is estimated now that 50-60% of the nation's economy is in the hands of the Gujarati.

The Gujarati in all countries around the world primarily practice Hinduism as their religion, and some do in Madagascar as well, but the primary religion of the Gujarati in Madagascar is Islam. They hold fast to their beliefs and guard them zealously. The Gujarati are among the least reached people groups in Madagascar with virtually zero Christians despite the fact that the Bible, the Jesus film, gospel recordings, and radio broadcasts are all available in their language. Their language is Gujarati.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism\\_in\\_Madagascar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism_in_Madagascar)

### **00000**

#### **Karimbola (105,000)**

The Karimbola people live in the southwest of Madagascar in the province of Toliara. They are often grouped in with the Tandroy people group. I could not find any additional information on the Karimbola people group of Madagascar.

The Karimbola speak Malagasy and practice ethnic religions. 20% adhere to Christianity.

**15310**  
**Korean (10,570)**

There is a small North Korean community residing in Madagascar. These probably migrated to Madagascar during the early presidency of Didier Ratsiraka. When Ratsiraka took office, he was impressed by the North Korean leader's idea of national self-reliance. Ratsiraka employed the help of North Korea in the fields of agriculture and irrigation and for the training of his military security unit.

The North Koreans of Madagascar speak Korean primarily, and they do not practice any religion at all. This group is also among the least reached people groups of Madagascar, having less than 1% Christians and no evangelicals.

**33363**  
**Mahafaly (309,242)**

The Mahafaly tribe is another one of the primary 18 Malagasy tribes of Madagascar. They reside on the southwest of the island in the Ampanihy region in the province of Toliara. The land in which they live is very scarce and barren and they receive very little rainfall in a given year. The Mahafaly are very accustomed to seasons of long droughts and little food.

The name Mahafaly has two possible meanings of which are quite opposite in nature. The prefix maha- forms verbs or adjectives, and the suffix -faly can either mean happy or it can mean taboo. So, the name Mahafaly can either mean "one who is able to be happy" or "one who causes happiness" or it can mean "one who causes taboos." It is uncertain where this name came from, but some think that it is a reference to the land in which they live. This interpretation would of course lead to the latter meaning for their name.

The Mahafaly are known to be a cruel people. They will attack the European trading posts near where they live and sometimes rob and/or kill the station attendant. When they are in a particularly harsh drought and unable to come by food, they have been known to sell their children to get food for themselves. They are also known for their skill in woodcarving. They have very ornately decorated tombs and have the most beautifully carved wooden posts on the entire island.

The Mahafaly, like the rest of the Malagasy tribes, speak Malagasy as their primary language. Their dialect is very similar to their neighbors the Tandroy. Also, they practice the same native religion as the rest of the Malagasy employing ancestor worship.

However, 24.9% of the Mahafaly population adheres to Catholic and Orthodox traditions. Only 1.28% are evangelical. The Jesus film, gospel recordings, and radio broadcasts are all available in their language.

<http://cesa.imb.org/peoplegroups/mahafale.htm>  
<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-23484/Madagascar#386783.hook>



## **15302**

### **Makua (226,194)**

The Makua make up a large group of people that live in the southwest of Madagascar in the province of Toliara. This group is of African origin, being imported as slaves from Mozambique during the time of the Arab slave traders. It is uncertain what the term *Makua* means, but it is a term used to refer to people who have dark skin and kinky hair and is sometimes used to refer to someone as a slave. Generally, it is used derogatorily. Variations of this name include Makoa and Makuwa.

The Makua are a pastoral people that find their only source of wealth in the amount of property and livestock they own. To an outsider, it would seem that the Makua would starve to death due to the apparent lack of food where they reside, but the Makua have learned all the secrets of their land about how to survive.

The Makua speak a language that is part of the same language group as Bantu called Mahkuwa-Meetto. It is in the Nigerian-Congo language family.

Their religious practices are similar to that of the rest of the island with particular emphasis on one's ancestors. The dead are considered to be the heads of the family because they are believed to have additional powers once their spirit leaves their body.

The Makua are among the least reached people groups in Africa with only 4.4% Christian adherents and 0.02% evangelical.

## **15276**

### **Malay (22,000)**

The Malay people group is that group that migrated to Madagascar from Malaysia in Southeast Asia. This is where the original inhabitants of Madagascar are thought to have come from around the time of Christ. During that time, the Malay people were in control of a good portion of the sea trade routes in and around Southeast Asia.

The Malay in Madagascar retain the same language and belief system as that of the Malays in other countries. They are a rural people and they are primarily wet rice farmers. They also make cloth and produce metals.

As a people, they are generally very courteous and they place a higher importance on this attribute than on keeping commitments. Their family structure is in line with that of the Muslim faith, which allows for the possibility of a man having four wives, but usually, marriages are monogamous. These marriages are generally arranged, but they must have the consent of both parties.

The religion that the Malay people follow is Sunni Islam. However, they will often mix their Muslim practices with that of older beliefs such as Hinduism, Buddhism, or ethnic

religion. Other Muslim groups often view the Malay as being distorters of the Islamic doctrines.

Christian adherents among the Malay on Madagascar are virtually nonexistent. They cling tightly to their Islamic faith, making it difficult to evangelize to them. However, their mixture of different faith practices suggests that they seek more than what their named religion can offer.

## **00000**

### **Masikoro (106,000)**

The Masikoro tribe is a tribe that lives in the southeast of Madagascar. They reside between the Onilahy and Mangoky Rivers. The term Masikoro was originally used to refer to all the peoples that were conquered by the Andrevola dynasty, which include the Masikoro, the Mikea, and the Vezo, but later use has separated the groups into these three names giving Masikoro title to the group that resides a little further inland and practices herding.

The Masikoro are proud and they prefer the rural life to the city, because they believe that the city dwellers are corrupt. They are very respect oriented. Proper language use and cleanliness are highly valued. They can often be recognized by their dress.

The Masikoro have a genuine openness to outsiders and they generally express interest in the Christian faith. The Jesus film was recently translated into the Masikoro language, which is a distinct dialect of Malagasy, with the help of Wycliffe Bible translators. It is being shown among the Masikoro and seeing a large number of people express that they wish to follow Christ. However, upon follow-up, few return. Many go back to their original religious ways, which include ancestor worship and the traditional Madagascar animistic religion. It is unknown how many Christian adherents or evangelicals exist among the Masikoro, but they are not among the least reached. The Jesus film and the Bible are both available in their language.

<http://www.cci.org/ministries/jesus-film/madagascar-viewing.aspx>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rog3=MA&rop3=106383>

## **15360**

### **Mauritian (5,700)**

Mauritius is a small, British-controlled island nation 560 miles east of Madagascar. Its proximity to Madagascar has allowed for some migration between the two nations over time. This accounts for the small Mauritian population that resides in Madagascar.

The official language of Mauritius is English, but the language that is most widely spoken and that is spoken by Mauritians in Madagascar is Mauritian Creole that is a French-based Creole.

It is unknown if the Bible exists in their language although they can easily understand it in either English or French. Roman Catholicism is the religion that about 90% of Mauritians practice in Madagascar. It is unknown how many evangelicals there are among this group.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauritian\\_Creole](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauritian_Creole)

## **15308**

### **Merina (4,821,104)**

The Merina are the largest of the tribes in Madagascar. Their 4.8 million recorded population makes up approximately 20% of the total population in Madagascar. This group, whose name means “those from the country where one can see far,” live in the northern central highlands of Madagascar around the capital city of Antananarivo in the province of Antananarivo. Their name refers to the location in which they live, the highlands that overlook the rest of the island.

Not only do the Merina boast the largest population on the island, but they also make up the most advanced group in terms of education, culture and skills. Most of the professionals found in Madagascar come from this people group. Doctors, lawyers, and politicians all come largely from this group in proportion to other groups on the island.

The Merina are generally considered to be among the most Asian group on the island. They have lighter skin and straight dark hair as opposed to some other groups such as the Bara or Masikoro who tend to be more African in appearance as well as culture. The Merina also practice a wet-rice farming culture much like the inhabitants of Southeast Asia, from whom it is thought the Merina are directly descended.

The Merina have long been the most well-known and powerful tribe on the island of Madagascar. The history section above gives greater detail to the expansion of this people group.

The Merina kingdom continued for almost 70 years and saw 5 more rulers sit on the throne before it was terminated by the invasion of the French in 1896. Since that time, the Merina have continued to be among the most influential group on the island among the Malagasy peoples.

The Merina language is the dialect of Malagasy that most closely resembles the Maanyan language of Southeast Borneo where it is thought that the first Madagascan inhabitants migrated from.

The Bible was translated into their language in 1818 by the London Missionary Society. The Merina have been the most evangelized group among the Malagasy tribes and 70% adhere to Catholic or Orthodox groups. 6.1% of the Merina are evangelical Christians. Many others tend to mix their Christian beliefs with the beliefs of their ethnic animistic religions.

## 15309

### Mikea (1,306)

The Mikea are another of the Malagasy tribes that live in the southwest part of the island. They occupy a forested region just north of the provincial capital of Toliara. In fact, the Mikea are not a defined tribe of Malagasy as are the others. Rather, Mikea is more of an identity of Madagascar. The term Mikea can refer to anyone who lives in the forest and subsists on the hunting and gathering lifestyle. Regardless, the majority of Mikea remain together in this forested region neighboring the Masikoro and the Vezo.

These other two groups are similar in structure and are often considered to be all of the same clan along with the Mikea. The component that separates the Mikea from the Vezo and from the Masikoro is their method of subsistence. As mentioned, the Mikea are known as hunter-gatherers. The Vezo on the other hand are known as fisherman, and the Masikoro are known as herders.

These distinctions are traditions passed down orally within these groups and have their origins during the times of the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and the rule of the Andrevola dynasty. According to tradition, this dynasty produced a number of powerful kings that raided each other and warred against neighboring groups. The three groups all acted differently in response to these kings. The Masikoro were loyal, and they paid tribute to the kings from their herds. The Vezo fled the kings and learned to live off the ocean to survive. The Mikea also fled, but they fled to the forests and learned hunting and gathering to survive. This subsistence method is seen to symbolize self-sufficiency and autonomy. Thus comes the meaning of their name, Mikea; it comes from the phrase *tsy meky hea*, which means “do not want to be pursued.”

The Mikea are rather primitive, and they make up one of the poorest people groups in the world. They have extremely limited access to healthcare, education, commodities, and any kind of a voice in the social or political arena. They live relatively hidden to the outside world within their forests. However, their forests are being depleted fairly rapidly. The State and some missionary groups are trying to provide national habitats and make preservation laws so that the forest will be protected.

The Mikea are a Malagasy people group, speaking the Malagasy language and practice the traditional Malagasy animistic religion. 5% of the Mikea adhere to Christianity and only 0.25% are evangelical Christians. Only some gospel recordings are available in their dialect.

<http://beedl.anthro.uga.edu/mikea/people.html>

<http://www.jpduilleux.com/thework/mikea/index.html>

## 15311

### Reunionese, Creole (77,482)

The Reunionese Creole of Madagascar migrated to Madagascar from Reunion. Most likely this migration took place following the abolition of slavery, as this group is

primarily born out of the slave culture. Reunion lies just east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean.

The Reunionese Creole of Madagascar speak Reunion Creole French and practice Christianity as their primary religion. 90% adhere to Catholic beliefs. Only 0.9% are evangelical.

**15312**  
**Russian (22,180)**

No information could be found about Russian presence in Madagascar. The number of Christian Russians in Madagascar is unknown.

**33364**  
**Saint-Marien (39,143)**

Saint Marie is an archipelago just off the northeastern coast of Madagascar. The people who live there gave themselves the name of Saint-Mariens. This group is of a very mixed ancestry. The island of Saint-Marie was popular among all of the different foreign groups that inhabited the island. Pirates from America, Britain, France, Wales, etc all came and had a time of habitation on the island.

Likewise, Arabs settled Saint-Marie for a time. In addition, the Malagasy people have always been present on the island. Therefore, the Saint-Marien people group of Madagascar has a very mixed physical appearance. There are dark-skinned blondes, people with green eyes (whereas most Malagasy have brown eyes), and other people with Arab characteristics in their appearance.

While Saint-Mariens look much different from other Malagasy people in Madagascar, their language and customs are very similar to the other Malagasy tribes. They speak a dialect of Malagasy that is similar to that of the Merina. They practice customs such as Famadihana and Tromba.

Also, their primary religion is the same as other Malagasy, practicing native animistic beliefs. However, 40% of Saint-Mariens do adhere to Christianity and 6% are evangelical.

[http://www.virtualtourist.com/travel/Africa/Madagascar/Things\\_To\\_Do-Madagascar-BR-5.html](http://www.virtualtourist.com/travel/Africa/Madagascar/Things_To_Do-Madagascar-BR-5.html)

**15307**  
**Sakalava (896,036)**

The Sakalava people actually constitute a number of different ethnicities that at one time made up an empire. Therefore, they have differing customs among them. Their one main characteristic that they all share in common is the dialect of Malagasy that they speak which is common to all the inhabitants of Western Madagascar, where the Sakalava dwell.

Prior to the Merina kingdom, the Sakalava kingdom was one of the most powerful. It was begun by Andriamisara, and then perpetuated by his son, Andriandahifotsy. His sons, Andriamanetiarivo and Andriamandisoarivo, extended the empire north up the western coast until the empire spanned the breadth of the western coast over all the provinces of Toliara, Mahajunga, and Antsiranana. Once the empire became this large, however, it split into two kingdoms, a northern kingdom and a southern one. The northern kingdom was the Boina and the southern was Menabe. Following this split, there were more splits. With the end of the slave trade, the Sakalava lost most of their power and the Merina took over.

The meaning of the name Sakalava is disputed and remains uncertain. However, there are two options that are the most likely. The first is “the people of the long valley.” This is a reference to their habitation in Madagascar. The Sakalava extend from the northern tip of Madagascar and inhabit areas all the way down to the southern regions along the western coast. Their territory is a long strip of land down the western side of the island. The other option for what their name means is “slave.” This comes from the Arabic word for slave which is saqaliba.

The Sakalava thrived during the slave trade and they were able to extend their territory as a result of the slave trade. It was only when the British fleet came and ended the slave trade in the Indian Ocean that the Sakalava would lose their power to the Merina.

The language spoken by the Sakalava is Malagasy. They practice native animism as their primary religion, but 30% adhere to Christianity in some way. 5% are evangelical Christians. In their dialect, the Sakalava only have some gospel recordings available.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sakalava>

### **15313**

#### **Sihanaka (424,305)**

The Sihanaka are another one of the primary 18 Malagasy tribes in Madagascar. They reside in the northeastern part of the island on the escarpment that separates the highlands from the east coast. They are just northeast of the Merina in the province of Toamasina. Their neighbors include the Merina, the Tsimihety to the north and the Betsimisaraka to the east. Their name, Sihanaka, means “people of the lake.”

The Sihanaka are primarily fisherman, but they also practice wet-rice cultivation. A particular cultural distinction of the Sihanaka includes their view of the soul. They believe that each person’s soul, which they refer to as the *angatra*, exists after the death of the body and can exist apart from the body. In addition, the *angatra* can temporarily depart from the body during one’s life. When one dreams of other places, the Sihanaka believe that the *angatra* has left the body and actually gone to that place. Fainting and comas are also explained by the departure of the *angatra*. If the *angatra* is somehow hindered from returning to the body, then that person will become sick and eventually die. However, the Sihanaka believe that the *ombiasy*, or medicine-men, are able to restore the lost *angatra* to the body.

The language of the Sihanaka is a dialect of Malagasy similar to that of the Merina. They have the Jesus film, some gospel recordings, and some radio broadcasts available in their language, but not the Bible, although it is available in another Malagasy dialect, which would be mostly understandable to the Sihanaka. The Sihanaka have a high rate of Christian converts, although their primary religion remains ethnic animism. 40% of the Sihanaka are Catholic adherents and 16% are evangelical Christians.

*Antananarivo Annual* No V. Christmas 1881

**11942**  
**Swahili (3,800)**

The Swahili people reside primarily on the east coast of the African mainland. However, there is a small group that has migrated to the northwest part of Madagascar as well. The term Swahili refers more to a specific culture, language, and religion rather than a particular people group. For this reason, the Swahili are very distinct from other people groups because they have such a blend of different influences in their culture. They have Asian, African, and Arabic influences.

Their language is Swahili. The Bible, Jesus film, gospel recordings, and radio broadcasts are all available in the Swahili language, but there are very few Christians among them.

The primary religion among the Swahili is Islam. It is such a large part of their lifestyle that their day-to-day activities are generally governed by the Muslim practices. They attend the mosque daily where men can be found at prayer times five times each day. However, the Swahili still retain some of their pre-Islamic beliefs and they practice a syncretism of these and the Muslim beliefs.

The Swahili in Madagascar are among the least reached people groups on the island. There are no known Christian adherents and obviously no known evangelicals either.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php>

**15314**  
**Tanala (736,498)**

The Tanala people are another one of the primary 18 tribes of Madagascar. They reside in the heavily forested region of southeastern Madagascar in the province of Fianarantsoa. Their neighbors are the Betsileo to the west, the Betsimisaraka to the east, and the Bara to the southwest. Their name means "people of the forest."

The Tanala are made up of primarily two different subgroups, the Menabe Tanala in the north and the Ikongo Tanala in the south. Tanala houses are fairly isolated in the mountaintops of the forested region. They practice slash-and-burn agriculture and cultivate dry rice, corn, and other crops.

The southern Tanala were among the only people groups to remain independent of Merina control during the Merina monarchy up until French colonization.

The Tanala speak a dialect of Malagasy and practice animism as their primary religion. It is unknown how many Christian adherents there are among the Tanala, but they are not among the least reached people groups in Madagascar as they have a fairly high number of evangelical Christians. The Jesus film, radio broadcasts, and gospel recordings are available in their dialect.

### **15291**

#### **Tandroy (928,818)**

The Tandroy are another of the primary 18 Malagasy tribes residing in Madagascar. The Tandroy live on the extreme southern tip of the island. They are surrounded by the Bara to the north, the Tanosy to the east and the Mahafaly to the west. Their name means "people of the thorns." This name comes from the location in which they live and refers specifically to the *roy*, which is a type of mimosa plant that has long thorns.

The Tandroy subsist primarily as herders and a pastoral people, but they also practice some farming, producing crops such as corn and sweet potatoes. They often build their villages in places that are completely hidden from the main road. Usually, this means being hidden behind a wall of cactus.

The Tandroy speak a dialect of Malagasy that is similar to that of the Mahafaly. Their primary religion is animism. However, there are 19.8% Christian adherents among the Tandroy and 2.7% are evangelical. The Jesus film, gospel recordings and radio broadcasts are available in their dialect.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php>

### **15306**

#### **Tsimihety (1,440,214)**

The Tsimihety are another one of the 18 primary Malagasy people groups. They live in the northern mountainous region of Madagascar. Their neighbors include the Sakalava to the north, the Betsimisaraka to the east and the Sihanaka to the south. Their name means "people who do not cut their hair."

The Tsimihety are farmers. Their main crop is rice. For a long time, the Tsimihety have been one of the most sedentary groups among all of the Malagasy tribes. They have remained in the land of their ancestors, whereas many of the other tribes have been more migratory. They remained independent during the Sakalava domination and were integrated under Merina rule in the 1820's.

The Tsimihety speak a dialect of Malagasy that some believe could qualify as a separate language due to their employment of so many Arabic and French words.



Their primary religion is animism. 15% of the Tsimihety are Christian adherents and 1.9% are evangelical Christians. The Bible, the Jesus film, and gospel recordings are available in their dialect.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsimihety>  
<http://cesa.imb.org/peoplegroups/TsimihetyofMadagascar.htm>

**00000**  
**Vezo (188,000)**

The Vezo are a Malagasy people that reside on the western coast of Madagascar. Their name means "people of the coast." The Vezo are interesting because they say that their identity is not traced through descent, but rather it is acquired through the practice of a particular way of life. Therefore, the origins and ancestry of the Vezo are extremely hard to uncover and to follow, but they are generally referenced as being a subgroup of the Sakalava.

The defining feature of the Vezo is their semi-nomadic lifestyle of fishing. Most Vezo survive off of the sea. They use their dugout and outrigger canoes to both travel up and down the coast and to fish for their livelihood. Poverty among the Vezo is the norm and it is embraced. They will not accept any attempts to provide them with better or more profitable techniques as their ways are the definition of who they are.

The Vezo are a Malagasy ethnic group, and so they speak a dialect of Malagasy, similar to the other Malagasy tribes.

They also practice the traditional animism religion of the island. Many claim Christianity as their religion, but practice customs more in line with their traditional beliefs such as ancestor worship and ritual sacrifices. It is unknown how many Christian adherents or evangelicals there are among the Vezo, but they are not among the least reached.

<http://www.philosophy.dept.shef.ac.uk/culture&mind/people/astutir/>  
[http://www.picturetank.com/\\_/series/e45b6c42df9438c4e14565951fd52337/Vezos\\_of\\_Madagascar.html](http://www.picturetank.com/_/series/e45b6c42df9438c4e14565951fd52337/Vezos_of_Madagascar.html)  
[#top](#)  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vezo>

**00000**  
**Vorimo (20,000)**

The Vorimo speak Malagasy and practice animism as their primary religion.

18% adhere to Christianity and it is unknown how many evangelicals there are. No additional information could be found concerning the Vorimo.

**00000**  
**Zafisoro (83,000)**

The Zafisoro is a Malagasy people group that is a subgroup of the Antesaka. They are known to have tense relations with the Antaifasy. These tensions developed over struggles to gain the prime rice cultivation areas in the region where they reside.

The Zafisoro speak Malagasy and practice animism. 14% adhere to Christianity and it is unknown how many evangelicals there are.

[www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/Feb2004Course/Backgroundmaterials/Brinkerhoff.doc](http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/Feb2004Course/Backgroundmaterials/Brinkerhoff.doc)

<http://www.naturallyafrica.org/country/madagascar/guide/guide-people-and-culture.php>

<http://www.madagascar.org.za/culture.htm>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php>

<http://www.peoplegroups.org/MapSearch.aspx?country=Madagascar>

### **Missiological Implications**

1. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to approach the peoples of Madagascar with the full gospel of Jesus Christ. Evangelical missions should develop a methodology for sharing the Good News with followers of Traditional Religions. The Malagasy religion believes in one God and in an afterlife in which the soul still exists. The goal of most Malagasy religion is to worship ancestors and to keep them appeased because they have power over events in the lives of the living. This religious system is such that it would be possible to introduce Christian truths into the culture and to educate them about Jesus Christ.

The belief in an afterlife provides a redemptive analogy possibility. They need to know that God is loving, not cruel, and they should live in such a way as to show their love for Him, out of love for Him, not out of fear that He will smite them.

2. Evangelical Christians and churches should strive to replace the Malagasy confusion that stems from the rampant syncretism that occurs in just about every tribe. Most tribes mix traditional beliefs with Christian ones. The Muslim tribes will mix their ancestral beliefs in with their Muslim beliefs as well. The Malagasy need to be taught about the lifestyle of Christian practice and learn about how it is more than just an aspect of life, but it is a definition of life and should guide how they live.
3. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to provide evangelical materials for evangelism and Christian development. The Bible has been present in the Malagasy language since 1818. People need to be willing to take it to the individual tribes, along with the Jesus film, and share it with each person in Madagascar so that they all have a chance to hear the gospel and have a chance to come to know Christ.
4. Evangelical Christians should target several distinct groups. The Merina, who are also the wealthiest and most dominant tribe in the country, also have the highest percentage of Christians. Missionaries should work with the Merina to provide for

the needs of the more impoverished people of the island. In this, they will gain an influence and a hearing among the people as their spiritual needs may then be met following the meeting of their physical needs.

The Makua who number over 226,194, are among the least reached people group in Madagascar. Evangelicals should seek ways to introduce Christ to this needy people group.

5. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to meet physical and social needs on the island as a springboard to sharing the gospel.
6. Evangelicals should share with believers in Madagascar methods of sharing the Good News with Roman Catholics. Many groups, such as the Mahafaly are not only numerous (309, 200) but also deeply immersed in Catholicism. The Reunionese Creole (77,500) also are deeply influenced by Catholic teachings.

**Links:**

[http://atheism.about.com/library/world/KZ/bl\\_MadagascarReligion.htm](http://atheism.about.com/library/world/KZ/bl_MadagascarReligion.htm)

- Information on the traditional beliefs of Madagascar religion

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music\\_of\\_Madagascar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Madagascar) - music

<http://www.madagascar.org.za/culture.htm> - interesting facts about the flag, famadihana, and cultural practices.

[http://www.madagascarconsulate.org.za/Madagascar\\_Culture.html](http://www.madagascarconsulate.org.za/Madagascar_Culture.html) - Information on cultural practices

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/croccaves/legends.html> - Legends of Madagascar