

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family

- Malagasy, Malagasy, Austronesian

1.2 ISO code

- ISO 639-3: mlg

1.3 Location

- 20° 0' 0" S, 47° 0' 0" E

1.4 Brief history

- “Scholars now generally agree that the basis of Madagascar’s population was constituted by successive waves of immigrants from the region Indonesia, of which the earliest reached shore of the great island some centuries before the Christian era and the most recent came in the fifteenth century... From their home islands the immigrants brought with them their techniques of fishing and of cultivating rice and taro, and their languages and socioreligious customs, including the cult of the dead” (2p3.)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors

- The early French missionaries in Madagascar first introduced the Roman Catholic faith. Protestant missionaries came to Madagascar soon after the French bringing education. The London Missionary Society’s attention was then focused on the Malagasy peoples but various obstacles arose. In the first few years, education held a prominent position in the goals of the missionaries. Children were ordered to be sent for instruction by the king and nearly one hundred schools were established for both boys and girls to attend (3p402-407.) For the most part, Madagascar has been under French control but after World War II The people received a constitution which entitled them to elect five deputies and five senators to the Conseil de la Republique and seven members to the French Union Assembly. This gave the country of Madagascar some independence (2p51.)

1.6 Ecology

- “At the time of the island’s first settlement, the eastern, northern, and central areas of the island were generally heavily wooded, providing a natural cover whose modern-day remnant is the thin and rapidly shrinking strip of rain forest close to the coast, once a band of dense and lush forest hundreds of kilometers long... Today, some 80% of Madagascar’s plants are reckoned to be indigenous, as are many of its animals” (9p22.)

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

- The population is 14,736,900. Three-fourths of all villages include 2 or more local descent groups, with a maximum of 32, a mean of 3.4, and a median of 3 local descent groups per village (6p131.)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staples

- Sugar cane, rice, cattle, peanuts, taro, beans, maize, tomatoes, onions, sweet potatoes, coffee, vanilla, cloves, and perfume plants are the main staples and cash crops (2p251.)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources

- The main protein sources are cattle, goat, sheep, beans, and maize (6p5.)

2.3 Weapons

- None found

2.4 Food storage

- Baskets and barrels are methods of food storage. Pottery is used for the storage of water for household use (3p227.)

2.5 Sexual division of production

- Women keep kitchens and gardens. They cook for the family and raise some crops, pigs and fowl. Whereas cattle are the charges of men (6p142.) “Women with suckling infants commonly carry them on their backs, secured by flannel or cotton cloth wrapped around their waist, up around the baby” (6p145.)

2.6 Land tenure

- “Individual and even collective property rights were unknown in Madagascar until the reign of King Andrianampoinimerina in the eighteenth century. He divided most of Imerina among the Merina tribes,

and ordered their chiefs to subdivide the land among the various *fokonolona*... The land no allotted to the various tribes constituted a kind of public domain, and consisted mainly of forests and other areas difficult to cultivate” (2p329.)

2.7 Ceramics

- “In the making of pottery, the people are not so skillful as in some other handicrafts. The earthenware is of a dark-reddish colour and not very strong. The chief articles produced are water-jars, or *sinys*. These are globular in shape; some are used for carrying on the head, and others, of much larger size, for holding a store of water for household use” (3p227.)

2.8 Specified sharing patterns

- Sharecropping is common in the Malagasy Republic (2p235.)

2.9 Food taboos

- The rearing of pigs and the eating of pork are fady, or taboo, for many of the coastal tribes (2p380.)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

- The Malagasy use canoes that are hollowed out of a single tree. They are sometimes from thirty to forty feet in length, and upwards of four feet in depth and width. There is no keel, so that they are rather apt to capsize if incautiously loaded (3p52.)

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height

- Height for men and women has not been measured but in pictures they appear to be average height.

3.2 Mean adult weight

- Average weight for men and women has not been stated.

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche

- None found

4.2 Age at first birth

- “Adolescent girls and youths lead an active amorous life, and girls often give birth at a young age, usually before marriage” (7p14.)

4.3 Completed family size

- “Children are much praised by the Malagasy; but large families are rare, and a considerable proportion of married peoples are childless” (3p195.)

4.4 Inter-birth-interval

- None found

4.5 Age first marriage

- “Marriages are celebrated at a very early age; twelve or fourteen years is not an unusual time for both sexes, and they frequently become parents shortly after that period (3p102.)

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce

- Proportion is unknown. But “when a woman is unhappy with her husband she may leave him and go home to her parents. There she stays and is watched over by them” (4p219.)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously

- “Polygamy exists in Madagascar, and is, as always must be, a source of much family discord and division; but it is not by any means of universal prevalence” (3p195.)

4.8 Bride purchase, bride service, dowry?

- “Bara me always comment on how difficult it is to find a wife. These difficulties, however, do not derive from any inherent shortage of women or from the need to provide a large gift of cattle exchange for a wife. The sacrifice of only one cow establishes the marriage, and the later transfer of another cow strengthens the relationship” (7p101.)

4.9 Inheritance patterns

- The oldest son is to inherit in example of death. Most men eventually inherit and cultivate their father's estate (6p11.)
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict
- Noticeable it is a stress on respect and the subordination of adult child to parents, particularly to father and older brother. It is significant for the obligations die one's senior to be stressed rather than one's rights in him (6p11.)
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals
- "The rare involvement of men a bilo "patients" also seems directly related to status ambiguity. One is an effeminate outsider with no paternal kin. He is married to the middle child. The other male bilo is the only avowed homosexual in the area. He is an only son, married and childless" (7p123.)
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy)
- Usually, the tribes marry into the same family clans. If necessary they find suitable partners outside of the community but with adult guidance.
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?
- "A Bara man does not fear that his wife's child may have been "accidentally" sired by another, for he knows that the frequency of his own intercourse with her dilutes the slight contribution of a lover" (7p26.)
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly?
- "In many cultures (including the Malagasy) the emphasis is so heavily weighted on the side of the female that the temptation for the anthropologist to ignore the male side of the equation is great...It is stressed that only the female transfers the essential physical substance to the offspring; whereas the male is responsible, in some way, for merely creating form in the fetus...The Bara view can be summed up by saying that the semen of the father orders the blood of the mother" (7p24.)
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process?
- "Bara view can be summed up by saying that the semen of the father orders the blood of the mother" (7p24.) Incremental process was not found.
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape
- None found
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse
- "Cousins very frequently intermarry, except the children of two sisters by the same mother, and their descendants down to four generations. It is often difficult to ascertain exactly the relationship of members of a family, for first-cousins are usually termed brother or sister...(3p192.)
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?
- "Bara boys and girls begin experimenting with sex before puberty, and most have experienced intercourse by the age of fourteen" (7p14.)
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
- Extramarital partners are common but gift giving is not found.
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?
- In the situation of death of a mother the children would be taken care of by different females in the family.
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females
- None found
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades
- None found
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers
- "A Bara man does not fear that his wife's child may have been "accidentally" sired by another, for he knows that the frequency of his own intercourse with her dilutes the slight contribution of a lover" (7p26.)
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

- Children in the Malagasy tribe are always expected to respect their parents. They often work alongside them and stay by the mother's side until adolescence. "Besileo extend their children and grandchildren considerable warmth and succor, and they know that their ancestors felt and acted similarly. Nevertheless, adult children are expected to repay their parents with hard work, respect, and unquestioning obedience" (6p220.)

4.24 Joking relationships?

- None found

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations

- The Malagasy are part lineal. The oldest son is to inherit in example of death. Most men eventually inherit and cultivate their father's estate (6p11.)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

- "Among cousins, the relationship between children of sisters is generally considered closest, and the taboo on cousin incest applies with the greatest force" (6p4-45.) "...The dangers of incest can be averted only through recourse to the ancestors... Should a girl be propositioned by a related youth, she must report it immediately to her parents to avoid the risk of losing her life" (7p94.)

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

- For a while the national marriage customs were innocent enough, it had been thought right to urge upon the Christian part of the community to proceed the legal ceremony by a religious service in the church. After the service there is a feast and a speech by the bride's father (3p193.)

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

- "In some kins, all female children are given a surname derived from the names of their mother's female kin, and male children carry a different surname that they share with a male member of their father's side. This is a creative embellishment on a bureaucratically defined assumption, since many Malagasy people do not have surnames" (4p106-7.)

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

- Marriage is usually preferred to be within the community. In special cases one may marry outside of the community if they have permission.

4.30 Are marriages arranged?

- "Compared to junior commoners, senior commoners' marriages are more often arranged by their elders, involve longer trial marriage periods, and are more stable... Arranged marriages are not as characteristic of junior commoners and slave descendants as of senior commoners" (6p204.)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who

- None found

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare

- None found

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death

- "The Zafimaniry are a group of Malagasy swidden cultivators living in high-altitude montane forest. In terms of general culture they are fairly close to the neighboring Betsileo or even the Merina. Their political history has been characterized by their determined attempts to avoid various forms of centralized government, attempts which on the whole have been fairly successful. The only period when the Zafimaniry suffered tight government control followed by the Madagascar-wide anti-colonial revolt of 1947 when the French army probably killed at least 80,000 people" (8p85.)

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing

- "The most successful of the fugitives was Tsimenata. Acquiring firearms from English traders via a local ally, he set off northwards and conquered a large swath of territory including the vital port of Mazalagem Nova, killing its Antalaotra sultan in the process" (9p101.)

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations)

- “Their participation on behalf of the French in World War II therefore created the most distress for most Malagasy, including the Betsileo, whose sedentary, relatively dense, and relatively accessible population meant vulnerability to government demands” (6p121.)

4.18 Cannibalism?

- None found

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size

- Three-fourths of all villages include 2 or more local descent groups, with a maximum of 32, a mean of 3.4, and a median of 3 local descent groups per village (6p131.)

5.2 Mobility pattern

- For the most part, the Malagasy tribe stays in the same place. They have large villages so they don't move around.

5.3 Political system

- “Royalty in Madagascar is regarded with a profound, an almost idolatrous veneration. The people do indeed believe in the “divine right of kings,” and in a “divinity that doth hedge” them” (3p314.)

5.4 Post-marital residence

- “Several weeks after the ritual is performed, the bride moves to the hamlet of the husband and the marriage is consummated” (7p103.)

5.5 Territoriality?

- None found

5.6 Social interaction divisions?

- “Bara mores and Malagasy mores in general are perhaps as relaxed as any in the world with regard to sexual activity” (7p14.)

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships

- None found

5.8 Village and house organization

- “Owing to the fact that almost all houses in the central provinces of the island are built with the length running north and south, or nearly so, the people use the points of the compass in describing the position of things in cases where we should say left or right, behind or before” (3p210.)

5.9 Specialized village structures

- “For several years past, the old-fashioned style of Malagasy house, with high-pitched roof, crossed horns, and a single door and window, has rarely been built. Good modern houses, whether of wood or clay, are generally made larger than was formally the custom- with roofs of much lower pitch, hipped or sloping at all four sides, and with a verandah surrounding the building” (3p208-9.)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

- “The interior is divided into three chambers, the centre being the largest and used as a living room, the end ones as sleeping apartments” (3p210.)

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc

- The Malagasy base their social organization on clans and lineages. They are focused on the men in the family.

5.12 Trade

- “The traders who departed from Indonesia bore their own culture and social organization, no matter how partial a slice of what they left behind in Indonesia it may have been” (6p43.)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

- “More generally, capitalism shapes the nature of social relations, and anthropological approaches offer important tools for analyzing the manner in which indigenous forms of social structure respond or are transformed, as well as how capitalist relations are perceived and experienced” (4p7.)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR

- None found

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine)

- “Tromba mediums and clinicians generally respect each other’s attitudes towards healing... Indigenous healers specialize in other problems as well. Those associated with possession are generally considered the exclusive domain of tromba mediums” (4p207.) “...In all Malagasy societies some form of divination and astrology is practiced” (6p45.)

6.2 Stimulants

- “The growing of drug-producing plants on a large-scale exists in Madagascar, and there is a plant known as Khat whose leaves are chewed as a stimulant, inducing feelings of mild euphoria and excitement. Believed to have migrated from Ethiopia, this flowering shrub is a controlled or illegal substance in many countries” (10p117.)

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal)

- “A circumcised boy is largely under the moral authority of his father. Shortly after circumcision the father will arrange for his shaman (ombiasy) to perform the complicated and somewhat bizarre rituals to neutralize any adverse zodiacal traits resulting from the timing of the child’s birth. A bad birth sign that is not neutralized would endanger the gradual assimilation of the child into the male order” (7p33.)

6.4 Other rituals

- “The surest method of appeasing the ancestral spirits is to perform ceremonies in which they are offered gifts. The spirits are pleased by offerings of rice, honey, and alcoholic beverages, and above all by the sacrifice of cattle. This cult of the dead involves the Malagasy in a lifetime of what some observers describe as a “cascade of macabre rites,” An occasion for joy and feasting to the Malagasy is a ceremony called *famadihana*, or the washing a corpse and reclothing it in a fresh shroud” (2p188.)

6.5 Myths (Creation)

- “The earliest Malagasy believed in a supreme being as well as secondary deities or spirits that inhabited water, trees, and stones” (10p84.)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games)

- “Singing and the playing of the few native musical instruments, form an important part of the amusements of the people. They may indeed be called musical people, for unlike many nations of Eastern origin, they have generally a correct ear, and can appreciate and learn with ease European melodies” (3p234.)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR

- None found

6.8 Missionary effect

- The early French missionaries in Madagascar first introduced the Roman Catholic faith. Protestant missionaries came to Madagascar soon after the French bringing education. The London Missionary Society’s attention was then focused on the Malagasy peoples but various obstacles arose.

6.9 RCR revival

- None found

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs

- The Malagasy believe that when a person dies they become a part of the “spirit world:” a place where all good people go to when they die. They believe that ancestral spirits play large roles in their lives and pay much attention as to not offend them.

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

- None found

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

- “Memories of ancestors are revived, however, when descendants take their names; older brother replace their fathers and stand as fathers to their younger siblings; parents are socially defined with references to their descendants- teknonymy identifies them as ancestors” (6p220.)

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

- “For people of all ranks, death and life were closely associated with notions of destiny, a force that could be channeled via ritual but that was more powerful than humankind... In every part of the island people

believed that cosmic forces could be discerned by means of divination, dreams, and esoteric knowledge..." (9p87.)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint

- None found

7.2 Piercings

- Earrings are worn by the women of the Malagasy (3p218.)

7.3 Haircut

- "...The hair is kept long, and plaited in a number of knots all over the head, very much in the same way as the women wear their hair" (3p216.)

7.4 Scarification

- "The practice of tattooing seems unknown in Madagascar, but scars on the face and other parts of the body, resembling those seen in some of the aboriginal tribes of Australia. These appear to be produced by making incisions in the skin, the wounds being afterwards cauterized. The marks are most common on the forehead, and are frequently seen in slaves of African origin" (3p221.)

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.)

- "The Malagasy are not averse to ornamenting their persons; and the native jewelers make silver chains of a surprising fineness, as well as bracelets, earrings, and charms, consisting of small silver ornaments which are worn on the wrist" (3p218.)

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment

- "A very elegant lamba, called arindrano, is made, with the body of white cotton, woven like a fine twill, with narrow stripes of black and colour, and broad borders of black silk with a patten in coloured silk in the centre. These are worth from five to fifteen dollars. The Lamba-mema is another kind, of lighter colours. These are worn chiefly at the notional festivals, marriages, and other occasions of public rejoicing; and they are also used for wrapping the dead" (3p218.)

7.7 Sex differences in adornment

- "The ordinary dress of men of the poorer class consists of a long piece of cloth round the loins, called the salaka, sometimes a coarse jacket of hemp or rofia cloth, and always a lamba of these or some other cheap material" (3p216.)

7.8 Missionary effect

- "On special occasions both sexes are fond of arraying themselves in European dress, but it seldom suits them well; and although the materials are expensive, the want of judgment in arraying them sometimes makes the effect of the whole absurd, especially in the case of the men" (3p218.)

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment

- None found

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system

- Siblings of the Malagasy are, for the most part, treated equally. The older ones will of course marry sooner and boys do more work.

8.2 Sororate, levirate

- None found

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.)

- "However, among cousins the relationship between children of sisters is generally considered closest, and the taboo on cousin incest applies with the greatest force...Most Malagasy use Hawaiian cousin terms, designating their first cousins with the terms they use for brother and sister" (6p45.)

9. Other interesting cultural features

1. Covenant of Blood

- “Another Malagasy custom may be here referred to, that of the Covenant of Blood. This is an agreement entered into by two persons to aid and support each other in every circumstance of difficulty or adversity in which they may be placed. It is indeed a kind of Freemasonry, with this great difference- that is ceremony observed in public, and not secretly, and is generally confined to two persons, instead of being a bond of union between members of a widely-spread society” (3p238-9.)

2. Infanticide

- “The practices of human sacrifice, suttee, self-torture, and mortification are unknown to the Malagasy, and their absence has no doubt tended to preserve a higher tone of humane and kindly feeling than is usually found in non-Christian nations. It is true that formerly infanticide, to a certain and limited extent, was practiced, but it was resorted to under a belief that children born on certain unlucky days would be exposed to every kind of misfortune if allowed to live” (3p187.)

3. Turning the Dead

- “Most conspicuously, this cult and the inherent world view is demonstrated in the practice of “turning the dead”- famadihana. These ceremonies are an area of constant tension among Christians. Today it is quite common to see Christian crosses utilized as symbols decorating the family tombs. However, this does not necessarily mean that the whole family has converted to Christianity. More often it is an expression of mutual adaptation” (5p36.)

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