

1. Description

- 1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: Malagasy, A macrolanguage of Madagascar, Austronesian language family [1].
- 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): mlg [1].
- 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Madagascar, Mayotte, and Réunion are all regions with significant Malagasy language speakers [2].
Geographic coordinates: 20 00 S, 47 00 E [3].
- 1.4 Brief history: The written history of Madagascar begins in the 7th century, when Arabs established trading posts along the northwest coast and first transcribed the Malagasy language into Sorabe. During the Middle Ages, large chiefdoms began to dominate considerable areas of the island. European contact began in the year 1500, when Portuguese sea captain Diogo Dias sighted the island after his ship separated from a fleet going to India. The Portuguese continued trading with the islanders and named the island as "São Lourenço". By the 17th century, the French East India Company had established trading posts along the east coast of Madagascar, as well as on the nearby islands of Bourbon and Ile-de-France (today's Reunion and Mauritius). From about 1774 to 1824, Madagascar was a favorite haunt for pirates. Beginning in the 1790s, Merina rulers succeeded in establishing hegemony over most of the island, including the coast. In 1817, the Merina ruler and the British governor of Mauritius concluded a treaty abolishing the slave trade, which had been important in Madagascar's economy. In return, the island received British military and financial assistance. British influence remained strong for several decades, during which the Merina court was converted to Presbyterianism, Congregationalism and Anglicanism. France invaded Madagascar in 1883 in what became known as the first Franco-Hova War seeking to restore property that had been confiscated from French citizens. (Hova is one of three Merina classes – hova are the common people). At the war's end, Madagascar ceded Antsiranana to France. In 1890 the British accepted the full formal imposition of a French protectorate. After the conclusion of hostilities, in 1896 the French Parliament voted to annex Madagascar. The 103-year-old Merina monarchy ended with the royal family being sent into exile in Algeria. During World War II, Malagasy troops fought in France, Morocco, and Syria. After France fell to Germany, the Vichy government administered Madagascar. During the Battle of Madagascar, British troops occupied the strategic island in 1942 to preclude its seizure by the Japanese, after which the Free French took over. Madagascar moved peacefully towards independence. The Malagasy Republic was proclaimed on October 14, 1958, as an autonomous state within the French Community. A period of provisional government ended with the adoption of a constitution in 1959 and full independence on June 26, 1960 [3].
- 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: Artisan missionary envoys from the London Missionary Society began arriving in 1818 and included such key figures as James Cameron, David Jones and David Griffiths, who established schools, transcribed the Malagasy language using the Roman alphabet, translated the Bible, and introduced a variety of new technologies to the island [2].
- 1.6 Ecology (natural environment): World's fourth largest island: total area – 587,040 sq km; Climate: tropical along coast, temperate inland, arid in south; Terrain: narrow coastal plain, high plateau and mountains in center; Natural resources: graphite, chromite, coal, bauxite, salt, quartz, tar sands, semiprecious stones, mica, fish, hydropower; Land use: arable land: 5.03%; Natural hazards: periodic cyclones, drought, and locust infestation; Environment - current issues: soil erosion results from deforestation and overgrazing; desertification; surface water contaminated with raw sewage and other organic wastes; several endangered species of flora and fauna unique to the island [3].
- 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: Population: 20,042,551 (July 2008 est.) [3]. Population Density: 35.62 in 2010 [4]. In 1984–1985, the average farm size was three acres [7].

2. Economy

- 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): rice, laoka, whole grain cereals, noodles, coffee, vanilla, sugarcane, cloves, cocoa, cassava (tapioca), beans, bananas, maize, peanuts, manioc, tubers, root vegetables, fruit, curds fermented from zebu milk [3 & 5]. Vegetables such as carrots, cauliflower, cabbage, potatoes, peppers, and zucchini are available year round. Fruit such as pineapples, coconuts, oranges, mangoes, bananas, apples, and leeches are subject to seasonal availability [7].
- 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: zebu cattle, livestock products: beef, chicken, goat; pork (taboo for Muslim Malagasy), fish, wild game [5]
- 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: The Malagasy military is well-developed and their weapons collection consists of: tanks, armored cars, APCs, mortars, artillery pieces, anti-aircraft, anti-tank, small arms, various naval- and air-craft [6].
- 2.4 Food storage: Information could not be found.
- 2.5 Sexual division of production: Men are generally the primary money earners. Although women frequently engage in petty commerce to supplement their household budget, they rely upon their husband's earnings. Even though men and women are capable of participating in all forms of activities, men focus their efforts on economic and women on household and familial activities. Both men and women learn to do all household tasks; however, women tend to dominate the domestic sphere, caring for family, meals, laundry, and shopping, while men dominate the professional sphere, often farming or fishing away from the home [7].
- 2.6 Land tenure: There are two types of land tenure regimes in Madagascar: a customary system and a state system. Customary tenure systems are generally comprised of holdings and commons. Holdings consist of rice paddies or agricultural land, individual trees, and irrigation canals. Commons include pastureland, water resources (in some instances irrigation canals), and selected forest lands. State tenure systems are governed by written laws and regulations. Communities have clearly defined rules and procedures which resolve civil conflicts as well as disagreements over access to and control of resources. A right of passage law gives people the right to pass through private land. Recently there has been government movement toward creating local security teams to supervise adherence to land tenure laws. Only Malagasy may own land [7].
- 2.7 Ceramics: Despite the differences of pottery styles of the Malagasy compared to Sumatra, Java, and Borneo, the Malagasy pottery found in the center and eastern regions of the island resembles the Bau and Kalanay complex from Island Southeast Asia [8].
- 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: Information could not be found.

- 2.9 Food taboos: Food taboos (*fady*) tend to be passed down within family groups and along ethnic lines. Some *fady* apply to daily life and some are observed during special circumstances such as pregnancy and lactation. *Fady indrazana*, taboos related to ancestral lineage, link Malagasy to their ethnic groups. For example, it is *fady* for most Sakalava to eat pork or eel. For Antandroy, sea turtle and cows without horns are taboo. When a man and woman from different ethnic groups marry, it is common for a woman to observe both her and her husband's *fady indrazana* as well as the *fady* which apply to both ethnic groups during pregnancy and lactation [7].
- 2.10 Canoes/watercraft? : Archaeologists estimate that humans arrived on Madagascar between 200 and 500 A.D., when seafarers from southeast Asia (probably from Borneo or the southern Celebes) arrived in outrigger sailing canoes [3].

3. Anthropometry

- 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): average height about 159 cm [9]
- 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): average weight about 51 kg [9]

4. Life History, mating, marriage

- 4.1 Age at menarche (f): Information could not be found.
- 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): The median age at first birth is 19.9 [10].
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f): Usually between 4-6 individuals [10].
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): Information could not be found.
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): The median age at marriage is 19 [10].
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Divorce is a common occurrence. By the age of forty, most Malagasy have been involved in several successive marital unions. Reasons for the dissolution of marriages are fairly specific, including the infidelity of either spouse (although this does not always lead to divorce); neglect of duties as a husband (he does not provide adequate food); or neglect of duties as a wife (she does not care adequately for those in her charge or does not spend household money wisely). All property acquired during a marriage is considered the property of both and is divided equally if the union terminates [7].
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: In precolonial times polygyny was viewed as a sign of success. The institution of men maintaining more than one wife and household varies across the island and is generally referred to as *deuxieme bureau* (second office) or *vady aro*, *telo*, or *efetra* (second, third, or fourth wife). It is estimated in some areas that more than 50 percent of adult men simultaneously maintain two or more wives and households at some point in their lives [7].
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: There is no formal dowry arrangement or bride price, but a present of zebu cattle will often be made [11]. The first and most important tradition is called the "vodiondry" (literally meaning 'lamb's rump'). Without this ceremony, the couple would not be considered married and if they were to appear in public it would bring disgrace to their friends, family and community. What is the vodiondry (you might be asking yourself)? Vodiondry is a gift given by the groom to the bride's family. It is offered as a consolation to the parents who are losing their cherished daughter. While some might think that the groom is 'buying' his bride this is not the case. Vodiondry is a sign of respect and a way for the groom to thank the bride's parent for raising such a beautiful and wonderful daughter. Often, the groom will offer a gift to the bride's brother as well, called "tampi-maso" (meaning 'eyewear'). This is traditionally meant as a decoy to distract the brother so that he forgets his sorrow at losing his sister [16].
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns: Customary inheritance practices pass land and household to male children and the contents of the household such as furnishings and jewelry along to female children. Although current law states that male and female children have equal rights to all of the family resources the cost of taking this to court is too prohibitive for most. Customary land tenure practices traditionally resulted in land being passed from father to son. Daughters and other relatives inherited land only in the absence of sons. Although current law states that male and female children have equal rights of inheritance, it is still common for land to be given to male children [7].
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: The majority of marriages are traditional in nature as are most divorces. Long after a union may have dissolved the children of that union give continued meaning to familial obligation [7].
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: Homosexuality is legal in Madagascar. The age of consent is 21. Neither homosexuality nor sodomy are mentioned in the criminal laws of Madagascar. The U.S. Department of State's 2010 Human Rights Report found that "there was general societal discrimination against the LGBT community" and that "sexual orientation and gender identity were not widely discussed in the country, with public attitudes ranging from tacit acceptance to outright physical violence, particularly against transvestite sex workers." The report also found that "LGBT sex workers were frequently targets of aggression, including verbal abuse, stone throwing, and even murder" and that "in recent years there has been an increased awareness of "gay pride" through positive media exposure, but general attitudes have not changed" [2].
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Malagasy tend to practice a pattern of endogamy in terms of ethnic group and social status [7].
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?: Paternity is not partible amongst the Malagasy; 'other fathers' are not recognized [7].
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows"): Information could not be found.
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? : Information could not be found.
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape : Madagascar is a source country for women and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking; sex and labor trafficking have increased, particularly due to a lack of economic development and a decline in the rule of law during the current political crisis, which began in March 2009; children, mostly from rural areas, are subjected to domestic servitude, commercial sexual exploitation, and forced labor in mining, fishing, and agriculture within the country [12]. Many Malagasy women are unaware of the fact that their body and their fecundity are things they can control. This is in part due to unmet need for sexual education and contraceptives. Sexual harassment and violence is often seen at public places and at home. Victims of incest, raped by friends or

strangers are the most usual scenarios. Also, it is important that the rate of sexual abuse is particularly high at schools.¹ Most often it is the high school teacher or the university professor who sexually harasses female students [13].

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin) : Information could not be found.

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?: Information could not be found.

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: Information could not be found.

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? Primary caregivers for small children are the mother and/or father. However, many children will be fostered to other family members such as a grandparent, an aunt, or an uncle from a few months to a few years or for the child's whole life [7].

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: Sex ratio: at birth: 1.03 male(s)/female [3].

4.22 Evidence for couvades: There is no evidence for couvades amongst the Malagasy.

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): There do not seem to be any different distinctions for potential fathers amongst the Malagasy.

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?: Children are taught from an early age what they are not allowed to do. They are told stories of disobedient children who are cursed by their parents. This preserves ancestral understanding in future generations [7].

4.24 Joking relationships? : There is no evidence of joking relationships amongst the Malagasy.

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: Predominately there exists patrilineal descent for right, names, or associations [14]

4.26 Incest avoidance rules : Among the Merina, the Malagasy people most thoroughly studied by anthropologists, the population is divided into a number of *karazana* (large kin groups) that are defined in terms of the common land upon which the family tomb is located. They are hierarchically ranked and usually named after a single ancestor. Members of the same *karazana* are described as being "of one womb." The general practice is for individuals to marry within the *karazana* or even within the same subunit to which they belong. Although endogamy carries with it the taint of incest, intermarriage is preferred because, in this way, land (especially tomb land) can be kept within the kin unit rather than being inherited by outsiders. Preserving the boundaries of the kinship unit through intermarriage preserves the integrity of the all-important link between the living and the dead [15].

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? : The wedding ceremony takes the form of verbal jousting or "kabary" between representatives of both parties. Each family will choose a spokesperson or "mpikabary" who is well versed in kabary. The spokesperson begins the ceremony by apologizing profusely from his or her inadequacies (anytime you speak in public you have to be humble) and then presents the history and genealogy of the family and then begins praising the bride. Once the families have given the bride and groom their blessings, the bride's family receives the vodiondry. A lamb is slaughtered for the occasion and a number of live zebu are given as a dowry. In highland areas, money now takes the place of both the zebu and the lamb. The groom also offers a gift to his wife; generally a lamba (a silk stole) which is a symbol of their union. Finally, the oldest and most respected family members give the couple their blessings. During a grand wedding feast, the newly weds enjoy a meal together. Originally, the meal of newlyweds was served on the "fandambanana" or on a clay plate. This has special significance, and signifies a wish to live a long and healthy life. It is also a reminder of the fragility of relationships. The couple are must eat from one spoon carved from black horn, which expresses that now they are one. The colour black also signifies a wish for long life. The meal is usually made up of a mixture of rice with milk and honey. After the meal, guests offer the newlyweds gifts such as a mattress, wardrobe, bed and other various utensils. Once the ceremony is over, the newlyweds travel to their home with their gifts and begin their life together [16].

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? : Information could not be found.

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) : Marriages are usually preferred to be within the community.

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? : Regardless of the form of marriage, most unions today are formed by joint consent with the institution of arranged marriage decreasing in frequency. When a family does arrange a marriage, it is generally with the purpose of securing or strengthening familial and social relationships. Marriage patterns vary according to socioeconomic status and have political implications in that they are intended to preserve or increase wealth, power, and prestige [7].

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: Information could not be found.

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: Information could not be found.

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: Information could not be found.

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: Information could not be found.

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): President Ravalomanana has stated that he welcomes relations with all countries interested in helping Madagascar to develop. Disputes - international: claims Bassas da India, Europa Island, Glorioso Islands, and Juan de Nova Island (all administered by France). Illicit drugs: illicit producer of cannabis (cultivated and wild varieties) used mostly for domestic consumption; transshipment point for heroin [3]. Political tensions between the main Malagasy groups (high plateau and c tier) still exists today and are characterized by the perception that the central government does not meet the needs of the c tiers. Each of Madagascar's presidents has struggled to achieve a viable cultural balance between the acceptance of western ways of life, most notably French, and the safeguarding of traditional Malagasy customs. That which has emerged as quintessentially Malagasy in the national sense is a constantly evolving product of all of these influences [7].

4.18 Cannibalism? There does seem to be indication of cannibalism amongst the Malagasy in the past, but not so in recent times.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: Information could not be found.
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Information could not be found.
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Since independence from France in 1960, Madagascar has been a democratic republic. Since independence, while the country has struggled with economic and political insecurity, Madagascar has moved from post-colonial democracy, to a transitional military government, to a socialist regime, to a parliamentary democracy. The current constitutional framework was approved on 19 August 1992. Currently the president is elected by universal suffrage to a five-year term with a two-term limit. The bicameral parliament is comprised of a senate and national assembly. The prime minister is nominated by the parliament and approved by the president. The system is one of proportional representation which has resulted in many independent parties. In the 1993 elections more than one hundred twenty political parties supported four thousand candidates for one hundred thirty-eight seats [7]. Malagasy political system is set up so that power tends to remain in the hands of the top few while everyone else is part of the working class.
- 5.4 Post marital residence: Patrilocality is the preferential post marital residence pattern [7].
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Information could not be found.
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): There does seem to be divisions in social interactions by age and sex amongst the Malagasy.
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: Information could not be found.
- 5.8 Village and house organization: The situational aspect of homes and important buildings are considered very important. The most desirable direction for the primary roof line is north-south. Homes, cattle pens, family tombs, and the village are aligned in relation to this orientation. As recently as the 1950s it was common to find the interior furnishings of homes arranged in a traditional fashion in keeping with the Malagasy cosmological conception of the world being square and horizontal. For example, the bed was located in the northeast, the greeting place for guests in the northwest corner, and the cooking hearth in the middle of the western side of the house. Although some people still follow traditional customs of the placement of objects, the practice is in decline. Those in coastal regions that can afford to buy furniture tend to acquire a bed frame or sofa and wooden table. A single room serves multiple functions [7].
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): Information could not be found.
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? Information could not be found.
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: Information could not be found.
- 5.12 Trade: During the Middle Ages, the chiefs of the different settlements began to extend their power through trade with Indian Ocean neighbors, notably East Africa, the Middle East and India. Beginning in the 1790s, Merina rulers succeeded in establishing hegemony over most of the island, including the coast. In 1817, the Merina ruler and the British governor of Mauritius concluded a treaty abolishing the slave trade, which had been important in Madagascar's economy. In return, the island received British military and financial assistance. British influence remained strong for several decades, during which the Merina court was converted to Presbyterianism, Congregationalism and Anglicanism [3]. Commodities exports to France, the United States, Japan, and Italy include coffee, vanilla, cloves, shellfish, sugar; and petroleum products [7].
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Malagasy political system is set up so that power tends to remain in the hands of the top few while everyone else is part of the working class.

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

- 6.0 Time allocation to RCR: Information could not be found.
- 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): A variety of traditional practitioners provide the functions of diviner, traditional healer, and/or astrologer. Clergy from either the Catholic or Protestant church are consulted alongside traditional practitioners. Illness, misfortune, financial hardships, and relationship problems are frequently connected to the discontent of ancestral spirits, making healers of all traditional practitioners [7].
- 6.2 Stimulants: Information could not be found.
- 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Newborn children are kept inside the house for a period of approximately seven days after birth, at which time a small ceremony is performed to celebrate the "coming out" of the child [7]. The Merina and Betsileo reburial practice of famadihana, or "turning over the dead", celebrates this spiritual communion. In this ritual, relatives' remains are removed from the family tomb, rewrapped in new silk shrouds, and returned to the tomb following festive ceremonies in their honour where sometimes the bodies are lifted and carried high above the celebrants heads with singing and dancing before returning them to the tomb [3].
- 6.4 Other rituals: Information could not be found.
- 6.5 Myths (Creation): Information could not be found.
- 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Support for the arts is understandably limited due to the poor economic conditions of the country. *The Centre de Culture Albert Camus* in Antananarivo hosts local and international performances and exhibits in the fine arts. Although there is little public funding for the fine arts there are many excellent individual artists. There is a growing market both internally and internationally for artisan goods. Hand-crafted objects are made in wood, leather, horn, metal, stone, mineral, clay, cloth, and feathers. *Kabary* is an elaborate and poetic form of discourse in which the speaker makes a critical point in an indirect fashion [7].
- 6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Generally, males are still the only ones allowed to hold positions such as priest or shaman.
- 6.8 Missionary effect: Information could not be found.
- 6.9 RCR revival: Information could not be found.
- 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Ancestral spirits are regarded as intermediaries between the living and either of the two supreme gods. The dead are viewed as having the power to affect the lives of the living. They are considered the most important members of the family, influencing lives on a day-to-day basis. *Razana* (ancestors) are the pulse of the life force and the creators of customs (*fomba*) [7].

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? There is no taboo against naming dead people, in fact it is almost common – especially seen with the strong belief of ancestor involvement in daily life.

6.12 Is there teknonymy?: Yes, in certain ethnic groups such as The Betsileo of Madagascar there is teknonymy [17].

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) : Approximately 50% of the country's population practice traditional religion, which tends to emphasize links between the living and the dead. The Merina in the highlands particularly tend to hold tightly to this practice. They believe that the dead join their ancestors in the ranks of divinity and that ancestors are intensely concerned with the fate of their living descendants. About 45% of the Malagasy are Christian, divided almost evenly between Catholics and Protestants. Many incorporate the cult of the dead with their other religious beliefs and bless their dead at church before proceeding with the traditional burial rites. They also may invite a pastor to attend a famadihana. The Roman Catholic church is open to its members continuing these practices, while more conservative Protestant denominations tend to condemn them to be superstitions or demon worship that should be abandoned. Many of the Christian churches are influential in politics. Islam in Madagascar constitutes about 7% of the population. The Muslim traders who first brought Islam in the 10th century had a deep influence on the west coast. For example, many Malagasy converted to Islam and the Malagasy language was, for the first time, transcribed into an alphabet, based on the Arabic alphabet, called Sorabe. Muslims are concentrated in the provinces of Mahajanga and Antsiranana (Diego Suarez). Muslims are divided between those of Malagasy ethnicity, Indo-Pakistanis, and Comorians. The number of mosques in the south-east region has increased from 10 to 50 in the last ten years. Recently, there has been some growth in Islam through conversion [3].

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

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

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

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

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Numbered references

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