

# Social Factors in Development & Environmental Conservation in Madagascar

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## Social Factors in Development & Environmental Conservation in Madagascar

### 1 Introduction

Similar to the two sides of a coin, Madagascar is one of the world's richest countries in terms of biodiversity, but also one of the world's poorest countries economically. This 'coin' of Madagascar would have an area of 587k square kilometres and a population of 22.3 million people, making it the 4th largest island of the world (World Bank 2013). Walsh describes a month's wage of a cane cutter as being around \$40 and contrasts this to the boasts by a sapphire miner who calls that very amount his minimum daily wage (2003: 290). While this is certainly indicative of a high-income disparity, Walsh explains that the money gained by these miners is considered 'hot money', and is immediately spent on 'living the life' and is certainly not the norm for a majority of Malagasy people.

Overall, a vast majority of the people have incomes similar to that of the cane cutter, and can only dream of the wealth of a sapphire miner: The World Bank estimated the threshold of monetary poverty in Madagascar to be at FMG 988,600 per year per person, and found 69.6% of Malagasies living in poverty (2003). Since then, poverty has increased to 77% in 2010, reaching the highest poverty rate in Africa with the country suffering even more during the aftermath of the Euro crisis (World Bank 2013). The gross national income per capita was at USD 430 in 2012 (ibid). This, in combination with other factors, explains Madagascar's 151st rank in the human development index published by the United Nations (Malik 2013: 143).

However, the rich nature offers an antithesis to Madagascar's monetary poverty. The country is classified as one of the eight "*hottest hotspots*" for "*areas featuring exceptional concentrations of endemic species and experiencing exceptional loss of habitat*" (Myers, Norman, *et al.* 2000: 853). For instance, over 80% of all plant species are native, making it responsible for nearly 2% of the world's plant biodiversity (Myers 1988: 189, 190). This unique nature of Madagascar was formed more than 60 million years ago, when a continental shift deposited the island at its current location and evolution could thrive in isolation (cf. Tilghman *et al.* 2005: 1, 2).

The dominant narrative with regards to the natural wealth of Madagascar is one of an impending threat, where deforestation endangers the Malagasy biodiversity. One report on the progress of the USAID environment programs over the last 25 years in Madagascar with the title "*Paradise Lost?*" is indicative of this (Freudenberger 2010). And it is often the local residents that are branded as the villains, because the impoverished local residents are supposedly destroying nature through swidden agriculture (Shyamsundar & Kramer 1997, Gezon 1997, Kull 2002). With the local population being the culprit of environmental unsustainability, it is not surprising that the development programs have a strong focus on promoting environmental conservation.

International funding to the country is strongly concerned with protection of the environment in Madagascar. While the World Bank reports that the ongoing political crisis has made it impossible to achieve most of the Millenium Development Goals, it boasts "*substantive results*" in the area of environmental protection (World Bank 2013). In fact, the only concrete positive results the World Bank reports in Madagascar concern the environmental sustainability: a "*75% reduction in the rate of deforestation over*

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*the past 20 years*”, the “*Creation of 2.4 million hectares of national parks*”, and the “*Sustainable management of 4.5 million hectares of landscapes, primarily by non-governmental organizations (NGOs)*” (World Bank 2013).

Recently, such programmes have come under critique by journalists and scholars as continuing colonial and neo-colonial appropriation of resources under the discourse of “*green grabbing*” (Fairhead *et al.* 2012). Green grabbing is defined as the expropriation of land or resources for environmental purposes and is embedded in the debate on land grabbing in general (Corson & MacDonald 2012: 263). The core insight of the discourse on green grabbing is that ecosystems are compartmentalized and commodified, leading to a “*neoliberalization of nature*” (Fairhead *et al.* 2012: 254). This is best exemplified by one paper that estimates the annual costs for the establishment of the Mantadia National Park for the households in the vicinity of the to be at USD 49 – 18% of their gross total income (Shyamsundar & Kramer 1997: 183).

The view of nature is dissonant to the perceptions of the local population. When Caroline Seagle confronts her Malagasy informants with their poverty, they answered that Madagascar is not poor, “*the problem is Mivarotra tanindrazana (Selling off the land of the ancestors)*” (2009). The importance of “*Tanindrazana*” for the Malagasy is highlighted by the constitutional Motto of the country: “*Fitiavana – Tanindrazana – Fandrosoana*” (Love, Fatherland, Progress) (Le Comité Consultatif 2010, Article 4).

This contrast between a conflict of foreign and Malagasy interpretations of things and events has a clear historical precedent going back to the Merina kingdom which ruled the country before the French conquest in 1895 (Bloch 1971: 28, 30). In his analysis of the peasant society in Madagascar, Bloch observes that this rift permeates to the core of the Merina society and thus dedicates most of his book on the two schemes of interpretation dictating agency in Imerina (*ibid.*: 33).

In this context, my research will be focussing on the discourses surrounding land and environmental conservation in Ambohitantely and Mantadia, Madagascar. I will attempt to describe how these discourses affect the lives of the local communities with the hope that the result will allow for a translation between these views and therefore support the articulation of the needs and wishes by the various local stakeholders.

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### 2 Research Question

In order to address the intellectual puzzle outlined in the introduction, the following research question and sub-questions shall be asked.

**How does the environmental conservation affect the people living in the vicinity of national parks in Imerina, and how do these people utilise and interpret the discourses framing the access, use and ownership in order to manage the effects of the environmental conservation?**

What do these discourses include, and what are the goals of the different stakeholders in Ambohitantely Special Reserve and Andasibe-Mantadia National Park in Madagascar?

Who are the agents holding power over the ontologies of land and environmental resources and how are these relationships (re)produced?

How does the environmental conservation affect the behaviour and means of subsistence of the population living in the vicinity of the protected areas?

Conversely, how does the behaviour of the people living in the vicinity of protected areas affect the environmental conservation?

And finally, what are the conceptual systems underlying the valuation of land by local communities and how are they expressed in the people's relationships with the environment?

I have chosen this research area, because it is a clearly limited field for research in Madagascar, while still being relevant, especially with respect to the foreign developmental assistance and the tourism industry, both important economic factors for the country (cf. Walsh 2012: xx-xxx).

Furthermore, while the chosen area has been subject of prior anthropological studies (such as Bloch 1971), the impact of national parks on the local culture, which is tightly connected to ownership of their ancestral tombs has to the extent of my knowledge not yet been thoroughly analysed by an ethnographer.

Therefore, I hope that this research can elucidate a novel, yet significant aspect of life in Madagascar.

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### 3 Regional Background

My research in Madagascar will be conducted in two different settings, the first being the capital Antananarivo, and the second being a town in the vicinity of a national park near the capital. While the particular town has yet to be defined, there are two national parks that are accessible from the capital by car: On one hand, the Ambohitantely Special Reserve in the highlands, and on the other hand, the tropical Andasibe-Mantadia National Park.

For practical reasons, my main basis will be located in the capital of Madagascar. Antananarivo provides access to research institutions and libraries, such as the University of Antananarivo, and is the local premise for important actors, such as the World Bank or the Malagasy government.

The main reason for choosing such a multi-sited research approach is that according to Bloch, “[...] *to understand many aspects of the rural Merina’s concepts we must understand the concept of Tananarive.*” (1971: 13). A case in point would be the University of Antananarivo, which conducts research on biodiversity in Ambohitantely (Klein *et al.* 2007: 455). In the following I will provide a brief on the background information for the sites where my research will be conducted.

#### 3.1. Antananarivo

The province and city of Antananarivo lie in the central highlands of Madagascar, a region “*most simply defined as the lands over about 1 000 metres in altitude*” (Kull 2008: 114). The vicinity of the capital in the hilly north-eastern portion of the highlands is home to the Merina people, where Maurice Bloch encountered “*One of the more disturbing moments of my field work*”, as he is faced with the moral neutrality of money in rural Imerina (1971: 165, 166).

The city itself (Commune Urbaine d’Antananarivo or CUA) is the political centre of Madagascar, and covers an area of approximately 86.5 square kilometres, with a population estimated to be 1,119,235 in 2007 (Ratsitorahina *et al.* 2009). With a population growth proportional to the rest of the country, the city now probably houses more than 1.5 million residents. The city is divided into six administrative arrondissement, which are in turn divided into 192 fokontany, the smallest administrative units ((Ratsitorahina *et al.* 2007).

The main addresses of interest in Antananarivo are the University of Antananarivo, the WWF and the World Bank. Since these institutions involved in the creation and maintenance of national parks, they will need to be investigated as well in order to get a complete picture of the discourses surrounding the environmental conservation.

#### 3.2. Ambohitantely Special Reserve

In the central highlands of Madagascar, there are only two official protected landscapes, Ambohitantely Special Reserve (also known as Ambohitantely Forest Reserve) in the north; and Andringitra national park in the south (Kull 2008: 125). Other than these two reserves, the central highlands are in spite of the Malagasy conservation efforts a “*blank spot*” in terms for ecological preservation (*ibid.*). Consequently, there is also a striking lack of ethnographic literature on the Ambohitantely Forest reserve,

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even though the region is inhabited by the culturally dominant group of Madagascar, with the sole exception of the short study conducted by Klein *et al.* (2007). However, since the Merina culture has been extensively studied by the ethnographer Maurice Bloch, there is a wealth of background information available that could be used in an ethnographic analysis of Ambohitantely (cf. Bloch 1971). Therefore, a deeper description of how the Merina handle the preservation of their natural wealth would be ideal, because it could extend both the knowledge of the contemporary Merina culture and the nature of the conservation efforts in Imerina.

The Ambohitantely Special Reserve is located at an elevation between 1,300 and 1,650 metres over sea level, and 5,600 ha in size (Pareliussen *et al.* 2006: 197). About half of the reserve is covered by a (fragmented) forest, and the remainder is mostly grassland (*ibid.*). As for biodiversity, Pareliussen *et al.* write that there are more species in the bigger forest areas than in the smaller ones (2006: 197).

They further note that the five months from May to September, when I will be conducting my fieldwork, are cold and dry – with June and July having an average of just 14 mm of precipitation (*ibid.*). Obviously this has implications for the agriculture that can be conducted in this period, for example, I assume that the rice fields are not cultivated during this period. In order to get a complete picture of the agricultural cycle, interviews will have to be conducted, covering the activities during the rest of the year. On the other hand, most fires are set to burn right before the rainy season in order to release nutrients before the rainfalls effect the growth (cf. Klein *et al.* 2007: 460). My fieldwork penned for September should provide ample opportunity to observe these burning practices, if I manage to get access to them.

According to some sources, the fires in the reserve area are one of the main dangers for the forest, and one of the main efforts of the ANGAP concentrate on preventing fires from spreading into the forested area (Klein *et al.* 2007: 463). The fires are usually set in the grasslands and are recognized to serve several functions – from being a livelihood practice to maintain pastures and woodlands, to prepare cropfields and to control pests to being set in protest against colonial and governmental forces, where the fires are theorized to be a form of peasant resistance (cf. Kull 2002: 927).

In Ambohitantely in particular, fires are quite frequent – for instance, 18 fires were reported in the reserve between 1996 and 1999, burning around 180 ha of grassland (Pareliussen *et al.* 2006: 197). The reserve was created in 1982 as a safe haven from exploitation and fire, and became a research area for the University of Antananarivo in 1998 (*ibid.*). The reserve borders are demarked and patrolled by the ANGAP, and the area is subdivided according to differing purposes. One part is intended to be a strict nature reserve, while another is to be used for eco-tourism and scientific studies, and a third part should be used sustainably by local people, who, however, in practice do not use the area (Klein *et al.* 2007: 455).

There are four administrative zones (fokontany) in the east of the reserve, containing several small villages in the periphery of the reserve (*ibid.*). These villages are quite isolated and may even be cut off from the rest of the world during the rainy season, when rivers flood the roads – another advantage of conducting the research during the dry season.

According to Klein *et al.*, rice is the principal crop in this zone (2007: 459). The rice is usually grown in terraced areas near the valley bottoms, and the hillside (tanety) is used for grazing and the growing of dry-land crops (e.g. manioc, ground nuts). Klein

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*et al.* further describe that the rights to own and work the fertile land near the valley floors reflect the history of migration and social structure of the local people, and note that the land is cultivated collectively (*ibid.*). Immigrants have to cultivate the plentiful tany, and by planting and working an area gain the rights to the land.

As mentioned earlier, the analysis of Bloch that finds zebu cattle central to the rural social fabric in Madagascar can also be applied in the periphery of Ambohitantely (Klein *et al.* 2007: 459-460). These cattle are mostly owned by a few wealthy owners who can rent out their cattle since they are necessary for the cultivation of the fields. Klein *et al.* find that most of the fires in the peripheral zone are related to cattle herding, for the maintenance of pastures, and also to hide the tracks of cattle, since cattle theft is a constant threat (*ibid.*).

The forest is recognized as state property (*fanjakana*), and especially the places that hold tombs and the ancestral spirits are seen as sacred, again reflecting the articulations of Maurice Bloch (Klein *et al.* 2007: 460). The forests also provide directly consumed resources, such as medical plants and honey, and may also serve as hunting areas (*ibid.*).

Klein *et al.* evaluate the conservation and development projects that were introduced in five villages in the Maharidaza fokontany, where nurseries for Eucalyptus were built and small coffee plantations were established (2007: 461). They conclude that these projects failed due to a misconception of the needs and wants of the local inhabitants. The Eucalyptus trees were intended for the prevention of erosion and to produce firewood, however there is no perceived shortage of firewood, and the coffee did not make sense as a cash crop, since there is no reliable access to markets. They found that the villagers were understandably more concerned with growing enough food for subsistence than with these projects.

However, the official stance failed to recognize these issues and stated that the failures were due to the local villages being badly organized and traditional, and connected the future success of the projects to a better education and organization of the villagers (Klein *et al.*, 2007: 461).

This clearly demonstrates that different discourses are employed in Ambohitantely to converse on conservation. This further shows that the perspectives of the local villagers have to be understood better, if the goal of sustainable development is to be pursued. The conclusion by Klein *et al.* seems to be a bit premature – they find that the best chances for sustainability are found in a ‘fortress’ model for protection, where a strictly protected zone is enforced by the officials and local residents are excluded (2007: 463). The research by Walsh serves as an indicator of the relative powerlessness of such enforcement, when a valuable resource like gemstones is found in the reserve and countless people immigrate from other corners of the country (Walsh 2012).

### 3.3. Andasibe-Mantadia National Park

A second officially protected landscape in the vicinity of Antananarivo is the Andasibe-Mantadia National Park. Unlike Ambohitantely, Andasibe-Mantadia is a rain forest reserve and spans over an area of 9875 ha (Shyamsundar & Kramer 1997: 180). The reserve famously contains the habitat of the largest known lemur in Madagascar, the indri indri (*ibid.*). This made the area a prime candidate for the special protection under Madagascar’s National Environmental Plan (NEAP), and the protected area was established officially in 1989 (*cf.* McConnell 2002: 222).



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While there are no permanent settlements in the park itself, there are several within 10 km of the protected area, and their inhabitants have traditionally used tracts of the land in the park (ibid). The subsistence of the local population is mainly based on tavy, a form of swidden agriculture practiced in eastern Madagascar (Shyamsundar & Kramer 1997: 180). Furthermore, the locals generate additional income through timber extraction and mining (ibid).

McConnell describes that tavy is comparable to swidden agriculture in other parts of the world and consists of cutting and drying vegetation that is then dried and burned in preparation of the manual planting of rice grains with a dibble stick (2002: 218-219). Typically, a strip of forest is cleared up-slope to the ridge line, and the resulting field is usually cultivated for one season and then left in fallow (ibid.). McConnell creates a typology of the fallow, according to the degree of regeneration, as follows: "*ramasarana (just harvested); dedeka (1-2-year fallow), savoka (3-10-year fallow) jingeranto (secondary forest)*" (2002: 219).

Additionally, the term jingeranto may also denote land that is generally ready for cultivation, and the rights to re-use the land rest with the farmer who cleared the land originally (McConnell 2002: 219). McConnell also refers to Bloch in order to describe the social relations in the farming community, especially with reference to reciprocal labour exchange and the borrowing and lending of these lands (219). Consequently, I assume that the local population can also be categorized under the Merina and expect that the social structures in both Ambohitantely and Mantadia are comparable, even if the environment is different.

The average household annually grows 487 kg of rice, the main staple of the region (ibid.). The forest is foraged for a variety of products, from fuel wood over fish and animals to forest herbs. In other words, the situation in Andasibe-Mantadia is generally similar to the one in Ambohitantely, with the main exceptions that fuel wood has actually been gathered from the protected forest area, and while Syamsundar & Kramer don't mention cattle in the Andasibe-Mantadia region (1997), other sources confirm that the indigenous population in Mantadia does in fact also know zebu cattle (cf. McConnell 2002: 220).

The conservation efforts in the Mantadia region have been studied by McConnell who in 2002 published a paper where he characterizes the failure of the conservation strategies by the management of the national park due to 'misconstrued land use' (2002: 217-230).

McConnell writes that at the end of the 1996-1997 farming season, a number of farmers were evicted from the most fertile lands in Vohibazaha, where the farmers had been using land inside the national park under a trial arrangement for the promotion of sedentary agriculture (2002: 217). At the time, Vohibazaha was a small farming community of approximately 640 people (ibid.).

The pilot project established a buffer zone at the eastern border of the national park, where a special zone for 'controlled occupancy and use' was created and groups of farmers were allowed to cultivate plots in the national park under special contracts (McConnell 2002: 223). However because the farmers did not implement the soil and water conservation measures specified by the contract, they were evicted from these fields (ibid.).

Again, the official staff initially attributed the failure of the project to the "*laziness,*

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*ignorance and inherent conservatism of the farmers*”, and a follow up study mapping the land use during the project demonstrated that the tavy fields of the community were in fact grouped loosely by lineage and corresponded to the location of the ancestral tombs (McConnell 2002: 226).

Furthermore, these discussions also revealed how the farmers reacted to their eviction: they sought relief under the traditional sembontrano system, wherein they started to cultivate the oldest cultivated fields in the community that belongs to the lineage group (McConnell 2002: 224). They gained the approval from the lineage group to start cultivating these commonly owned lands earlier than usual. However, this land was relatively infertile and could only yield a meagre harvest due to weed infestations (ibid: 226).

This leads McConnell to the conclusion that a better appreciation of the historically established local practices of agricultural cultivation would have led to a better definition of conservation measures and to a more successful project than the ‘textbook list of soil and water conservation techniques’ (2002: 227). This constitutes a second example, where conservation can only be facilitated through the collaboration of the conservation staff and the indigenous population.

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### 4 Theoretical Framework

It has been argued in the previous section that the conflicting realities faced by those who wish to protect the environment, and those whose subsistence is based on agriculture in the vicinity of the reserves lead to mismanagement and ultimately to the failure of 'sustainable development'. In the following section, a range of theoretical approaches that can help to understand the social realities in the vicinity of the national parks in Madagascar are introduced.

#### 4.1. Modernity at Large

In general terms, the view purported by the developmental organisations where the projects to protect the environment fail due to the "backwardness" of the indigenous population is reminiscent on the global discourse of "modernity" observed by Arjun Appadurai.

For Appadurai, modernity is literally "at large", running rampant among the world and creating an unprecedented rift between the "traditional" past and the "modern" present (1996: 3).

Appadurai argues that the appearance of the electronic media change the wider field of mass media, as they open up a wider field "for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds", or what he also defines as "cultural" when used to refer to the construction of group identities (ibid: 3, 11-16). Because of their ubiquitousness and their rapid pervasion of daily life, "electronic media provide resources for self-imagining as an everyday social project" (ibid: 4).

Similarly, these media empower mass migration in a way that allows for migrants to create a distinct identity in the diaspora without having to assimilate with the local culture – for example, Turkish guest workers in Germany can watch Turkish films in their German flats (ibid: 4).

In combination, electronic mediation and mass migration counter theories that "depend on the continued salience of the nation-state as the key arbiter of important social changes", slaying the monstrous leviathan postulated by Hobbes (cf. Appadurai 1996: 4).

In the context of Madagascar, the theory can mainly explain the point of view of the conservationists who can be understood as embracing the notion of an endangered nature originating from a foreign perspective, migrating along the lines of developmental aid and empowered by structural inequalities. While this is obviously a simplification and reality is more complex, it is certainly correct to stress that there are foreign interests involved in the environmental conservation in Madagascar.

In fact, Ferguson compares transnational organisations influencing local policies as in the case of Madagascar, with imperialism and goes as far as branding this as a new form of "internationalized imperialism" (2006: 100). On the other hand, Ferguson sees civil societies at the bottom level, eroding the power of African states through structural adjustment, for example by providing schooling (ibid: 101). In both cases, Ferguson argues, that we are not dealing with political entities that are opposed to the state, but rather with a single transnational "apparatus of governmentality".

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## 4.2. Governmentality

The term “*governmentality*” is a neologism used by Michel Foucault to denote the emergent forms of government that were disconnected from a theological rationality and originated in the rationality of enlightenment (1991: 87). Foucault writes that the essential issue in the establishment of an “*art of government*” was the introduction of economy into political practice (ibid: 92). Furthermore, it is a move away from a government of territories to the government of men and their relations to other things like wealth, resources, means of subsistence, et cetera (ibid: 93).

For Foucault, this marks a turning point away from sovereignty as the goal of government to a new focus on the perfection and intensification of the process of governance (ibid: 95). This increases the scope of government from being contained in laws to a range of “*multiform tactics*” (ibid.). Consequently, Foucault defines “*governmentality*” with the three following features (1991: 102-103):

*“The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security.”*

*“The tendency which, over a long period and throughout the West, has steadily led towards the pre-eminence over all other forms (sovereignty, discipline, etc.) of this type of power which may be termed government, resulting, on the one hand, in the formation of a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses, and, on the other, in the development of a whole complex of savoirs.”*

*“The process, or rather the result of the process, through which the state of justice of the Middle Ages, transformed into the administrative state during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, gradually becomes ‘governmentalized’.”*

Governmentality, as defined in the above, deconstructs the state as a sovereign unity, and conceptualizes the state as a composite reality consisting of a range of tactics of government – essentially limiting the state’s power: The competences and meanings of statehood have to be continually renegotiated on the basis of the applicable tactics of governmentality (ibid: 103).

In the context of environmental protectionism in Madagascar, such this conception of governmentality can facilitate the understanding of that the ANGAP enforces national parks by patrolling the borders with officers and the tactics employed by peasants in order to resist this enforcement – including the burning of land. This means that a study of the Malagasy conservation should study the practices through which environmental policies are enforced as well as the practices through which people resist those policies.



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### 4.3. Discourse

Bourdieu uses the notion of a “*discourse*” to delineate how policy is shaped in practice (1989: 22): A discourse performs an act of cognition, defining a thing as what it is objectively. A discourse also prescribes how people have to act and records how people have acted in the past, for instance in official police records. Therefore, a discourse imprints a specific vision on the public. However, Bourdieu also notes that there is always a struggle for the production and legitimation of discourses. How much influence any entity can exert on any given discourse amounts to the power the entity possesses in that context (ibid.). In this case, states are often the holders of much symbolic power – but not the sole owner.

In the example of Madagascar, the two dominant discourses have already been mentioned – one discursive project that aims to protect the natural heritage, and the opposed discourse of the ancestral lands that provide the subsistence for the local villages. However, in reality these discourses are not able to provide complete picture of the discursive landscape in Malagasy national parks. In what follows some of the particular definitions of land in other Malagasy contexts are outlined with respect to their expected relevance to Ambohitantely and Mantadia.

### 4.4. Discourses of Land in Madagascar

#### 4.4.1. Land as Sacred Place

When Walsh visits the Ankarana National Park for the first time, he attends to a ceremony taking place in the ancestral caves (2012: 4-7). This ceremony was not only frequented by the indigenous people and the odd anthropologist, but also by the French consulate, politicians, tourists, NGO representatives and television reporters (ibid: 7). Walsh observes that the local elite actively asserts their claims to the land by including such wide range of participants in this ceremony that establishes a connection between the land and their ancestral worship.

The significance of tanindrazana, as the ancestral tombs are called in Malagasy, has already been established by Maurice Bloch in 1968, when he describes the function of the tombs to be a conceptually fixed point in the otherwise fluid social organisation of the Merina people (1968: 94). The importance of tanindrazana has not diminished since then – it is one of the three words contained in the motto of the new constitution of Madagascar formulated in 2010 (Le Comité Consultatif Constitutionnel 2010).

#### 4.4.2. Land as Natural Wonder

Walsh further observes that it is the discursive persuasiveness of Madagascar as a natural wonder and endangered paradise that has the power to attract these actors to the ritual (2012: 9-11). The narrative of the heroic efforts necessary to protect the “*paradise lost*” has been frequently used to draw attention to the “*environmental decline*” in Madagascar in order to mobilize people. A prime example is the report on the activity of USAID in Madagascar that uses exactly these words in the title: “*Paradise Lost? Lessons from 25 years of USAID environment programs in Madagascar*” (Freudenberger 2010).

Walsh notes that the “*rulers*” of Ankarana strategically ally themselves with the cause of protecting the environment, in order to lobby for their own ends, for instance for

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enforcing their fady (taboo's) through the instruments of the ANGAP (2012: 12).

#### 4.4.3. Land for Subsistence

In the section providing regional background information, it has already been mentioned in detail how landscapes in Madagascar provide the subsistence for the local peasants. It should not be surprising that the people living off the land have their own ways of categorizing the land. Their terms may range from terms concerning the use of the land, such as *tanimbary* (rice fields) over terms for the soil (for example, *tany mena* for red soil) to wider categorization of land, such as *baiboho* (floodplains) (cf. Kull 2008: 119).

There are complete ethnographies featuring the terminology used by farmers to describe land written by Blanc-Pamard and Rakoto Ramirantsoa, but some of the more insightful terms are listed in the following. The wide open landscapes of the western highlands are appreciated with the terms *malalaka* (open, spacious) or *mazava* (clear), implying that these lands provide room for human settlement (Kull 2008: 119). A similar implication is made with the word *eftira* that Kull translates as “wilderness” to denote the barren land that is yet to be cultivated by humans (ibid.). Furthermore, land can be called *tany madio*, or land that is kept clean through regular burning. If an area is cleared and cultivated for the first time, it is called *tany vakiloha* (ibid.).

This terminology used by the peasants informs their perception and use of the landscapes in Madagascar. If an area is seen as wasteland that has to be cultivated in order to become useful to humans, one can suspect that farmers have little understanding for efforts aiming to preserve this desolate area.

#### 4.4.4. Land for Eco-Tourism

The notion of seeing the land in Madagascar as a location to conduct eco-tourism is strongly connected to the perception of land as a natural wonder. Tourists visit the national parks in Madagascar because they are categorized as natural wonders in the first place. However, the discourse of eco-tourism is mentioned separately, in part because it is often used as a textbook example for sustainable development, where a win-win situation is created because the tourists bring money into the empty pockets of the locals without consuming a physical product of the land (cf. Walsh 2012: 49-52).

However, the second and more important reason for why eco-tourism should be seen as a discourse in its own right already demonstrates that the tourism industry does not primarily benefit the local population: The people benefitting most from the tourists are the service providers like the tourist guides who are mainly entrepreneurs from other regions of Madagascar who have specialized in supporting tourists and immigrate to the vicinity of national parks in order to work there (cf. Walsh 2012: 54-61).

It is this group of entrepreneurs that I also expect to find in Ambohitantely and Mantadia, who are probably going to be lobbying in favour of national parks, as their livelihood depends on them. Since they know the tourists visiting the parks, they can act as experts on the perspectives of the tourists who may be difficult to interview in-depth otherwise. And since they are expected to argue in favour of conservation, their opinions should reflect the successful discourses supporting national parks.

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### 4.4.5. Land as a Place of Opportunity

A last perspective on land is found in example of sapphire mining. In this example, the land is seen as a place of opportunity. In the case of Abondromifehy, a gold rush gripped the region in 1996 and a surprising amount of Malagasy migrated to the town in order to strike it big by mining the gemstones (cf. Walsh 2012: 14-19). This made the village with a population of a few hundred people grow into a town of more than 15,000 inhabitants in the span of less than two years (ibid: 14).

This perspective was not included here, because I expect it to be prevalent amongst the people of Ambohitantely or Mantadia, but rather because it demonstrates the limitations of the environmental protection in Ankarana. Even with the support of the local population who also regards the miners with suspicion, the ANGAP could not stop the influx of these entrepreneurs and Walsh recounts the telling story of a tourist guide who decided to explain to a group of tourists, that the mining digs they encountered in a visit to the national park were caused by an animal that is only active during the rainy season (2012: 63, 64).

### 4.4.6. Land and Social Structure

The common denominator of all these perspectives is the social relevance of land in Madagascar. For instance, when referring to Tanindrazana, the land becomes a compass, delineating the origin of a lineage. On the other hand, uncultivated land is an important place to enable social mobility, be it in the case of sapphire miners who search for wealth in gemstones, or be it for a peasant family that wishes to carve their own plot for cultivation.

This corresponds to Igor Kopytoff's theory that the frontier is the legitimizing historical model in Africa (cf. 1989). The core of Kopytoff's theory is that socio-political mobility becomes possible through migration in many African societies (Kopytoff 1989: 51). He argues that African people often have hierarchies based on their age and gender and often follow the principle of lifelong tenure (ibid: 36-37). Kopytoff explains that after a migration to the frontier, existing and new hierarchies are negotiated and a chieftainship slowly develops (1989: 54, 55, 69, and 70).

In the context of my research, I expect that the nexus between land, social structure and migration plays an important role for the indigenous discourses on land ownership. Therefore, the relationship between these concepts should be subjected to careful scrutiny.

## 4.5. Green Grabbing

A last discourse that bears mentioning is not primarily a discourse on land in Madagascar, but rather a nascent academic discourse on land usage in general. In this view, the appropriation of land for the purpose of environmental conservation is criticized as a neo-colonial practice that dispossesses the local people (cf. Fairhead *et al.* 2012; Corson & MacDonald 2012). Under the negatively connoted term of "green grabs" scholars, activists and journalists have been taking up arms against plain environmental conservation without consideration for human factors.

In Madagascar, it has been observed that the WWF spending has increased by a factor of 10 from 1983 to 1993, and that the USAID also allocated \$71 billion to conser-

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vation projects – making the country a prime example for “green grabbing” (Klein *et al.* 2007: 454). The government plan for environmental action (EAP) has been criticized “for transferring only responsibilities, not rights, to the local communities” (Klein *et al.* 2007: 454).

Here, I hope that my research can provide a remedy for conservation efforts that overly focus on the environmental protection and are prone to failure due to their inability to account for human sensibilities.

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### 5 Research Plan

Since there are two vastly different research localities, it will be necessary to have a set of two research methodologies for this research project. Therefore, my description of the research methods is divided into three parts, first the methods that will be employed in Antananarivo, then the methods for the national parks, and lastly the methods common to both sites.

#### 5.1. Research in the Centre

As previously outlined, the centre in Antananarivo is constituted by an accumulation of institutions with a vested interest in National Parks. There is not only the state and the educational institutions, we also have the World Bank and the WWF who are based in Antananarivo.

For the investigation of the official positions by these organization, my plan is to contact and interview them as a Master's student interested in National Parks and I hope that they will provide me with the information they would usually provide to interested parties.

A second approach will be to gather the information brochures for tourists, since I expect the official discourses over environmental conservation to mention and target ecotourists.

To get information on the official position of the state, I intend to collect maps of the national parks where the frontiers are drawn – and I intend to use these maps in the periphery to see, if they match the local perceptions.

#### 5.2. Research in the Periphery

In the periphery, there are also different groups of people that will be investigated. While the focus will lie on the local townspeople and peasants, there are also tourist guides and park officials to consider.

Since land has been established as the central theoretical concept for my research, ethnographic mapping techniques should be used to gain a first understanding of how the different typologies of land are defined and understood. Especially with regards to the fields for the production of subsistence and their connection with lineages and ancestral places, collaborative mapping techniques have been used successfully in the past (cf. McConnell 2002).

One such technique is social mapping, where a group of people is asked to draw a map of their local community and a focus on the salient features for the group is made (Pelto 2013: 73). This method has been shown to be more accurate and useful than surveys. (ibid.).

Therefore, I also plan to use social mapping in order get a general idea of how land ownership and usage is conceptualized by the peasants. However, I don't expect this to be sufficient to create a detailed typology of land as it is understood by the peasants who have their own ways of categorizing the land. Their terms may range from terms concerning the use of the land, such as *tanimbary* (rice fields) over terms for the soil (for example, *tany mena* for red soil) to wider categorization of land, such as *baibo*

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(floodplains) (cf. Kull 2008: 119).

There are complete ethnographies featuring the terminology used by farmers to describe land written by Blanc-Pamard (cf. 1986, 1995, 1997, 1998), but some of the more insightful terms are listed in the following. The wide open landscapes of the western highlands are appreciated with the terms *malalaka* (open, spacious) or *mazava* (clear), implying that these lands provide room for human settlement (Kull 2008: 119). A similar implication is made with the word *eftira* that Kull translates as “wilderness” to denote the barren land that is yet to be cultivated by humans (ibid.). Furthermore, land can be called *tany madio*, or land that is kept clean through regular burning. If an area is cleared and cultivated for the first time, it is called *tany vakiloa* (ibid.).

This terminology used by the peasants informs their perception and use of the landscapes in Madagascar. If an area is seen as wasteland that has to be cultivated in order to become useful to humans, one can suspect that farmers have little understanding for efforts aiming to preserve this desolate area.

In my case, I plan to use participatory photography to build a body of the relevant items and concepts of the peasants. This will be achieved by giving a camera to select farmers and ask them to take pictures during their normal work day, and then to discuss why they took specific pictures (cf. Pink 2001: 59-64).

Another perspectives to be captured through photography is the view of the ecotourists who commonly produce many pictures during their travels. By analysing the pictures the tourists take, we can investigate what they actually value in practice when visiting the National Parks in Madagascar (cf. Pink 2001: 27).

Lastly, any photographs can serve as devices for memory elicitation, not just in cases of the typology of landscapes, but also in other cases, such as social situations where pictures can assist in memorizing the people present at a certain point in time, as well as helping to remember background information. Here, I envision conducting pile-sorts with the pictures of different typologies of land that emerged during my research with the goal of finding and collect evidence of the commonly shared definitions of the typologies of land in Merina.

### 5.3. Research between Centre and Periphery

The main pillars of my research will be used in both the centre and the periphery. These methods are going to be participant observation on one hand, and interviews on the other. However, even if the methods are the same, their purpose and the data they are going to yield will differ.

The method championed by cultural anthropology that can generate realistic and grounded data of human societies, as required by my research question, is participant observation (DeMunck 2009: 179-180). Especially for investigating the perspectives of the indigenous population in the vicinity of national parks, participant observation has the advantage of allowing for deep insights in the local culture. The participant observation in Antananarivo will have the goal of delivering a contrast between the Merina population in general and the people living near a national park.

For example, there is a Zoo in the centre of the city (Tsimbazaza Zoo), and a Malagasy visiting it asked the question: “*Quel est la difference entre un Zoo et un Parc National?*”

In other words, already the perception of what exactly a national park is, will differ



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between core and periphery. And this question certainly makes sense in this context: both zoos and National Parks are visited because they offer a glimpse into Madagascar's unique nature, mainly with the example of Lemurs.

Furthermore, the observations in the capital will have the goal of understanding the significance of the Western influence and wealth in centre on the periphery.

Interviews are going to constitute a second pillar for my research. They are especially useful, in cases where participant observation is less optimal or not possible due to temporal constraints, interviews can generate the necessary scientific evidence into the discourses held by people. While participant observation is characterized more by informal interviews, conversations with official representatives should be interviewed with a more structured approach.

In this case, it makes less sense to distinguish between the core and the periphery, but rather to classify the data according to the social position and structure of the person who is put to the question. For example, I plan to use similar interviews with government officials in Antananarivo, as with official park guards and the ANGAP in the periphery.

In general and where possible, I plan to use a less formal and structured approach to interviews, in order to not guide my participants, but to be guided by their knowledge.

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#### 5.4. Schedule

My research is divided into three months of presence in Madagascar, and in the following I will describe how I plan to utilize these three months in order to answer my research question.

##### 5.4.1. Month 1

The overarching goals for the first month in Madagascar will be to get used to the local setting and establish contact with a first level of local stakeholders. In the beginning, the focus will not yet be to find key informants, but rather to understand where such informants may be found locally. Furthermore, I plan to start learning basic Malagasy and become proficient in the local variety of the French that is spoken.

It will also be a high priority to make a first trip to both national parks in order to

##### 5.4.2. Month 2

In the second month, the data collection will be prepared. That includes the creation of the interview guides and conducting interview tests.

A second goal of the second month will be, to gather the data in Tana, in other words, to interview the organizations with their main offices in the capital.

Maybe it would be possible to organize a longer, weeklong period in the field, where I could optimally find key informants and prepare for the period in the field.

##### 5.4.3. Month 3

The climax of the project will be after my work ends on the 21.07.2014. After that date, I will have the opportunity to fully concentrate on my research and to conduct the participant observation mentioned in my methodological focus above until I return on the 12.09.2014.

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## Abbreviations

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
ANGAP	National Association for the Management of Protected Areas—Association Nationale pour la Gestion des Aires Protegees
CUA	Commune Urbaine d'Antananarivo
NEAP	National Environmental Action Plan
EAP	Environmental Action Plan
ICD	Integrated conservation and development

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