

Appendix 3

Glossary of Malagasy Terms

The following is a list of all the Malagasy terms used in this dissertation. Note that whenever possible I have used the local vernacular spellings, rather than “official” orthography.

Ala: Forest.

Ambiasa: (Elsewhere in Madagascar, *ombiasy* or *ombiasa*). A traditional diviner-healer, who divines the future by interpreting cast seeds (*sikily*) and prescribes traditional medicine (*aoly*). *Ambiasa* are exclusively men.

Añalamikea: The Mikea Forest.

Andrevola: The ruling clan of the Masikoro/Fihereña polity from the late seventeenth century until 1898 (see Fagereng 1950).

Antsoro: A spade used in agricultural labor or for digging wild tubers.

Aoly: (Elsewhere in Madagascar, *ody*). Magical force, magical objects, traditional medicine, or modern medicine. The power of *aoly* comes from wood; people with powerful magic are sometimes said to have *le gros bois*. Magical objects include charms, house relics, and family/clan relics.

Asotre: The dry, cool season (usually May-July).

Baibò: A field or garden, often in a savanna or floodplain, that is cultivated perennially. *Baibò* differ from *hatsake* in that the latter term applies to temporary swidden fields.

Baintao: Literally, “wounded year.” A bad year. Normally this term refers to droughts, but many informants told me that every year is a *baintao* (see Chapter 8).

Biby maseake: Literally, “mean animal;” a monster who bites off the penises of uncircumcised boys and bites off the ears of girls who have not have them pierced, usually resulting in the death of the child. This monster was rumored to be on the loose in March-June 1998. As a result, many Mikea boys and men who had not previously participated in the *savatse* circumcision ritual due to a lack of funds were circumcised during these months.

Doany: A spirit that possesses a *tromba* spirit-medium. Some *doany* are spirits of the dead, while others are forest spirits (*koko*).

Doka, dokany: A term referring to a small shop or to the shop’s owner. *Doka* typically sell tobacco, soap, matches, sugar, coffee, and cooking oil.

Faly: (Elsewhere in Madagascar, *fady*). Taboo, forbidden. Certain ethnic groups, clans, families, and individuals are forbidden to eat certain foods, or participate in certain activities, usually because these foods/activities are considered to counteract protective magic (*aoly*).

Faosa: The dry, hot season (usually August-November).

Fararano: The dry, warm season that follows the wet season (usually March-April).

Fasy: Sand and sandy ground. *Fasy* is easy to dig through and difficult to traverse on foot or oxcart. Opposite of *tany henta*.

Fatidrà: A same-sex best friend with whom a ritual has conferred fictive kin status, equivalent to a “blood brother” (or sister).

Fihereña: The region of southwestern Madagascar that is the traditional realm of the Masikoro polity, and which contains the Mikea Forest. The Fihereña is bounded to the north by the Mangoky River, to the south by the Onilahy River, to the east by the Mikoboike Mountains, and on the west by the sea (see Figure 1.1).

Fototse: One to four manioc stems that are planted together.

Fia sale: Fish that have been preserved by smoking; the preferred method for preserving fish destined for local sale.

Fia vendra: Fish that have been preserved by sun drying; the preferred method for preserving fish that will be consumed within a few days.

Fiantsira: Fish that have been preserved with salt; the preferred method for preserving fish destined to be sold to exporters in Toliara or Morombe.

Fokonolo: Townspeople. The *fokonolo* of villages hold public forums (most often attended by men) for discussing local political and economic matters.

Fokontany: Literally, “people’s land.” An administrative unit equivalent to a township.

Hako: Literally, a “hider.” *Hako* are mythical, semi-human forest dwellers with primitive technology and social organization to which Mikea are often compared.

Hatsabao: A new (first year) slash-and-burn swidden field. *Hatsabao* are created by chopping down a section of forest and burning the fallen trees.

Hatsake: A slash-and-burn swidden field. The most common *hatsake* crop is maize, but sometimes manioc, sweet potatoes, watermelons, vohem beans, or peanuts are grown in this type of field.

Hazomanga, hazomboto: (Literally: Sacred wood or penis wood). A post or series of posts owned by a clan which are used in the *savatse* circumcision ritual.

Kado: (From the French word *cadeau*). A present; an extra unit or part of a unit of sale given to a buyer by a vendor as a show of thanks for having performed the transaction. Demanding a *kado* of a vendor is part of the haggling process.

Kapila: A traditional wooden container used to store and transport honey or milk.

Kapoake: a standard unit of measure in markets throughout Madagascar, measured with a 354 mL Nestle condensed milk can piled heaping full.

Katray: The strategy of planting crops before the first rainfall of the rainy season (also called *soimà*).

Kijoly: An enclosure that houses a spirit (*doany*) that is invoked in a *tromba* spirit possession ceremony.

Kipao: A wooden scoop tool used when excavating wild tubers.

Kotoke: Mythical semi-human beings who are rumored to steal milk and honey from negligent cattle herders.

Lambo: The wild swine *Potamocorus larvatus*.

Lampihazo: Literally, a “tree-hugger.” *Lampihazo* are mythical, semi-human forest dwellers with primitive technology and social organization to which Mikea are often compared.

Lohatao: Literally, the head of the year. A term referring to the days immediately preceding and following the first rains of the rainy season. *Lohatao* is the traditional beginning of the year.

Litsake: The rainy season (December-February).

Mahafaly, Mahafale: A cultural identity term applied to people living south of the Onilahy River (see Figure 2.1). Also, the name of a powerful chiefdom allied with the Sakalava against the Masikoro and the Tandroy during the early eighteenth century. The ruling clan of the Mahafaly was called Maroseraña.

Manditse: An adjective used to describe the dense, dry texture of *ovy* tubers judged to be of highest quality. *Ovy milemiley*, soggy tubers, are available at the end of the rainy season, but the tubers don’t become *manditse* for another few months. Tubers coming from hard-packed *tany henta* soil were said to be more *manditse* on average than tubers from sandy soil (*fasy*).

Mandroso sakafo! A phrase inviting one to share a prepared meal. People eating a meal are obliged to call this phrase to anyone in sight who is not eating.

Masikoro: A cultural group in southwestern Madagascar who are reputed to be skilled farmers and herders. Traditionally, the Masikoro have constituted a polity ruled by kings from the Andrevola clan, in the region called Fihereña (see Figure 2.1).

Merina: A cultural group in the central highlands of Madagascar, around Antananarivo. The Merina formed a state in the mid-eighteenth century, which expanded to dominate the majority of the highlands and east coast up to the early nineteenth century (see Figure 2.1).

The Merina state attempted to conquer the Sakalava and Masikoro polities, but with limited success (Brown 1995:91-94). In southwestern Madagascar, Merina people are usually called *Ambaniandro*, meaning, “from beneath the sun” (a reference to their mountainous homeland).

Miaramila: A soldier (in a modern army, in contrast to *tafike*).

Mihemoste: Nomadic foraging.

Mikea: A person who lives in the Mikea Forest and is reputed to be a forager, or to come from a family of forest-dwelling foragers. Most Mikea are ethnically Masikoro or Vezo.

Misaotse, Misaotra: Thank you. This term was probably imported from the High Plateau; Masikoro and Mikea usually say *mahavelo* (literally, “gives life”) to mean “thank you.” To say *misaotse* to an offer of food (*mandroso sakafo*) is a polite way of saying “no,” whereas *mahavelo* means “yes.”

Milemiley: Weak, flaccid. An adjective used to describe the soggy, flaccid texture of the *ovy* tubers judged to be of poorest quality. *Ovy milemiley* are available at the end of the rainy season; after several months they become *manditse*, hard and dense—the preferred texture.

Mondra: An anthropogenic clearing in the forest, the result of chopping and burning the forest for agriculture or pasture. Some *mondra* are colonized by thorny scrub and weeds; others are colonized by grasses. *Mondra* may be burned to promote the growth of grasses for pasturage purposes, thus transforming them into savanna. In other cases, *mondra* regenerate into forest, *ala*.

Monka: A swidden field (*hatsake*) that is more than a year old. *Monka* fields are normally prepared for planting by clearing out the weeds that have grown in them since they were planted the year before. Sometimes, however, *monka* are planted without clearing weeds.

Monto: A clearing or open land, including savanna, dry lakebeds, and anthropogenic clearings (*mondra*).

Mpamorike: An evil *ambiasa* (diviner-healer) who casts spells to cause others harm (*vorike*).

Mpanao kinanga, mpanao kasave: A mobile retailer.

Mpitokazomanga: A clan leader. Normally, the oldest male member of a clan.

Nahodabe: Literally, “big man,” usually the oldest male at any given camp or village. The *nahodabe* is the recognized authority figure in a community. It is a gesture of respect for visitors and newcomers to a community to greet the *nahodabe*. In most cases, however, this is an honorific position with little power.

Ndrañahare: (Elsewhere in Madagascar, *Zanahary*). God.

Nenitoa: Aunt. The nickname of the Norwegian missionary living in Vorehe.

Oranasotre: A rare rainshower during the dry, cool season of *asotre*.

Ovy: The wild tuber *Dioscorea acuminata*.

Piripizà: A “partisan;” a Malagasy person who sympathized with or collaborated with French colonialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Poakafo: A swidden field (*hatsake*) made by burning the forest without chopping any trees.

Poiny: Destined to poor fortune, a born loser. A *poiny* forager encounters prey rarely and harvests it ineffectively.

Sakalava: A cultural identity term applied to people living north of the Mangoky River (see Figure 2.1). Also, the name of a powerful chiefdom or paramountcy that controlled the western half of the island until French Colonialism in 1895. Many sources classify Masikoro, Vezo, and Mikea as Sakalava, although historically these are different groups with different ruling clans. The ruling clan of the Sakalava, as well as the Mahafaly, was called Maroseraña. The Sakalava polity was allied with the Mahafaly against the Masikoro and the Tandroy during the early eighteenth century.

Savatse: Circumcision ceremony. Boys are customarily circumcised at the age of six to ten. Age sets of boys are circumcised together. A traditional circumciser or doctor performs the ceremony, under the direction of the clan leader or *mpitokazomanga*. Boys are presented to

ancestors at a series of sharpened upright posts called *hazomanga* or *hazomboto*. *Savatse* are lively ceremonies in which livestock are sacrificed and consumed by guests, normally with rum. Many Mikea households cannot afford to sponsor this ceremony; as of 1998, most Mikea males in the northern half of the forest were not circumcised.

Sijy: A feeling of intense craving or “jonesing” for an addictive substance, usually tobacco.

Sikily: (Elsewhere in Madagascar, *sikidy*). Divination of the future performed by casting seeds from the *fany* tree (*Entada abyssinica*) onto sand. This is the skill of an *ambiasa* healer.

Soimà: The strategy of planting crops before the first rainfall of the rainy season (also called *katray*).

Soro: A ceremony in which ancestors are invoked for the purposes of physical or social healing. Traditionally, a cow is sacrificed, but Mikea today sometimes slaughter a goat instead.

Soronanake: A rite of filiation that must be performed by a man in order for children to become part of his clan. The children are ritually presented to the ancestors, and a cow is sacrificed. Today most Mikea men cannot afford to slaughter a cow for this occasion, so children remain part of their mother’s clan.

Tafike: A warrior in the service of Malagasy kings during the era before southwestern Madagascar was conquered in 1898.

Tambotrike: The small tenrec *Echinops telfairi*.

Tandrake: The large tenrec *Tenrec ecaudatus*.

Tandroy or Antandroy: Literally, “land of thorns.” A cultural identity term applied to people living in the dry south-central part of Madagascar (see Figure 2.1); the region is also called Antandroy. Also, the name of a powerful chiefdom allied with the Masikoro against the Mahafaly and the Sakalava during the early eighteenth century. The ruling clan of the Tandroy during that period was called Andriamañare.

Tanindraza: Literally, “land of ancestors.” Homeland.

Tany dangalia: Ground in savanna environments characterized by an eroded grayish soil that has little worth for cultivation. *Tany dangalia* is easily recognized by the dominant ground cover, a brushy plant called *zavilo* (*Indigofera bojeri*). *Tany dangalia* is named for the three-eyed skink, the only animal thought to thrive on this type of ground.

Tany henta: Hard-packed ground. *Tany henta* is difficult to dig through, and easily traversed by foot or oxcart.

Toetsaombe: A pasture territory, or a temporary camp occupied while performing herding tasks.

Traño: A house; also, a familial social unit associated with a house or collection of houses (a household).

Tromba: A term applied to both the spirit possession ceremony and the spirit medium who performs it. *Tromba* are male or female.

Tsiokatimo: Literally, “southern wind.” A cold, forceful wind that blows from the south (off the Mozambique Channel) during *asotre*, the cool, dry season.

Vahiny: Visitor, guest.

Vazaha: A foreigner, a white person, or someone in a position of authority. Europeans and Americans are called *vazaha mean sofy* (red-eared foreigners). Malagasy people affiliated with the military, gendarmes, police, and politicians are called *vazaha-gasy*.

Vazimba: This term has many meanings in Madagascar. In Malagasy folklore, Vazimba are ancestor spirits inhabiting tombs that have been neglected; they take the form of beautiful women living in water or grotesque dwarves with unkempt hair, and they sometimes haunt their descendants, especially those who convert to Christianity. Beginning in the nineteenth century, Malagasy historians wrote of Vazimba as a race of African pygmies who inhabited the island before the arrival of the Indonesian proto-Malagasy (Berg 1977). Vazimba is also the name of a clan among the Masikoro and Sakalava. There is an ethnic group in the Tsiribihina region of western Madagascar who also go by this name.

Vezo: A cultural group in coastal southern and western Madagascar who are reputed to be skilled fishers.

Vezondriake: Literally, “sea Vezo.” A term used to describe Vezo people who specialize on marine exploitation in exclusion of farming and foraging.

Vezompotake: Literally, “mud Vezo.” A term used to describe Vezo people who cultivate in addition to fishing.

Voloso: A spear used for marine foraging, with a squared-prismatic iron tip that is sometimes barbed; a harpoon.

Vorike: Black magic. Magical spells cast to hurt others, or to cause selfish personal gain at the expense of others.

