FOMBANDRAZANA VEZO:

ETHNIC IDENTITY AND SUBSISTENCE STRATEGIES AMONG COASTAL

FISHERS OF WESTERN MADAGASCAR

by

EARL FURMAN SANDERS

(Under the Direction of THEODORE GRAGSON)

ABSTRACT

The complex dynamic among coastal peoples of western Madagascar involves spread of cultural elements due to extensive seasonal migrations, tribes and ethnic groups merging into progressively broader ethnic groups, distinctions based on interethnic and intra-ethnic boundaries, and lumping of peoples with remotely similar subsistence patterns which has perpetuated ethnonym vagaries. This study analyzes the cultural bases of the Vezo, a group of marine fishers inhabiting the west coast of Madagascar, with the intent of presenting a clearer image of what is entailed within the ethnonym, Vezo, both with respect to subsistence strategies and cultural identity.

Three broad areas of inquiry, ethnohistory, ecological niche as understood from the Eltonian definition, and geographical scope inform the field research. Access to these areas leans heavily on oral histories, which in turn is greatly facilitated by intensive participant observation and work in the native language.

The analysis shows that the Vezo constitute a distinct ethnic group composed of diverse named patrilineal descent groups. This ethnic group is defined by common origins and a shared sense of common history, which along with the origins of the taboos are maintained within their oral histories. Within the ethnonym, Vezo, there are subsistence as well as other cultural distinctions, most notably the taboos. These distinctions are the bases of the ethnic boundaries separating those who belong to the Vezo cultural group and others who are referred to as Vezo (Vezom-potake and Vezo-loatse) due to geographical disposition.

Contact with other, contiguous and noncontiguous groups of marine fishers in southeastern, southern, and northwestern regions of the country reveals that not all who live by the sea and orient themselves toward the marine environment in Madagascar are Vezo. The examination of neighboring groups to the east of the Vezo promotes the possibility of improved understanding of mechanisms of ethnic group formation and the meaning of ethnicity in a broader sense for this region of Madagascar.

INDEX WORDS: Ethnogenesis, Ethnic Identity, Ethnic Boundaries, Ethnic Group, Descent Group, Ecological Niche, Subsistence Strategies, Semi-nomadism, Vezo, Masikoro, Mikea, Madagascar.

FOMBANDRAZANA VEZO:

ETHNIC IDENTITY AND SUBSISTENCE STRATEGIES AMONG COASTAL FISHERS OF WESTERN MADAGASCAR

by

EARL FURMAN SANDERS

B.S. Marine Biology, College of Charleston, Charleston , SC, 1980

M.S. Marine Biology, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC, 1984

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2005

FOMBANDRAZANA VEZO:

ETHNIC IDENTITY AND SUBSISTENCE STRATEGIES AMONG COASTAL FISHERS OF WESTERN MADAGASCAR

by

EARL FURMAN SANDERS

Major Professor:	Theodore Gragson
Committee:	Brent Berlin
	Ervan Garrison

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2005

DEDICATION

To my mom, Dorothy Furman Sanders

and

my dad, Robert Wilson Sanders

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks go to the Vezo of western Madagascar who permitted me insight into their life patterns, to Ted Gragson, Brent Berlin, and Ervan Garrison for constructive input during my time as graduate student, to Ben Blount for encouraging me to apply to the program, and to the gang at the motorcycle shop for at least attempting to keep me real.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The upsurge of interest in ethnic identity in recent years has encompassed both ethnic groups themselves and the field of anthropology. In polyethnic societies, access to scarce resources is often determined by group membership. In the broader post-colonial Africa region, individuals and groups have vied for recognition within the larger society that is the nation state within whose often arbitrarily placed confines they are located. Frequently there is a lack of recognition of certain groups by the majority group in these states due at least in part to a paucity of documents, particularly for the pre-colonial periods, one of the major obstacles in reconstructing history in this part of the world. Academicians are confronted with this same problem. In Madagascar, the majority group, the Merina, has been reasonably well studied, while other groups, especially those occupying the coastal areas, remain relatively unknown (Kent 1970, Barendse 1994).

There are eighteen officially recognized ethnic groups in Madagascar (see Table 1, Appendix A). In western Madagascar, there are three additional groups that are considered non-ethnic entities, their designations based solely on performative aspects. These are the Masikoro, stereotyped as agropastoralists, the Mikea as hunter-gatherers, and the Vezo as people who live by the sea and exploit the marine environment (Fanony

1986, Yount et al. 2001). It is the latter group that serves as the focal point of my research.

Issues Critical to Understanding the Central Idea

The central idea is that the Vezo do constitute an ethnic group, one that is composed of numerous patrilineal named groups, and this ethnic group was formed in situ in Madagascar based on the Vezo-Mahafaly. Historical and ecological approaches permit fuller understanding of the Vezo as a cultural group and allow distinctions to be made within the ethnonym Vezo. The ethnic picture in its broad scope is possible only from the perspective of the entire geographical range. These three broad areas of inquiry, ethnohistory, ecological niche as understood from the Eltonian definition, and geographical scope, are both the issues I consider the most vital to more fully grasping the essence of Vezo identity as well as the directive forces that dictated my approach to the field research.

The Vezo as a cultural group are composed of diverse karaza (named patrilineal groups), united by the occupation, knowledge of the sea, and common taboos. To understand this, one must understand the history that defines this group - arrival in Madagascar, semi-nomadism that has been responsible for their extensive range, origins of the taboos. As DeVos expressed it, origin myths establish who one is (1975). This statement is reflected in the substantial weight given oral histories in my attempt to sort through the precolonial period of political unrest that had a lasting effect on western Madagsascar. A synchronic approach based on performative aspects alone is insufficient

in that other defining cultural features, most if not all of which are historically based, are not included in the equation.

The performative labels (group identity based soley on mode of subsistence) applied to the Masikoro, Mikea, and Vezo have been influenced by what Larson (1996) called the tribalism paradigm - that ethnic labeling is a product of the colonial period, especially true in the Africa region (Southall 1970; White 1984; Eggert 1986; Harries 1988; Atkinson 1999; Sharp 2001; Walsh 2001). Many of the socially constructed ethnic identities in this region began well before the colonial period (Willis 1992; Burnham 1996; Atkinson 1999). The colonial naming of groups had antecedents in western Madagascar with the formation of the Sakalava kingdoms that conquered the Masikoro, Mikea, and Vezo (Southall 1986; Allen 1995; Middleton 1999). Previous names assigned the various groups in Madagascar have been perpetuated by post colonial Malagasy administration (Bloch 2001).

When I single-handed my tiny canoe from Bevohitse to Andavadoake, going out into the Mozambique Channel with impressive waves (a six hour sail), I was told by the Vezo of Anadavadoake that I was *Vezo-be* and *Vezo-avao* (big Vezo and Vezo only, respectively). These were just expressions, not to be taken literally. They were induced by the respect accorded those who go to sea in small boats, regardless of identity or origins. As this situation repeated itself often up and down the west coast when I would sail in from having engaged in Vezo-like activities - sailing on the open ocean, trolling far out to the west, or catching good-sized pelagics - I learned to incorporate this into a partial presentation of the Vezo cultural model, saying that while I knew a bit of the sea, I was only *Vezo-vazaha* (a white foreigner), not *Tena-Vezo* (true Vezo), because I did not

adhere to the *faly* (taboos) of sheep or quail. This was always a good lead into an informal interview on the beach. The Vezo who had helped me haul my canoe up past the high tide mark, would agree, saying, "*Izy mahay raha, mahay ny tantara Vezo*" - this guy knows things, he knows the Vezo history.

As the Vezo explained, I as a vazaha could live for twenty years among them, follow the same subsistence patterns as the Vezo, marry a Vezo woman and have children; I could not become Vezo. I would die a vazaha, and since this is a patrilineal society, my children, regardless of how well they knew the sea, would be Vezo-vazaha, not true Vezo. Thus, to be Vezo is not just to learn the Vezo way of life. Within the Vezo ethnic group, all the karaza are united by the profession as well as the taboos. I am called Vezo - Vezo-vazaha - because I know a bit of the sea, but I am not Tena-Vezo in the way that *Vezom-potake* (Vezo of mud) and *Vezo-loatse* (Vezo a bit more, meaning more like the Vezo than the Vezom-potake) are not Tena-Vezo. It is not due necessarily to profession, but because our fathers were not Tena-Vezo. For this reason, we shall never be integrated into the cultural group that is Vezo. This was not always the case.

As will be revealed in this dissertation, the semi-nomadic tendencies of the Vezo fishers have brought them in contact with other groups, some of which have completely adopted the Vezo culture while others have adopted the subsistence patterns alone.

There is a complex dynamic among coastal peoples of western Madagascar, which has made inroads into southern Madagascar as well. This dynamic involves spread of cultural elements due to extensive seasonal migrations, tribes and ethnic groups merging into progressively broader ethnic groups, distinctions based on interethnic and intra-ethnic boundaries, and lumping together of peoples with remotely similar subsistence

patterns, which has served to perpetuate ethnonym vagaries. Madagascar is, by all indications, much more culturally diverse than generally recognized. Lack of complete understanding of the depth of and meaning of ethnicity in Madagascar could, at least in part, be attributed to gaps in knowledge as to original settlement patterns and insufficient collection of oral histories.

It is these oral histories that form much of the foundation of my research, allowing insight into the formative period of ethnogenesis in western Madagascar. During such periods that were at best poorly documented, the continuity of oral traditions and the powerful tool that they offer to ethnographers cannot be overstated.

Research Intent

My research intent as presented in this text, simply put, was to flesh out the related research that had come before me. I first arrived on the southwestern coast of Madagascar in 2003, with the intention of investigating the manifestation of cultural change or cultural continuity in the face of increased exposure to the more modern world. The main research question hinged upon the effect of access to more modern fishing gear and broader market exposure on the social organization of a pre-industrial fishing people. In the first week of talking to Vezo on the Fihereña Coast about changes in fishing gear, target species, and market access in the past few decades, I was impressed by several things: 1) I could look at changes to the lives of fishers due to what is essentially a small part of the very large concept/phenomenon known as globalization, but I could not look at cultural change within a group of fishers if their only shared trait was livelihood; 2) the oral histories to which I was privy early on, indicating both common origins and a shared

sense of common history, as well as other traits that distinguished these fishers from neighboring groups, put budding perceptions of the Vezo completely at odds with the existing literature; 3) in order to fully understand these fishing people and how this increased exposure to modernity was handled and manifested, I needed to pursue a parallel line of questioning that delved into their seeming cultural constitution.

The latter I did, with this line of query forming the basis of the field research in 2004-2005, and it is this research topic that controls the flow of this dissertation. In retrospect, that is, after the completion of the preliminary research, I recognized that the research direction presented in this text was substantially affected by my choice of geographical starting point for the 2003 field work. I decided on the Fihereña Coast due to Bernard Koechlin's having done his research there, and this reputedly being the most traditional part of the Vezo range. He concentrated his efforts on the northern part of the Fihereña. Looking at the map of Madagascar, I decided to approach the Fihereña from the south, then work my way north. This decision was particularly fortuitous for two reasons: 1) as I was to learn, the southern half of the Fihereña Coast is more traditional than the northern part; 2) on my first day there, a mechanical breakdown of the normal public transport (bush taxi) prompted introduction to a Vezo walking companion who ultimately introduced me to many of my initial informants.

CHAPTER TWO

THE VEZO CULTURAL MODEL: SOME THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter I discuss some of the perspectives that have been presented by others who have researched the world of the Vezo. As well, I briefly introduce my own take on the question of Vezo ethnicity and present the hypotheses with the early reasoning that produced them. For areal orientation, see the maps of Madagascar and the west coast of the island in Appendix D.

What Others Have Said About The Vezo

The principal investigators of the Vezo to date have been Marcelle and Jacques Faublée, Bernard Koechlin, Rita Astuti, Taku Iida, and Mansaré Marikandia. Of these, only Astuti and Marikandia focused their research on the issue of Vezo identity.

Marcelle and Jacques Faublée

The Faublée brothers' research emphasis was on the Vezo outrigger canoes and navigation. While I had read a paper by them before going to the field, it was not until I returned from the 2004-2005 field research that I was able to appreciate the Faublée contribution to understanding the centerpiece of the Vezo material culture. Not only this, but there was the reassuringly compounding effect of similar observations, that is, theirs and mine, within the material culture realm and information received from my

informants, both of these decades apart, as the Faublées did their research among the Vezo in the 1940's.

However, similar takes on material culture did not overlap into the realm of other cultural aspects, but the issue of whether the Vezo constitute a discrete cultural entity apparently did not occupy an inordinate amount of their research. What little Marcelle and Jacques Faublée said of Vezo identity left no doubt as to their position - the name Vezo indicates a style of life only, that is subsistence based on the marine environment, and as such those calling themselves Vezo do not constitute a tribe or ethnic group (1950).

Bernard Koechlin

Bernard Koechlin, who has been referred to as the seeker of the Vezo way of life, is the investigator of the Vezo world to whom all subsequent investigators are essentially obliged to refer. Koechlin was my own introduction to the world of the Vezo. His research focused mainly on the Vezo subsistence systems, but his interests included their social organization, the situation of the villages, dry season migrations, as well as forest exploitation - in short, all aspects of Vezo life.

These impressions from the literature were compounded when I visited Bevato, a Vezo village located between the regional center of Morombe to the north and the village of Andavadoake to the south, and talked with elders who remembered him. I was told that Koechlin lived in Bevato from 1968-1970 and that his involvement in "all aspects of Vezo life" included marrying a Vezo woman with whom he had four children. These dates were to best of the elders' recollections, but are likely close to reality, as his major

publications on the Vezo began in the 1970's. If someone is doing the math on two years in Bevato and four children - there is not a correlation, as I was told that they had lived in Morombe as well. The local memory of Koechlin was of one who did indeed engage in all the Vezo actitities, from going out on sea to harvesting wood for canoe construction, and included such anecdotal tidbits as Koechlin's apparent fascination with local birdlife in the forest to the east.

After the time spent in Bevato, Koechlin and his family moved to Morombe, where, supposedly, his wife and children still reside. He apparently still made visits to villages along the northern part of the Fihereña Coast[1], for I met a Vezo on the island of Nosau (or Nosy Hau) who remembered his brief visit there. When first asked if he had heard of a Frenchman named Koechlin, this Vezo drew a blank. However, later he produced Koechlin's name and a Paris address from a notebook, saying that it had been a long time, the encounter was relatively brief, and he had forgotten.

As to the issue of identity, Koechlin viewed the Vezo as a technical subgroup of the Sakalava (1984), and as such, seemed to adhere to the same position as that of the Faublée brothers.

Rita Astuti

Astuti was the first to concentrate her research on this issue of Vezo identity, thus she merits credit for laying the groundwork for subsequent investigations. Astuti did

---

[1] This is that region of the southwest coast of Madagascar that is limited by the Onilahy River to the south and the Mangoky River to the north.

her dissertation fieldwork during the late 1980's in the northern part of the Vezo range, concentrating her efforts at two sites - the villages of Betania and Belo sur Mer. Betania is located just south of the regional capital of Morondava, separated by a relatively shallow channel. At low tide, one can wade across this channel, while during the flood tide there is a ferry - an eight meter outrigger canoe that paddles passengers across. Belo sur Mer, well-known as a center of *botry* (coastal schooner) construction, is located about sixty kilometers south of Morondava.

Within the range of her study sites, Astuti was told that everyone who lives on the coast is Vezo, that the Vezo are not a kind of people, rather they are defined by what they do and where they live (1995a, 1995b). To live by the sea and extract one's living from the sea is to be Vezo. Thus, according to Astuti, the Vezo view their identity as performative (defined solely on the basis of what they do) rather than a state of being. To be Vezo is to act Vezo. She said that one can understand Vezo identity by foregoing preconceived notions of ethnicity, instead listening to what the Vezo have to say about their identity. The latter part of this statement is, of course, the subjective approach advocated by Fredrik Barth (1956) and followed by such noted ethnologists as Aidan Southall (1976) and Ronald Cohen (1978). The former is in reference to the still-not-well-understood meaning of ethnicity in Madagascar.

Astuti expressed surprise at the large number of different peoples, peoples with different ancestral customs, who could all be Vezo. According to her, membership in these various groupings of people is based on intrinsic rather than acquired characteristics, while members of any of these groupings can become Vezo, because to be Vezo is not a question of origin. Likewise, she, as a *vazaha* (a white foreigner) could

become Vezo. The Vezo of Betania told Astuti that because she was learning the Vezo subsistence (fishing, going out with others in the outrigger canoes), she was becoming Vezo. She contended that the same holds true for a Masikoro who came from a village to the east and settled in Lovobe (a village just south of Betania); he could learn the Vezo subsistence and become Vezo in the process. Thus it is due to this learning of the Vezo way of life and becoming Vezo, that credence is lent to her statement that "the Vezo are not a kind of people" (see article title). Because being Vezo is an activity as opposed to a state of being, one can be Vezo one moment and Masikoro the next. Astuti used the following example to illustrate this: a man who handles his outrigger canoe with great finesse is said to be very Vezo; if the same man mishandled the sails on the outrigger, he would be called a Masikoro.

Following what is referred to as geodetermined identity, that a group or people's identity is based on where they live, to live by the sea (in Madagascar) is to be Vezo. While Vezo are associated with the coast, Masikoro are associated with the interior. Astuti noted that there are many obvious differences between Vezo and Masikoro, from differences in dress to differences in female hair styles. She followed these noted distinctions by saying that people are Vezo if they behave like Vezo and Masikoro if they behave like Masikoro, which led into the statement that Masikoro do not have canoes nor do Vezo have fields. For Astuti, Masikoro identity is constructed in a similar fashion to that of the Vezo, that is in both cases identity is based on what one does as well as on where one lives.

Vezo told Astuti that they were never part of the Sakalava. She took the rejection of the Sakalava history to be a sort of carte blanche refusal of history, period, at least for the

Vezo as a people. Vezo have no past, they have no history. Their identity is determined by what they do in the present, for only activities in the present can determine who they are. What one is, is made fresh (from scratch, as she put it) each day.

Taku Iida

Taku Iida did dissertation field research on the Fihereña Coast in the village of Ampasilava, which is situated fifty kilometers south of Morombe, between the village of Andavadoake to the north and the island of Nosy (note that *nosy* translates as island) Lamboara to the south. Iida's research was focused on Vezo subsistence strategies and changes to these in conjunction with changes in fishing economy since 1970. In addition to the time spent in Ampasilava, he visited dry season fishing camps north of the Fihereña: Andramitaroke Island, where *jarife (*netting for sharks) fishing takes place; and Morondava, where fishers from Ampasilava spear sea cucumbers.

As an interesting aside, a bit of serendipitous juxtaposition in a very unlikely place, the same Vezo whom I met on Nosau and asked about Koechlin, was Iida's constant companion and translator during this field research. I met Dantesse merely by chance while walking around this tiny island with no source of freshwater and no house that was not built of *vondro* (bulrush). We ended up talking for quite a while, and I returned to visit him during the week that I spent on the island (I was there to witness the octopus and sea cucumber harvests during the *bory vola famonta* - the full moon spring tides). When he learned that I was doing research on the Vezo, he produced the name and address of Iida, including email, and told me that Taku had been doing research on the Vezo of Ampassilava during the mid-nineties, but was not specific about the research.

After settling back into the States, I sent Iida an email in September, but it came back undelivered. In December, just three days before I was to present to the Anthropology Department my findings from the summer research on the Vezo, I received an email from Iida. He had gotten my email address from Dantesse on Nosau - somewhat incongruous considering that the island has absolutely no amenities! It turned out that he returns to Madagascar and the Fihereña Coast every August, and always pays a visit to Dantesse. Iida introduced himself and how he knew of me, and then asked if I would read and comment on his first article on the Vezo in English (his previous work had been written only in Japanese, which is why I had never heard of him). At least fifty percent of the paper was on the aforementioned changes since 1970 - the very topic of my presentation! As it turned out, our independent investigations often provided confirmation where they overlapped and were complementary as well.

Iida did not investigate the issue of Vezo identity. He did state that while he agreed with Astuti in that the Vezo identity is closely connected to their residing on the coast and extracting their livelihood from the sea, he took some exception to her position that this alone was the basis of their identity, with ethnicity not playing any role (Taku Iida, letter to author, 12/04/2003).

Mansaré Marikandia

Marikandia is a Malagasy and a professor at the University of Toliara. Toliara (or Tuléar as it is also called, this a remnant of French colonialism) is the provincial capital, that is the capital of southwestern Madagascar. He did a study of the Vezo of the Fihereña Coast from a historical perspective, concentrating on the issue of identity, but

discussing as well marine habitat degradation. There is no statement of how long the study was nor how much of the Fihereña he covered; his efforts may well have been concentrated in the regional centers - this I surmised from the following clues: I met no Vezo in any of the villages away from the two regional centers (Toliara and Morombe are located at the southern and northern limits of the Fihereña, respecitively) who had either heard of Marikandia or of any Malagasy who had been investigating the Vezo way of life; by contrast, Koechlin, and Iida were known in the northern part of the Fihereña, and I was known along the entire coast; Marikandia's reference to the recent influx of migrants to the coast as well as to the Vezo as an emerging ethnic group apply much more readily to the regional centers than to the small coastal communities; his making no mention of the Vezo-Mahafaly makes me think that he may well have not gone further north than Manombo.

Regardless of how long or where exactly the study was conducted, Marikandia came closest of any of the researchers mentioned in grasping essential elements of Vezo identity (2001). This is primarily due to his historical approach and his recognition of the importance of the taboos as cultural features distinguishing the Vezo from other groups. As well, he was the first to present in the literature the terms Vezom-potake and *Vezo-vatane* (literally, Vezo of the body, but he presented it as true Vezo; most Vezo find this term humorous, actually preferring the terms Vezo-avao or Tena-Vezo). Later in this dissertation I shall discuss in detail the significance of these terms, as revealed by informants; the terms and their correspondence to subsistence strategies as well as cultural elements are much more complex than is found in the literature.

Marikandia recognized that the ethnonym, Vezo, is a designation referring to what one does - exploit the sea. However, he pointed out, on closer examination, one notices that the Vezo have their own dialect and customs that are different from the Masikoro and Mikea living to the east. Though there are numerous references in the literature on Madagascar to the unifying factor of a common language, there are many different dialects, some quite distinct. Marikandia stated that the Malagasy language actually does not have a sense of unity. Recognition of dialectical variants in Madagascar is a useful tool in distinguishing among ethnic groups.

Marikandia rightfully noted that oral histories pertaining to the origins of the *faly*[2] (taboos) are important to Vezo culture and identity. What he found to be the most prevalent faly are *aondry* (sheep), *kibo* (quail, Coturnix communis, the common quail[3]), and *aombe vandamena* (white zebu with red spots). Following his discussion on the importance of taboos and their oral histories, Marikandia noted the need to identity the *tomponpaly* (the originators of the faly). These, he said, are lineages from north of Morombe, thus north of the Fihereña Coast - such groups as the Antenose, Kimija, and Tandavake.

In arguing that the Vezo should not be considered a subgroup of the Sakalava, Marikandia pointed to the Fihereña Coast having been occupied by fishers before the

---

[2] *Faly* is a Vezo word; in official Malagasy it is *fady*. Note that Malagasy nouns, regardless of the dialect, do not change between singular and plural forms.

[3] *Kibo* in the Vezo dialect does mean quail, but actually refers to the harlequin quail, Coturnix delegorguei, which is found in the Toliara area, that is the southwest, Vezo territory. The common quail is found on the high plateau.

Andrevola dynasty of the Sakalava arrived in the 17th century. This argument has merit, as Portuguese trading vessels in the early 16th century recorded the presence of a population of fishers along the Fihereña Coast. There will be additional support of this forthcoming when I discuss the Vezo-Mahafaly.

My Own Views on the Issue of Vezo Identity

Much of ethnic identity is embedded in the common origins and shared sense of common history that a group has. In many traditional societies, oral histories preserve the cultural heritage. The Vezo oral histories connect them to ancestors who came to Madagasar from East Africa. These oral traditions are maintained by Vezo village elders.

Historical Context in a Nutshell

The Vezo progenitors were fishers from East Africa when they arrived in Madagascar. They took wives from an existing group in southwest Madagascar, the Mahafaly, and learned their language. These proto-Vezo developed their own material culture and subsistence strategies and became successful in exploiting a particular environment, thus creating their own niche. Development of the outrigger canoe and later the sailing rig, gave them mobility unrivaled among groups in Madagascar. The fiavieni Vezo, the seasonal migrations made possible by this mobility, were responsible for the spread of Vezo cultural elements. This same mobility allowed the freedom not only to exploit remote fishing grounds, but also to remain somewhat aloof from the political turmoil that consumed western and southwestern Madagascar during the period stretching from the sixteenth through at least the early part of the nineteenth century.

The contact with other groups during the seasonal migrations exposed these groups to a way of life that was not only successful in exploiting the marine environment, but permitted relative freedom from land-based turmoil and extraordinary mobility for that time period (and even today), all very attractive features.

By the time the period of political unrest was over, the Vezo had pushed their seasonal migrations north and south to where this range abutted that of other groups of fishers. These two critical elements combined to directly bring about the end of Vezoization, integration into the Vezo cultural group.

The Essence of the Vezo Cultural Model

The Vezo cultural group was formed in situ in Madagascar, based on predominantly East African components. The Vezo material culture (particularly the *laka* - single outrigger canoe), the subsistence patterns, as well as the distinctive faly, all have their origins with the Vezo-Mahafaly. The Vezo-Mahafaly are not considered the *Vezo vohalohany* (the first Vezo) - these are the Vezo-Sarambe due to their having been fishers in southwest Madagascar when the proto-Vezo arrived. Though not considered the first Vezo, the Vezo-Mahafaly were the most influential culturally, and are thus the foundation on which the Vezo cultural group is based.

With the sailing rig added to the outrigger canoe, the Vezo-Mahafaly were able to expand the range of their dry season migrations. Within the Vezo *foko* (ethnic group) reside at least forty-three *karaza* (named patrilineal descent groups). There are so many karaza due to extensive seasonal migrations over a protracted period. These karaza have been integrated into the Vezo foko by way of the mechanisms of adoption of the marine

oriented subsistence patterns and acceptance of the taboos against eating kibo and aondry. Those Vezo on the Fihereña Coast have a third taboo, *manapak latak* (circumcision).

As ethnic categories (understood as foko here) are culturally defined, they are mutable, whereas membership in descent groups (understood as karaza here) is usually determined at birth. Thus those members of the karaza newly contacted who were integrated into the Vezo cultural group, would retain their distinctive karaza and at the same time merge into the larger grouping that is the foko Vezo. It was during this formative period that distinctions within the newly contacted karaza were established. The members who adopted the Vezo way of life became known as Vezo (Tena-Vezo), while those members who continued with the former subsistence patterns (mixed economy) became known as Vezom-potake or Vezo-loatse and adhered to the former faly. Subsequent generations followed these distinctions.

The ethnonym, Vezo, came from other groups in Madagascar during the pre-colonial era. Within this ethnonym there are subsistence as well as other cultural distinctions, most notably the taboos. There are the Vezo (Tena-Vezo), Vezom-potake, and in some areas a third category is recognized, the Vezo-loatse. The Vezo are the true mariners, the Vezom-potake have a mixed economy, doing both agriculture and nearshore or onshore gleaning, and the Vezo-loatse do a little agriculture and nearshore fishing.

Vezom-potake can be Masikoro, Mikea, or members of one of the Vezo karaza (such as Marofohy, Sara, Tanalana, Makoa, Kimija) that do not follow the subsistence patterns nor adhere to the faly of the true mariners of that same karaza. All of these are often

called Vezo by outsiders because they live by the sea or live in the interior and come to the seaside to glean for invertebrates.

In villages such as Andranopasy (village north of Morombe) and Ampasilava, there is the third subsistence distinction within the Vezo ethnonym, the Vezo-loatse. They have a mixed economy as well, but lean less heavily on land-based activities than do the Vezom-potake. They do not practice true agriculture nor do they engage in open ocean fishing. This is a generalization, as some few may really know the sea, but culturally they are not Tena-Vezo. Faly adherence tends to be the same as the Vezom-potake.

Neither Vezom-potake nor Vezo-loatse is Vezo. Those outside the Vezo cultural group often refer to those who live by the sea between Androka to the south and Maintirano to the north as Vezo. Vezom-potake (and sometimes Vezo-loatse) often live in the same village as Vezo, so outsiders do not always make the distinction. To belong to the Vezo foko means having adopted the subsistence patterns, the material culture, and the faly. Neither Vezom-potake nor Vezo-loatse belong to the Vezo cultural group. This is the reason that those who do, most often refer to themselves as Tena-Vezo or Vezo-avao.

In addition to distinctions within the Vezo ethnonym, there are distinctions between the Vezo and other groups of marine fishers in Madagascar that occupy coastal areas which are both contiguous and noncontiguous with the Vezo range. In the Ft. Dauphin area, southeastern Madagascar, there are the Antanosy who live by the sea and fish from *molangas* (single-hulled dugout canoes). They are not Vezo. In Lavanono, southern Madagascar, a marine fishing section of the Antandroy fish for shark from outrigger canoes that they have adopted from the Vezo. They, as well, are not Vezo. In the area

around and including Mahajanga, there are Sakalava-Boina who fish from planked outrigger canoes with Arab-inspired lateen rigs. They are not Vezo.

Thus to live by the sea and exploit the marine environment in Madagascar does not by necessity make one Vezo. The Vezo are a distinct people, a distinct cultural group with defining cultural features. They have common origins, a shared sense of common history, a distinct dialect, a defined ecological niche, and they identify with a particular, albeit extended, territory.

Research Beginnings

In the following section I present the hypotheses as well as the impressions early on in the field research that led to their formulation. This in conjunction with the field research methodology and trajectory presented in Chapter Three, should illuminate the iterative approach and consequent transitional flow from relatively simplistic views on the issue of Vezo identity to recognition of its longstanding complexity.

Research Intent and Hypotheses

The proposed intent of the research as stated before re-entering the field after the preliminary research was to establish the Vezo as a discrete ethnic group, both contextually and historically, distinguishing them from other ethnic groups that occupy areas of the southwest coast and exploit the same marine environment.

The research proposed to test three interrelated hypotheses:

H_1: The Vezo have a sense of ethnic identity with group markers by which they distinguish themselves within the locally constructed Vezo identity.

H_2: In the southern part of the Vezo range, the ethnic boundaries between the Tena-Vezo and Vezom-potake are distinct due to distinct ecological niches.

H_3: In the northern part of the Vezo range, the absence of distinct ethnic boundaries among the Tena-Vezo, Vezom-potake, and Vezo-Sakalava is due to the absence of distinct ecological niches.

Discussion of Hypotheses: Original Reasoning behind Their Construction

These points put forth within the first hypothesis have been addressed in the previous section entitled, The Essence of the Vezo Cultural Model, and essentially indicate that I felt that, contrary to what is found in the literature, the Vezo constitute an ethnic group, this due to the self-identification expressed by informants in 2003. This was compounded by interviews in 2004-2005.

The second hypothesis was not disproved during the 2004-2005 fieldwork. The problematic aspects of this hypothesis were mirrored in my overall perceptions of the Vezo as a distinct group, that is, all were far too simplistic. Certainly it is not unusual for social wholes with the functioning of their components to be more complex than originally thought. In 2003, informants had explained to me the distinctions between Vezo (Tena-Vezo) and Vezom-potake. These informants emphasized the distinct orientations to the environment, what I have called distinct ecological niches, this defined from an Eltonian perspective, that is, the place of a species (or social group) in an environment with respect to both distribution of resources and other species in that environment. They emphasized as well those other defining features that maintain ethnic boundaries within the Vezo ethnonym, the faly (taboos). These latter cultural features

were not expressed in this hypothesis, as I was caught up in the similarities within the orientation to the environment between humans and other species, the similarities in many ways between cultural and biological adaptation to a set of environmental conditions, this based on the given that all species orient themselves within an environment based on distribution of resources. However, the reasoning went beyond this, for it drew from totemism and what Levis Strauss (1963) had said: animals are not only good to eat, they are good to think. To keep this fairly simple, there are two points I would like to make: 1) both other animal species and specific human groups most often only utilize part of the resources available within a given environment, this is known as resource partitioning; in the case of humans this tends to create economic interdependence, with these ties being integral to subsistence risk reduction; 2) to successfully hunt other species, humans are obliged to study their behavioral patterns; early human groups undoubtedly learned much from not only those animals they hunted, but from all those species within their environment; the understanding garnered must have affected their own orientation toward the environment.

One last issue integral to the second hypothesis concerns the importance of cultural features other than subsistence distinctions in maintaining ethnic boundaries. I have revealed, earlier in this chapter, situations where Vezo orientation to the marine environment is similar to that of other groups. On the Fihereña Coast, there are Masikoro and Mikea whose subsistence in part (this due to their having mixed economies) overlaps that of some Vezo, particularly during the monsoon season (first of December until mid-March). This overlap is mainly within the realm of gleaning for invertebrates at low tide. There are some Mikea and Masikoro who go out on sea in canoes, both molanga (more

frequently) and laka (more rarely). There are some Vezo who forage for honey and wild tubors in the forest, and others who plant corn during the monsoon season. There are yet some very few others who have cattle. In all these Fihereña situations, those ethnognomonic features that center around the taboos play key roles in maintaining group distinctions, and hence, ethnic boundaries.

The general application of the term Vezo is to those who live by the sea and orient themselves to the marine environment throughout Madagascar. As we have seen, this is, of course, not necessarily true. There are the Antanosy marine fishers of the Ft. Dauphin area, the Antandroy marine fishers of the Lavanono area, and the Sakalava-Boina marine fishers of the Mahajanga area. None of these is Vezo. Once again, where there are subsistence similarities, yet the maintenance of group distinctions, one must look to other defining features as a source of these distinctions.

The third hypothesis reveals the lack of recognition of the complexity inherent within the Vezo society. Based on the preliminary research conducted in 2003, I reasoned that there must be ethnic blending, hence lack of group distinctions, in the northern part of the Vezo range that would have allowed some of Astuti's conclusions (that the Vezo do not constitute a cultural group, that they have no shared history, that their identity is performative alone, that she, as a vazaha, could become Vezo), for hers were quite different from what I found along the Fihereña Coast.

Astuti was told by her informants in Betania (and Belo sur Mer) that the Vezo are not a kind of people, that they are defined by what they do - exploit the sea (1995a, 1995b). She admitted to lacking empirical evidence that this applies to other regions beyond where she worked. The belief that similar responses would not have been elicited from

Vezo informants along the Fihereña Coast where oral histories help shore the more clearly defined ethnic boundaries, is partially what prompted the proposed initial part of the 2004-2005 field research in the southern section of the Vezo range. A cultural model developed along the Fihereña was to be applied to the Betania situation, with the aim of further unraveling the complexities of Vezo ethnic identity within an anticipated more convoluted setting. As it turned out, the cultural model that I constructed from informant information gathered in the southern part of the Vezo range applied equally well to the northern part of the range, which includes Betania.

Since most of my preliminary research was conducted on the Fihereña Coast, there was emphasis among my informants on the differences between Vezo (Tena-Vezo) and Vezom-potake. Those who live by the sea north of Morombe, were generally referred to as Vezo-Sakalava, though I was told, and verified myself, that there were Vezo from the Fihereña region who lived north of Morombe. Thus I thought that there were three distinctions within the Vezo ethnonym: Tena-Vezo, Vezom-potake, and Vezo-Sakalava. Not understanding the mechanisms for integration into the Vezo ethnic group, nor the large number of different descent groups (karaza) that have done this, I equated Tena-Vezo with the Vezo-Mahafaly, not knowing at the time how close I was on this point. The Vezom-potake I believed to be Masikoro who gleaned invertebrates; again, this was close to the mark. Vezo-Sakalava I believed to be those marine fishers who lived north of Morombe, in the Sakalava-Menabe region. Once again, this is not incorrect, only incomplete.

What I surmised for the Betania situation is the following: I anticipated that the model from the Fihereña Coast would apply to early settlement of the village, namely

that situation where Vezom-potake came first from the east to exploit the near shore invertebrate resources, thus these were the tompontany. This would follow the Beangolo settlement history. Then a small number of Vezo arrived from the south in their outriggers during the dry season. Some of these established residence in Betania in lieu of returning to their home village at the end of the dry season. Then there was what I anticipated would be the departure from the previous model: another group came from the interior (Sakalava-Menabe by regional affiliation) due to the attraction of the relatively abundant offshore resources and the large market of nearby Morondava. These adopted the Fihereña Vezo subsistence patterns and that aspect of their material culture necessary for exploiting similar resources, the sailing outrigger. I thought it unlikely that the Fihereña Vezo constituency in Betania was ever numerous, but that their presence has been influential. It was anticipated that oral history interviews would reveal that with time niche overlap among these three groups resulted in a more homogeneous community than is found in Beangolo, with most occupants calling themselves simply Vezo or Vezo-Sakalava, basing their identity on their way of life - the performative element. I noted that if this was indeed the case, then only the Fihereña Vezo material culture was adopted.

In the ninth chapter of this text, I present the actuality of the Betania situation, though by then the reader should be able to surmise how the Vezo cultural model has played out in this northern village.

In the following chapter I walk the reader through the field research process, that which allowed me to make the transition from the preconceived notions outlined above and the finished cultural model.

CHAPTER THREE

FIELD RESEARCH: APPROACH, ACTUATION, ANALYSIS

Field research in cultural anthropology is a matter of connecting the dots, and viewed from this standpoint, it is a much smaller version of trying to figure out life. The more dots one connects, the more pieces of the puzzle fit into position, the more the overall picture is revealed. The progression is linear in the beginning until the baseline or foundation is layed, then the progression assumes its geometric nature as each new piece of the puzzle, due to the improved clarity it affords surrounding pieces already in place, is more than merely a single bit of information.

Field research in cultural anthropology is wide open, and as such the approach is subject to interpretation by those who are actually doing it. I do not feel that there is one technique or type of approach that has universal application. The art or science, depending on one's viewpoint, of ethnography is not that old and not that precise, which is the reason why I describe it as wide open. How one goes about getting at the answers sought to the question posed can be as varied as the culture within which the answers lie and the personality of the researcher.

What the reseacher wants is a window onto the culture studied, this is the voyeuristic side of the observer. To really begin to understand, to grasp the handle, the researcher needs to get inside the skin of this culture. This is the side of the participant observer, doing what the people studied do, trying on and wearing for a while one of their coats, but not attempting to blend in. Putting oneself in that place opens doors, behind which

answers and more questions are accessible, much more so than gazing through the window. These bits of information provide leads to follow. Field anthropologists are participants, they are detectives.

Research Intent

The primary concern of the research was and is to present a clearer image of exactly what constitutes a Vezo, both with respect to ethnic identity and subsistence strategies. What I sought was a glimpse into, some understanding of Vezo identity. It exists beyond the work on the sea, of this I am sure. This is what I set out to do:

1) Construct a cultural model of the Vezo - no lines and graphs and arrows pointing in sixteen different directions; rather, a verbal treatise on the Vezo as a cultural group distinct from other groups within the pluralistic society of Madagascar, drawing from oral histories and contemporary self-identification based on the essential ethnognomonic features (cultural traits that are specific to a particular group)
2) Identify subsistence and other cultural features that constitute distinctions within the Vezo ethnonym - to tease out other groups that are called Vezo and may refer to themselves as Vezo as well, depending on the context
3) Ancillary issues
   A) Outrigger canoe history - based on collection of oral histories as a counterpoint to the work of Hornell
   B) Sail history based on collection of oral histories as a counterpoint to the work of Campbell
   C) Changes since 1970 to economic networks and effect on cultural continuity

D) Subsistence and identity issues among the Masikoro and Mikea - these I did not set out to do, but found it difficult to not explore to a certain degree

Effective Approach: Synopsis

Other investigators of the Vezo have laid much of the groundwork in understanding this group of marine fishers, and as is most often the case, subsequent research finds itself in a postion to fill gaps in previous research. In my field research among the Vezo I was not seeking to revolutionize perceptions, but merely to flesh out what others have done. The following is a brief overview of the approach to indicate direction. The temporal point of departure is 2004: the geographical point begins with the village of Salary Varitra where my *roa tratra laka, tsy misy zehe* (two fathom long outrigger canoe with no handbreadths) was built. The initial approach I decided upon before leaving Salary Varitra was modified from an iterative standpoint, but the essence held the entire research.

Salary Varitra is situated on the southern half of the Fihereña Coast. I had many contacts there that I established in 2003. I had conducted interviews between the provincial capital of Toliara and Salary, following leads presented in 2003, before taking off in the canoe. As I sailed north, alone in the outrigger canoe, I stopped in each of the coastal villages along the Fihereña. With the information I received from interviews in one village, I would drop back, re-evaluate the direction of future questions or add questions that the information raised.

In the next village to the north, I would ask the basic questions that allowed me to access the following:

1) History of the village and its settlement pattern(s)

2) Karaza present

3) Subsistence patterns

4) Presence of Vezom-potake

5) Presence of the characteristic faly (taboos)

6) Was I, as a vazaha who sailed a Vezo outrigger, a true Vezo

7) If a Masikoro came to the coast and took up the Vezo subsistence, could he become a true Vezo

8) What are the ethnognomonic features that define the Vezo

I would then present the information back to the informant(s) and ask if I had it right. Following this I would say, "To the south, in such and such villages, the elders told me this....." Then I would present the model or as much of it as I had to date. This would provoke comments and further add to the model. The approach served as well to demonstrate that the foreigner not only knew how to sail the Vezo outrigger, but was getting a handle on Vezo history, ethnicity, and subsistence patterns. All of this was an effective lubricant and the response was invariably appreciative, both of which greatly facilitated accessing anwers to my overarching question.

By the time I had arrived at the northern part of the Fihereña Coast, this the most traditional part of the Vezo range I had a pretty complete model. There were still leads that I needed to verify.

Based on information received along the Fihereña Coast, I felt the need to confirm leads pertaining to those areas indicated where Malagasy live by the sea and extract their living from the sea, but are not Vezo. I visited these places.

After having confirmed informant information concerning other marine fishing groups in these disparate areas, I added this component to the model derived from the Fihereña Coast. I took this model to Betania in the northern part of the Vezo range, the village where Astuti did the bulk of her field research on Vezo identity. Presenting the model there underlined to an attempt to ascertain not only how but why two investigators of the same group would differ markedly on a number of perceptions. Was this a function of inherent differences between those marine fishers called Vezo in the northern part of the range and those so-called in the southern part of the range? Or was this a function of approach and questions asked?

The last part of the research, I spent several weeks fishing out of my outrigger and talking with fishers about subsistence, presenting the model and further fine tuning it in Morombe, one of my favorite places within the Vezo range.

Methodology

The field research was approached and carried out from an iterative standpoint, thus flexibility was inherent. The mutability of the field research process did not carry over into the decidedly immutable research question - did the Vezo constitute a distinct ethnic group. In getting at this overarching question of Vezo identity, three methods were used: intensive participant observation, oral history interviews with key informants, and semi-structured interviews which were with key informants as well as those more

opportunistically encountered. I conducted one hundred and fifty-two (152) formal interviews with one hundred and sixty-three (163) informants. Nineteen of the informants were Masikoro. The three Mikea whom I contacted were not informants, as these were informal interviews. There were many, many informal interviews, especially with Vezo.

The extent of participant observation will be revealed in a subsequent section, where I essentially walk the reader through the progression of the field research. That the participant observation was intensive, greatly facilitated the rest. Doors were opened with an alacrity that always amazed me, this despite how often it occurred, and never failed to make me smile. A light-skinned man sailing a Vezo outrigger with strange sails, alone up to the beach of a Vezo village and speaking the recognizably Vezo dialect of the Malagasy language was an eye opener. That I had a grey beard classified me as a *nahoda*, an old man, which not only accorded me instant respect, but made the feat of traveling alone in a sailing canoe even more impressive, for I was past the Vezo age of retirement from activities on sea. Thus, the process of identifying key informants by way of peer reference was hardly a process at all.

A typical scenario would have Vezo walking down to the section of the beach that I was approaching, having identified the outrigger as that of a stranger by the very different sailing rig. As I nosed the canoe up onto the sand, the sheets released, and the wind spilling out of the sails, there would be questions followed by willing hands to help haul the canoe up onto the beach. I would be asked where I was coming from, where I was going, and why I was sailing alone. When I answered, there would be appreciative comments on my knowledge of the Vezo dialect, "*Izy mahay ny teny Vezo*". To further

open the door, I would tell them exactly what I was doing and what I was looking for, "*Izaho mandeha sanga-sanga ambon ny riake, baka tanana holy tanana hafa an varitse, iryak avao miarak lakako; mireseke myarak ny olo be satria izaho mila marina ny tantara Vezo; ny olo be mahay ny tantara"* (I am taking a trip on sea, going from village to village in a northerly direction, alone in my outrigger canoe; I talk with the elders because I am looking for the true history of the Vezo; the elders know this history). One of the Vezo listening might be such an elder, recognized as such, but he would not himself say this. More often, the eldest there would say a name, that of the most respected and knowledgeable elder in the village, and the other adults would voice their approval. Sometimes, literally within ten minutes of sailing up to the beach, I would be seated beside an elder on a woven mat in the shade of his house. We were never alone, for not only would the group from the beach likely be present, but the elder's wife and other family members as well. This was big entertainment to listen to the vazaha ask questions in Malagasy about not only Vezo history, but an array of other features of their culture, including subsistence. The young said nothing, in accordance with respect for elders. The other adults would often interject, though the elder held sway over the meeting. Often the elder would turn to the young Vezo and tell them to listen closely for this was their history. Always it was appreciated (and expressed as such) that this light-skinned foreigner who had come from far away, was interested in the Vezo history.

Oral history interviews provided access to such data as the overall history of the Vezo and their arrival in Madagascar; the history of the particular village; the settlement pattern of the village: whether the residents came from the interior or elsewhere along the

coast; the origins of taboos or other cultural markers; the origins of their material culture; and changes to subsistence strategies over time.

The oral history interviews were semi-structured to allow for informant leeway in responding to questions posed and in offering additional information. Thus what I am calling semi-structured interviews are not only the same as the oral history interviews in format, but there is a great deal of overlap of the oral history interviews onto the issues covered in the the interviews that I call the semi-structured ones. This latter is primarily due to the breadth of knowledge of the elders to whom I was referred by peers for the purpose of pursuing the Vezo history issues. What I am calling semi-structured interviews were those directed at subsistence pattern issues, both with respect to contemporary fishing methods and knowledge of the marine environment, as well as the definition of ecological niches occupied by Vezo and Vezom-potake within the temporal contexts of dry season and monsoon season activities.

Peer reference was used for identifying most informants, whether one might call them key or non-key informants. Contact with some non-key informants was what I have called opportunistic, because these usually stemmed from informal encounters, for example, on the beach while putting away my gear after a day of fishing, or my walking the beach in the latter afternoon at the time when the fishers return from the grounds. Within the course of an informal conversation about conditions on sea, location of fishing grounds, the day's catch, bait used, how long a particular fishing technique has been used, one knows instinctively and normally immediately if the other person is knowledgeable about such things. Formal interview sessions can be set up at a later date, banking off these encounters. Often, in a circuitous, back door kind of way, these informants will be

peer-referenced, for in these fishing communities regardless of whether they are as large as Morombe or as small as Beangolo, everyone knows everything that goes on, especially when there is only one light-skinned sailor and fisher in the community. I would often be told after the fact whether or not this Vezo whom I interviewed was well-regarded, as if by then I did not know.

Two of my best interviews were the result of opportunistic encounters. One of these was a formal interview (actually two, spread over two calendar years and two regional centers) and the other informal. The tie that binds these interviews and the two Malagasy from different ethnic groups is that both had a strong interest in oral histories that they had learned from the elders within their distinct and geographically disparate groups. In 2003, I picked up transport from Ankevo sur Mer to Morondava with a family sailing their eight meter outrigger from Morombe north. On sea I talked informally but quite specifically with the eldest male member. We set up a formal interview for two days later in Morondava that was very informative, as I had anticipated. A year and a half later, I ran into the same Vezo man on the dirt mainstreet of Morombe. He invited me to his house for a meal with his family at which time we set up a formal interview for the following day. The timing was especially good for this latter encounter, for I was in a bit of a quandary over some minutiae in the cultural model. This was in the latter stages of my field research, I had presented the model many times, but in pouring over my fieldnotes as I did on a regular basis, something jumped out at me, and made me say, "Yeah, but what about.....?" It was one of those. I had planned on sailing south to Andavadoake to talk with one of my favorite and most knowledgeable key informants, an elder who lives between there and the nearby island of Nosau. The day that I ran into the

Vezo informant in Morombe, the wind had been contrary - out of the south - so I had not left in my outrigger. I ended up not sailing back to Andavadoake, as the informant in Morombe and I were able to resolve the quandary.

The most outstanding informal interview took place in Mahajanga with a somewhat crippled Sakalava-Boina who had suffered injury from a diving mishap some years before. We met on the beach as I was looking at the construction techniques for the planked sailing outrigger canoes there. He turned out to be a very informative source on oral histories among the Sakalava and marine-related activities. We sat and talked for nearly three hours, and he had fun with my Vezo dialect.

Field Dictionary

In 2003, I moved just about as directly as the Malagasy infrastructure allows when using regional and local public transport, from the national capital, Antananarivo, to the southwestern provincial capital, Toliara, to the villages along the Fihereña Coast. I spent no time expressly trying to acculturate. I had a Malagasy dictionary with me, and I knew two words - *salama* and *veloma* (hello and goodbye) - the first of which was of little use among the Vezo. I did have command of French, the other official language of Madagascar, this a remnant of the colonial period. Having been in similar situations, but in other places many times during my travels, this was not a concern; indeed this sort of situation is both attractive and stimulating.

The Malagasy dictionary contained, as all do, the official dialect only, Merina. At the end of the first day on the Fihereña, I put this dictionary in the bottom of my rucksack where it remained for the rest of the preliminary research period. I started a field

dictionary of the Vezo dialect, which was to prove enormously helpful, not only in the obvious realm of communication, for most Vezo do not speak French, but in facilitating access to their culture. Few foreigners learn Malagasy, and very, very few learn the Vezo dialect. Being perceived as making the effort is greatly appreciated, and one has a veritable plethora of "instant professors" of the language, which makes learning any language fun. Learning another language should always be viewed as a game, a very entertaining one, and one should always be ready and willing to laugh at one's own mistakes. I would be remiss if I did not follow the latter part of this statement with a couple of examples. *Lavak* is translated as hole, and *vavak* is equivalent to the English word, church. I once told a Vezo repairing his canoe hull on the beach that he had a church in this canoe, "*Misy vavak anatiny rokako."* Consider the following very similar "v" words: *voro, voto, vato, votro, volo, vola,* which are translated, respectively, as bird, penis, rock, a species of grunt (fish), hair, and moon (also means money in the official dialect). So you can imagine the many mistakes waiting to happen with these, and the hilarity provided the Vezo. Once in the outdoor fish market at Morombe, I asked the name of the species of grunt listed. It is pronounced just like the word for penis, which surprised me, so I repeated the word and pointed to my crotch and asked, "*Marina, ny teny mitove?*" ("Is it true, the word is the same?"). This, of course, cracked up all the Vezo around, of both sexes, mainly because voto is the street slang for penis (penis is actually *latak),* and nobody expected me to know this word.

By the end of the two months of preliminary research in 2003, I had a pretty good working field dictionary, but it was not well-organized. Before returning in 2004, I transcribed the previous year's collection of vocabulary to another notebook, of the type

that I used for my fieldnotes, with a more accessible format. This I fleshed out considerably during the field research in 2004. Of note is the considerable bias, at least in the Vezo vocabulary that I collected, but I strongly suspect that this applies to the dialect as a whole, toward words beginning with the letter "m". See Table 1 in Appendix C for a sample of this, where I list an array of verbs only. In Vezo, most activities, from diving to paddling to steering a boat, from smiling to kissing to making love, from singing to dancing to getting intoxicated, from eating to drinking to sleeping, and the list goes on, are all "m" words. I could have concentrated on just this letter of the alphabet (which has, by the way, 21 letters as opposed to English's 26: c, q, u, w, and x do not exist in Malagasy) and have gotten by pretty easily among the Vezo.

Some Logistical Issues

Almost all interviews were conducted in the Vezo dialect of Malagasy. Interspersed sporatically, mostly unforseen situations, there were present French-speaking Vezo or the key informant himself turned out to be bilingual. At these times I profited from presenting the model in both Malagasy and French, and comparing the responses and contributions from those present. This afforded the obvious luxury of assuring myself that I was not missing something due to my command of Vezo not being as elevated as that of my French.

All of the data that I collected was qualitative data. Since any discussion of the data analysis would be brief, I shall do it here. Data analysis was, by necessity, an ongoing affair, with essentially all of it taking place in the field. It consisted of identification of themes derived from the text. The text was comprised of field notes, semi-structured

interviews, and oral history interviews. The ongoing aspect of the analysis was necessary due to:

1) The iterative approach: continually redirecting questions based on information received, and this affecting subsequent interviews and general research direction
2) Presentation of the model as it was developed and refined: taking input from informants and applying this to "fine tune" the model

The exploratory phase of the field research was centered on forming the model. The explanatory phase involved taking the model to the Vezo to see if I had it right. Subsequent in-depth interviews were aimed specifically at the process of refinement. Immersion in the data to the fullest extent possible, in essence every day, was instrumental in becoming so thoroughly familiar with the minute details that the patterns inherent in the data became readily apparent.

My interviews were conducted with a "memo book", a shirt pocket notebook into which I introduced key words only, mainly Vezo words that I did not want to forget. The rest, words and ideas that I would not forget, the "flesh" of the interview, I recorded immediately after the interview. All thoughts surrounding the interview and how these pertained to the model, were recorded as well. There was no taping, no obstruction, no "fear" introduced. I was merely curious about something(s) that this person knew. I did not want to do things that would interrupt the flow, so no photos, no tape recording. The small notebook and the very few words that I wrote, I explained as a problem of remembering new terms, and this was always understood. This is not to say that the Vezo have an aversion to tape recording, and they certainly do not have an aversion to having their photo taken with a digital camera, with the image available almost

immediately. Nor is this to imply that another researcher could not go in and do perfectly well recording the interviews. I simply do not care for what I perceive as the artificiality of interviews with mechanical props. My interviews were essentially semi-structured tête-á-têtes between knowledgeable persons from another culture and me. Approaching them as such, with nothing more than the memo book, helped me maintain that image in my own mind. Fortunately, the simple system that I used worked very well for me.

I must reiterate here, for the following was a very important part of the methodology. Toward the end of an interview, after the questions and issues I raised had been addressed, I would present back (repeat) the essential parts of what I had learned during the course of the interview to see if I had it right. Comments on this were listened to. Then I would present as much of the model as I had a handle on at that point in time to see if this was acceptable. Comments on this presentation helped to refine the model.

The Heart of the Field Research

In getting at the overarching question of Vezo identity, the most important aspects of my field research were the diachronic approach riding on the back of oral histories and the geographical scope. The diachronic approach permitted dealing with such fundamental issues in the definition of an ethnic group as common origins and shared sense of common history, as manifested in the case of the Vezo in the form of arrival in Madagascar, establishment of their material culture and subsistence patterns, and the seasonal migratory tendencies that spread these over a protracted period; once it is established that a people constitute a cultural group, then the diachronic approach permits looking at cultural continuity in the face of changes over time to such defining features as

subsistence patterns and social organization. Oral traditions among the Vezo establish who they are. Of equal importance to me, they establish the importance of the elders, both men and women, as retainers of pre-recorded history, and for the respect they are accorded by those Vezo from other age groups, both of which speak volumes about the maintenance of cultural traditions.

I established the importance of geographical scope when investigating the ethnicity of a group as widely dispersed as the Vezo. I went beyond the Vezo range to territories of contiguous and noncontiguous groups of fishers who live by the sea in Madagascar and extract their living from the sea, but are not Vezo. The geographical scope is an important factor as well in considering the spread of the Vezo culture by way of the seasonal migrations.

Intense participant observation in engaging in the Vezo subsistence activities, but especially in singlehanding a sailing outrigger canoe, immensely facilitated all fieldwork among the Vezo. I could be having a cup of coffee and a *bokoboka* (donut-like) at 0500 in a beachside shack in Morombe where the fishers congregate before heading out on sea. I would hear one say to his neighbor, "*Ny vazaha mana laka*." The neighbor would respond, "*Myarak machiny*?" "*Tsy misy machiny, lay avao*." (The vazaha has an outrigger canoe. With a motor? There's no motor, only a sail.)

Through the exploratory and explanatory phases of putting together and presenting the Vezo cultural model, the field research assumed its own personality, that of an adventurous endeavor. At least a smattering of adventure (along with a somewhat exotic locale) is lurking in the back of many field anthropologists' minds, whether this is manifested or not. The somewhat adventurous approach in itself was the lubricant, as my

traveling in a small canoe, alone, and modifying this canoe, opened all the doors. I found out what I needed, what I was after, doing it in my own fashion, while leaning heavily on participant observation. And it was this form of participant observation that not only gave me access to the small coastal villages, but also gave me access to the many interviews with village elders. Everyone knew the vazaha who traveled alone in a small sailing canoe.

I visited all the Vezo villages between Anakao, south of Toliara, and Morondava in the north (around 600 kilometers of coast). The intent of interviews in the villages was to confirm the ethnognomonic traits that unite the various Vezo named patrilineal groups, the karaza present in each village, and the professional distinctions between Tena-Vezo and Vezom-potake. I wanted to know what constitutes a Vezo with respect to subsistence strategies, cultural markers, and oral histories. The semi-structured interviews were aimed at subsistence patterns and cultural markers. The oral history interviews covered (with considerable overlap with what I am calling semi-structured interviews):

1) Vezo origins

2) Arrival in Madagascar

3) Origins of taboos

4) Origins of material culture

5) Settlement of the village

6) Subsistence patterns (dry and rainy season)

7) Presence of other groups and their subsistence

8) What karaza were present

9) Spread of the Vezo culture

10) The ethnognomonic features that define a Vezo

11) Extent of intergroup interaction

Both of these interview types fed into the exploratory phase of the research, the formation of the cultural model, in establishing the sequence of settlement within a particular village, subsistence patterns that clearly apply to Tena-Vezo and those that clearly apply to Vezom-potake, cultural markers based on the presence of certain taboos, and group origins based on the oral histories. What constituted the explanatory phase followed these interviews, the presentation of the cultural model, in short, that the Vezo are an extensive ethnic umbrella comprising numerous named, patrilineal groups. This society (understood from the definition of people who share a common culture) is based on the Vezo-Mahafaly, and the members are all united not only by common subsistence patterns, but by other cultural features as well, the most prominent of which are the faly.

The reason for traveling so much during the field research was in part to verify informant information about areas that are not contiguous. In fine tuning the cultural model, I needed to follow such leads, detective fashion.

Additional approach features for field research that I learned or verified, because they were mostly instinctual, were that 1) interviewers should corroborate what they have been told by giving it back to the informant and asking, "Do I have this right?" and 2) a researcher in the field can and should open barely cracked doors much wider by not being satisfied with a simplistic response and by saying, "Yes, but what about.....?", thus digging deeper.

Other doors are opened by being a participant: "Hey, vazaha, how many fish today?" or "I saw your blue sail today, you were far out to the west." I presented the model, or parts of it, most times that the opportunity arose, many of these in informal context. Whenever I sat down with a group of Vezo and one said, "You're a Vezo-be", I would say, "I'm only Vezo-vazaha, not really Vezo because....."

Participant Observation

The intensive participant observation centered around the foot-in-the-door approach of sailing an outrigger canoe. The outigger was my means of displacement along the coast, and it was my means of getting out to the fishing grounds. I had two small outriggers - a derelict hull that I resurrected in 2003, and a brand new four meter canoe in 2004.

The frontispiece of the Vezo material culture, the sailing outrigger canoe, was one of my initial attractions to their culture, this from afar, that is the literature. Close proximity did nothing to diminish that attraction. They are not easy to sail for the uninitiated, as the sail and other rig components are burdomsome, there are no modern conveniences or mechanical advantages to facilitate coming about (changing direction with respect to the wind, when the wind is on the bow quarter), and finally, most westerners (or northerners) will find the lack of a rudder troublesome and awkward. However, once off on a particular tack, with the wind direction consistent, they figuratively fly. The proverbial icing is the graceful beauty that they portray when under sail. Watching them from the beach, it is easy to forget that there are humans at the controls, allowing the outrigger with full sail set to assume the morph of one of the natural world's other creatures.

Early morning sail with breeze off the land. At Morombe.

My introduction to the Fihereña Coast in 2003 was by way of a hike from Manombo to Salary Varitra, prompted by mechanical breakdown of the usual public transport. Within three days of arriving on foot at Salary, I was at the helm of one of these outriggers under sail. This was a three fathom (a fathom is six feet) and several handbreadths canoe that belonged to the extended family with whom I was staying, and I was out diving with two family members. Within the confines of the same fenced family compound, there was a small (one and a half fathom) derelict hull turned upside down beside the area designated for salting fish. I asked the family if I could resurrect the canoe. This gave me a project, something that has long been one of my theraputic devices, as those who know of the several old European motorcycles I have put back into commission while a graduate student will attest (I knew that I could work the word, motorcycle, into this dissertation somewhere). As the reader will learn shortly, this project gave me much more than the equivalent of a late afternoon toddy on the veranda.

The derelict was a *roka* (hull) only. The patriarch of a neighboring compound (who later became one of my key informants) donated the outrigger components - a *fanare* (outrigger float) with two *varone* (outrigger arms). I went to the Mikea Forest in the back of an oxcart driven by a Masikoro, to look for wood for a mast, then later returned to the forest with a Vezo shipwright to look for more wood, this time *nonok* (a very hard and heavy wood) for the *fantia* (mast step). I was taught the wonders of the Vezo equivalent of "Super Glue", *loko mahery*, for repairing cracks in an old hull, and shown the extraction process from the famanta tree.

For the sails and rigging, I decided on a sloop rig (two sails, jib and mainsail) with Marconi sails (triangular, with the luff, or foremost edge, vertical, thus a right triangle).

These I sewed out of rice sacks I obtained from the *Chef du Village*. It was a "six sacker" with the evidence of international heritage printed in large letters: *Product of Pakistan* and *Product of China*. The cutting open of the rice sacks and sewing them together became a family affair, with the large rectangle produced forming the bulk from which I cut the two triangular sails. The old canoe, with even older fanare, sailed quite well. Having resurrected it put me immediately into the fray of village life, introducing me to essentially the entire village. Using the canoe allowed me to visit the Vezo villages on the southern half of the Fihereña Coast, began my education on the sailing qualities and seaworthiness of their fishing vessels, permitted my getting out on the ocean to fish, using the Vezo handlining techniques, and elevated me from the ranks of curious but merely observant vazaha to that of a participant who demonstrated an appreciation for the mainstay of their material culture.

On the first outing in the outrigger with the rice sack sailing rig, I sailed out to the barrier reef, then headed south toward the village of Tsandiamba. The wind shifted so that the sail back to Salary took much longer than anticipated. I had to urinate, so I tied off the sheets, shipped the steering paddle, and stood up. The canoe hull is so narrow in the bilge of a small outrigger, that I could only stand with one foot facing forward in front of the other. I edged forward to hold onto the mast with one hand, and as I was urinating over the gunnel, I noticed that the canoe had pointed up closer into the wind. As I made my way aft to resume my steering position in the stern, the canoe fell off the wind, assuming its earlier direction. This is how I learned to steer the outrigger canoe with no hands. For the rest of the trip back to Salary I left the steering paddle inside the canoe, shifting my weight fore and aft to steer. I sailed up to the landing spot on the beach in

Derelict hull resurrected with rice sack sails – main and jib. At Ambatumilo.

Salary with no hands, which was noted by the several male family members who were anxiously watching for my return. The family talked and laughed about this sailing style for several days afterwards.

The family members would know that it was I returning from sea from around two kilometers away at sea level. The basis of this recognition was, of course, the form of my sails, which differed dramatically from that of the rectangular sails of the Vezo. This functioned as an identifier at a distance in much the same fashion as the various colors, symbols and geometric shapes that are sewn into the Vezo sails function to identify each outrigger for family members, since they all have the same shape sails. I was thus known and recognized over approximately 150 kilometers of coast.

In 2004, I sailed more extensively in a canoe that was even more readily recognized. Before leaving Salary in July of 2003 to sail north in a larger canoe with three Vezo, I made a handshake and fifty percent down deal with the most highly regarded canoe builder in Salary Varitra, for a two fathom outrigger canoe hull, varone, and fanare, to be ready in July of 2004. I predicted that I would be back then to continue the study, this time under the heading of dissertation field research. The down payment was the equivalent of $12.50 US. Twice I sent letters from the US to touch base, and to confirm that the predicted time of arrival on the Fihereña Coast had not changed.

Upon reaching Salary Varitse in July 2004, the canoe was there. I paid the rest owed and began my part of the preparation of the canoe for the sea. Just beyond the outskirts of the village, past the northern well, on a bluff overlooking the sea, I staked out a tent brought from the States. Daily I would leave all my gear in the tent except my passport,

and even though there were no houses around the campsite and everyone in the village knew that I was set up there, nothing was ever touched.

Below the waterline, I applied *goudron* (bitumen cut with kerosene), while above the waterline the hull was painted red, yellow and green with the name, *Voro Fotsy*, painted in black on either side of the bow. *Voro Fotsy*, pronounced Vooroo Footsy, translates as White Bird. Not only did I never hear the end of this, but I was much better known by the name of my canoe than by my own name, which almost no Vezo could pronounce. Once, while walking one of the dirt streets in Morondava, a Vezo called out, "Voro Fotsy". It was a fisher whom I had met two months earlier in Andavadoake, 350 kilometers to the south. One young lovely in Salary asked me why I had not named the canoe *Voro Mainty* (Black Bird). After I explained the slavery connotation of blackbird, she allowed that Voro Fotsy was all-right. Basically it was necessary to explain why I chose the name only once in each village, after which the story would be passed around. But I traveled a lot, so this meant a lot of recounting the same story. The reason given had nothing to do with a play on words, rather the following: I likened the small canoe that traveled long distances on sea to the small white birds (smaller species of tern, *Gygis sp.*) that do the same; plus, I appreciated the sound of the two words together.

The fanare was outsized - much larger and heavier than was the norm for a canoe of two fathoms. It was made of *bue* - *Jatropha curcas* (Faublée et Faublée 1950). My reasoning for such a heavy fanare was that I would be sailing alone, thus no crew (*panampy*) to hike out and counter the wind's force. The fanare was coated with *goudron* and the ends painted yellow to complement the mainhull. If a bit is made of the canoe

2004 four meter canoe with windsurfer main and rice sack jib. At Morombe.

color scheme, it is due to the attention the Vezo give to their outriggers and my following suit.

In keeping with the same notion of weight distribution since I had no crew, I brought a four meter plank on a sailing canoe from Toliara; this I sawed in two, painted, and lashed fore and aft across the upper sides of the two varone, one plank per side of the mainhull. These were spaced far enough outboard to allow me to paddle. Complementing each plank was a straight sapling of undetermined species, that I cut in the forest, stripped of bark, and lashed parallel to the planks. All my belongings I carried in dry river bags, which protected the contents in rough seas. Depending on wind direction, I lashed these bags with the heavier either to port or starboard, but in either case, on top of the planks and saplings. My camera, passport, and money, I kept in a smaller dry river bag inside the canoe hull, close to my feet.

The tree for the mast, an *akao* - *Casuarina equisetifolia* (Faublée et Faublée 1950; note that where I cite the Faublée brothers it is for the Latin binomial; the Vezo words are from informants, but are the point of reference), came from the village of Fiherenamasay on top of a bush taxi. It was freshly cut with the bark still on. I learned another trick from the Vezo on bark removal. In the States I would use a drawknife to skin the bark off a felled tree. The Vezo use the blunt side of the ubiquitous, multi-task hatchet to strike the bark, working methodically down the length of the tree. This splits off the bark, which can then be removed by hand. I had to work the tree down to a diameter that would allow its passing inside the luff sleeve of one of the two windsurfer sails that I had brought from the States. These were second hand sails of two different sizes and weights

of material, that I had bought on Ebay. I used the larger and heavier of the two for the first sailing rig.

The mast slipped, albeit tightly, into the windsurfer sail sleeve, but the mast was still quite heavy, due to its being green and tall. This put a bit of weight aloft as the sail had a long luff. I reasoned that the weight aloft would improve with time as the mast dried. I rigged the small, rice sack jib from the year before (the family had kept this for me) and set up the canoe hull for both the jib attachment and mainsail sheets. I wanted to run the mainsail loosefooted (no boom), which would allow wrapping the sail around the mast for furling, rather than having to lower the sail - awkward with the mast running inside the sail sleeve. Windsurfer sails have fiberglass battens that fit into pockets along the leach, the purpose of which is to maintain sail form while allowing greater surface area with a generous roach. With no boom, the battens in the sail did not work, as they had a tendency to whip out with the wind and did not allow the sail to be wrapped around the mast. I came up with an alternative plan to the battens as well as avoiding a boom - multiple sheets (3), similar to a Chinese junk rig. With three sheets (a spaghetti affair in the narrow canoe hull) the sail shape could be formed and maintained. Because the sail had a curved luff, I added a long backstay with which I could pull back on the top of the mast and lash this off to the aft varone on the windward side. The canoe was launched, and I took her for a test sail out to the barrier reef off Salary Varatra. With no baggage, hence weight in the hull, and a good breeze, the canoe was a handful (I flew the fanare several times), but very fast. I reasoned that with correct distibution of my belongings, the canoe would be fit for sea. The next morning I headed north.

The sail to Andravona was fantastic, with a beam reach, the canoe responding beautifully, and my sailing up to the beach in front of the village with no hands. A few days later when I sailed to Ambatumilo, the situation was reversed. A strong wind and choppy seas revealed that the rig was too heavy and too tall. I nearly flipped the canoe more than a handful of times. During the several days spent in Ambatumilo camped in the dunes on the southern fringe of the village with the canoe pulled up nearly to the tent, I modified the sailing rig. The protection from the wind afforded by the dunes, allowed spreading out the sails and all rigging. After measuring the blue windsurfer sail (the second sail, shorter on the luff and longer on the foot), I sawed approximately two feet off the top of the mast and sandpapered this to prevent snags as it slipped inside the sail sleeve. I carried a rice sack of tools: handsaw, hatchet, block plane, sandpaper; there was another rice sack with line of assorted diameter: as I learned in 2003, it is very hard to find decent rope in Madagascar - polypropylene alone, which is rough on the hands, does not hold knots well, and has poor resistence to ultraviolet rays; I brought dacron and nylon line from the States: dacron for the sheets and nylon for the stays. Both of these rice sacks were stored inside a large, dry river bag. In addition to switching to the lighter (material) and shorter (on the luff) mainsail, I eliminated the jib and corresponding forestay. The three mainsheet setup on the first sail was reduced to a single mainsheet. The entire sailing rig was cleaner with less area. Because the blue mainsail was of such light material, I left the three small battens up high on the leach. The sail could still be lashed around the mast, with a small bulge near the peak due to these battens, which did not seem problematic. Later I was to learn differently.

The cat rig (mainsail only, no jib) worked well for the first *vava rano* (pass) which lies just north of Ambatumilo. In Bevohitse, I re-established the jib and forestay for extra speed heading through the next two passes north. In Andavadoake, a nasty squall with very strong winds picked at the batten bulge and nearly shredded the mainsail while the canoe was high up on the beach. During the squall I went to check on the canoe, having had a premonition that something might be amiss. I could hear the mainsail cracking like a whip from a hundred meters away. Struggling, I took down the rig and carried it back to the compound where I was staying. Later in the day, when the squall had passed, I was able to spread the rig out in the courtyard and effect repairs. The shattered battens were removed.

In Morombe, I did a number of modifications to the canoe, which entailed raising the freeboard of the mainhull and sewing a much larger jib. The blue mainsail was retained. I had access to a sawmill, and the workers there ripped a four meter plank into two very thin, light planks. These I attached to the existing gunnel, following the hull curve, and notching out for the two varone. The planks were nailed at the bow and stern to thwarts that I cut from a full thickness plank. Additional thwarts were attached inboard of the planks, running the length of the hull, with lashing of these to the previously existing structure. This modification increased freeboard by ten centimeters, and was helpful in reducing the amount of water shipped in choppy conditions. The larger jib gave greater sail area, and could be furled on sea if the wind piped up. To gain better control over mainsail shape and improve windward sailing characteristics, I made a boom which was attached to the mast using a snotter rig (a method of articulation between the boom and

mast which involves the use of rope). The mainsheet was then attached to the boom instead of to the clew of the sail.

All of these changes improved the canoe's seakeeping properties. Additionally, as I did the modifications with the canoe chocked above the high tide mark on the beach, the work was an attractant for Vezo to come over for a chat, and the inevitable (readily received) constructive comments. At times these gatherings around the canoe developed into animated discussions that often left me out, as I continued to work and they talked of sailing characteristics among themselves.

Trajectory: Temporal and Spatial

This section will present an overview of the field research within which I walk the reader through its geographical progression with indications of temporal context. The intent is to answer that ever important question of how did the researcher pursue the overarching research issue, in this case, that of Vezo ethnicity, and to continue the notion of field anthropologist as participant and detective. If a bit of adventurous flavor leaks through, perhaps that will serve as the same sort of lubricant for the reader's trajectory as it did for my own in the course of the fieldwork.

2003: Preliminary Research

Two months were spent during the dry season (end of March to first of December), with the original intent to concentrate only on the Fihereña Coast, however, I ended up covering the coastal area from Toliara to Morondava. The transport from Toliara to Manombo was with a *taxi brousse*. From Manombo to Salary Varatra, approximately the

same distance as the previous motorized transport (50 kilometers), travel was on foot. This was a fortuitous turn of events, with the mechanical breakdown of the usual motorized transport providing me with not only a great introduction to the Fihereña Coast, but an introduction to a knowledgeable Vezo contact from Salary. Leveling, so to speak, the playing field of people from different cultures being obliged to resort to walking in order to move from point A to point B must be one of the fastest ways in which to break down any barriers that might restrict meaningful communication.

The southern half of the Fihereña Coast I covered solo on sea in the resurrected, small derelict outrigger canoe owned by the family of the above-mentioned walking companion. To cover the northern part of the Fihereña, I sailed with Vezo in larger canoes. I left Salary Varatra in a six meter canoe with the brother of one of my informants and *ny chauffeur* (the French word that the Vezo most often use for the helmsman of a sailing canoe), a middle-aged Vezo with one thumb and one eye. I learned an enormous amount from the latter about canoe handling in general and the coastal sailing intricacies between Anbatumilo and Andavadoake. These I retained and was able to recall a year later during my solo sail along this same coast.

In Ambatumilo, the canoe owner decided that the six meter canoe was not large enough for the three passes north of there (so you can imagine what the Vezo had to say about my sailing a four meter canoe solo through these same passes a year later). There was an extended family connection in Ambatumilo, and an eight meter hull that needed some repair along the keel. This was done on the beach at Ambatumilo. We flipped the eight meter hull and repaired the keel with that Vezo cure-all, loko mahery, firing a pot of it on the beach. The following morning, we tranferred everything from the six meter

canoe to the eight meter, including entire sailing rig as well as fanare and varone, then set sail north. We nosed up to the beach in Bevohitse to deliver a letter from someone in Salary, not at all an unusual way for mail to travel in this region of the coast with no roads. The canoe owner named every village en route, and told me the main subsistence strategies of the inhabitants. When I returned solo a year later, spending time in all these villages, the information he had given me proved accurate. The following wind became much stronger the last likely fifteen kilometers of the trip, and the old mainsail blew out completely just outside the harbor mouth of Andavadoake.

The son of an informant in Andavadoake took me in the family sailing canoe to the nearby island of Nosau, where I camped for a week during the full moon spring tide. This was undoubtedly the most informative week of the preliminary research, as the heightened level of marine activity during this time of greatly exposed flats and reefs at low tide, and time spent on an island with no permanent source of fresh water and whose community had evolved from a seasonal fishing camp in the past three decades, produced a wealth of intertwined answers and questions. Additionally, the 80 year old patriarch of one of the island's extended family households became (and this is a tough statement to make) my favorite informant. I was introduced to him by his two eldest sons - twins.

The following year, when I sailed up to the beach in Andavadoake, having just completed the toughest leg of the trip north - six hours in the Mozambique Channel - I shippped the steering paddle and secured the bow of my canoe. Then I walked over to help three men launch an eight meter canoe. One of the twins from Nosau was among the three. I asked about his father, and as it turned out, one of the men on the far side of the canoe, hat pulled down low, was the patriarch from the previous year. As soon as I

started speaking Vezo, they recognized me from the year before, this despite my drastically altered appearance (hair and beard). When the eight meter canoe was ready to go, the stern holding it on the beach edge, the patriarch suggested that the four of us haul my canoe above the high tide mark. When the son and his companion sailed off to Nosau with several bidons of freshwater, the patriarch and I went to his courtyard in Anadavadoake.

Later in 2004, I stopped in the village of Bevato on the sail north. The same twin was sailing south and had stopped there as well for the night. We ended spending the evening talking and eating with his extended family relations there. All of this anecdotal recounting serves the purpose of not only bringing the reader into the fold, but revealing how intimate the Vezo world is: though spread over an extensive coastal geography, the confluence among the various villages that is made possible by the material culture (sailing canoe) reduces anonymity, and the inherent camaraderie among those who tackle an environment as potentially hostile as the sea is as ingrained as among those Bedouin and Tuareg who inhabit the nether regions of the Sahara: even an enemy who comes to your tent in a sandstorm will not be turned away, but fed and given drink.

Returning to the year 2003, I sailed north from Andavadoake with a husband and wife from Nosy Lamboara in their eight meter canoe, that turned out to be a serious leaker. All three of us bailed continuously. It was decided to stop in Bevato (where, to no surprise, these Vezo had relatives) to effect repairs on the mainhull keel with the usual - loko mahery. To do this requires that the hull dry out a bit, so we ended up staying for two days. This gave me the opportunity to talk with several village elders about Bernard Koechlin, as this was the village where he spent two years in the late nineteen sixties. As

well, the most amazing baobob trees (*Adansonia sp*.) that I saw anywhere in Madagascar are to be found a kilometer inland from the village (there are nine species of baobob in the world, with seven of these endemic to Madagascar).

During the sail between Andavadoake and Morombe, the husband named all the villages and islands that we passed, much as the canoe owner from Salary had done further south. Once when the wife mishandled a part of the rigging, the husband lost his temper and called her a Vezom-potake. Later, when she made the same mistake, he really got furious and called her a Masikoro. I intervened and handled the rigging myself, just to calm things down in a canoe on sea. When the wife made the first blunder in handling the sheets, and her husband called her a Vezom-potake, this meant that she did not know the open ocean, nor sail handling; at the second blunder he called her a Masikoro, meaning she was a landlubber. These were insults hurled in anger, not to be taken literally, for regardless of how many blunders she made on sea, she was still a Vezo due to her patrilineage: a Vezo-Kimija from Nosy Lamboara. Her father and grandfather, on back, were Vezo.

Morombe is a regional center that is essentially a large village. I spent quite a bit of time there in both 2003 and 2004, and made many contacts. From Morombe north to Belo sur Mer, I sailed with two Vezo men from Morombe in their eight meter outrigger canoe. Foul weather forced us into Andranopasy, where we spent the night. We dropped off a 55 gallon drum of kerosene in Ancoba the next day, staying for a few hours, and arrived in Belo sur Mer just after nightfall. Andranopasy was of interest due to the disparate marine activities of the Vezo and Vezom-potake there, and Ancoba due to its establishment as a permanent hamlet from its beginnings as a fishing camp.

Belo sur Mer's attraction for me lay in the multi-generational involvement in the construction of the botry (wooden coastal schooners). From there I walked the twenty-five kilometers north to the village of Ankevo sur Mer, where a father and son team proved stalwart informants, and I was able to pad my growing Vezo dictionary. The sail north to Morondava was based on a chance encounter with the family referred to earlier from Morombe, the patriarch of which became a key informant both years. The preliminary research, which as described, was essentially linear in geographical trajectory, ended in this northern part of the Vezo range: a few days spent in Morondava with walks to the nearby coastal villages of Betania and Lovobe.

In 2003, I conducted interviews in the following villages and regional centers, all on the west coast of Madagascar:

Toliara	Morombe
Tsifota	Andranopasy
Salary Varatra	Ancoba
Andravona	Belo sur Mer
Andavadoake	Ankevo sur Mer
Nosau	Betania
Bevato	Morondava

Early on in this preliminary research, looking at cultural continuity in recent decades, I recognized that how the Vezo described themselves and how they were depicted in the literature were not the same. Thus, I pursued the issue of Vezo identity along with subsistence patterns and cultural continuity amidst changes since 1970.

2004-2005: Field Research

Similar to the preliminary field research in 2003, the field research in 2004-2005 was much broader in geographical scope than was originally intended. In both cases, the broadening of research range was prompted by informant information within the originally intended range. The groundwork laid and the contacts made in 2003 so facilitated the subsequent field research that I was able to do more in 2004-2005 (look at more issues) than originally planned. It was as if I had never left western Madagascar: my canoe was ready upon return, and even three year old children remembered me (I had taught several how to say, "Simmer down!" in English, which they learned with enthusiasm, even closely imitating my southern U.S. accent). The total field research covered eight months. There was no time taken specifically for acculturation or for data analysis other than a day here and there. As noted earlier, data analysis was an ongoing affair due to the iterative nature of the field research and the formation of the cultural model. As will no doubt come as no surprise to the reader and as will be elaborated upon in a later chapter, the issue of Vezo identity was much more complex than I had originally thought.

The following is a sequential and geographical outline of the interviews conducted during the fieldwork of 2004-2005.

Interviews on the Fihereña Coast

Toliara (Mahavatse and Anvoroneoke, two distinct quartiers)
Manombo
Ambatumilo
Beangolo
Bevohitse

Fitsitike

Andavadoake

Salary Varatra

Nosau

Salary Roa

Bevato

Andravona

Morombe

Ambatumilo

Interviews in Southeast and Southern Madagascar

Ft. Dauphin (Taolagnaro)

Lavanono

Beloha

Interviews South of Toliara

Ankilibe

Soalary (Soalara)

Sarodrano

Anakao

St. Augustin

Interviews in Northwest Madagascar

Mahajanga (Majunga)

Interviews in the Morondava Area

Morondava

Betania

Return to the Fihereña Coast

Morombe: research conclusion with interviews and participant observation

The proposed field research plan for 2004-2005 was to spend the bulk of the time on the Fihereña Coast, with most of this in Beangolo, then proceed to Betania in the north to complete the fieldwork. This plan was modified due to information received early on in the research, particularly in the villages of Salary Varatra, Andravona, and Beangolo. While I would continue with the same basic lines of questioning leaning heavily on oral histories and subsistence distinctions, these lines were embellished. The trajectory was vastly modified to include areas much farther afield that confirmed the importance of geographical scope. The essential issues that modified the overall picture of Vezo identity, these garnered from interviews along the Fihereña, were: the extensive number of named patrilineal descent groups within the Vezo society; within the same named patrilineal group, there could be ethnic distinctions, that is, belonging to different ethnic groups (Masikoro, Vezo); groups of marine fishers in other parts of Madagascar who were not Vezo; Vezo-Mahafaly, who while confirming the oral histories of their arrival on the Fihereña Coast and the development of their material culture and subsistence patterns, indicated that the Vezo-Sarambe were the original Vezo.

All of this will be expounded upon in a later chapter. As it turned out, the bulk of the field research was, indeed, carried out on the Fihereña Coast, which I find fitting for reasons already indicated. The overall picture of Vezo identity, and hence the cultural model, were quite a bit more complex than originally anticipated. However, the basic core assumptions were more than reasonably close. The following will trace, with intended refrain from over-embellishment, the fieldwork trajectory for 2004-2005.

As stated, the canoe was ready upon my return, but it lacked paint and the intended, assorted modifications, particularly the proposed sailing rig. I made the first trip to

Salary Varatra with the *taxi brousse* (bush taxi), carrying the sails and other gear for the canoe. There was a layover, between the two bush taxi rides, of a day in Manombo. I profited from this by conducting interviews in Manombo and the nearby village of Fitsitike. After re-establishing contacts in Salary and confirming that the canoe was ready, I headed back to Toliara to buy supplies (paint, tools, and a four meter plank) and get the rest of my gear. There was another layover in Manombo, but having no baggage, I hitched a ride to Toliara with a Pro-Pêche truck (Toliara-based fishing company), nestled in the back with a load of octopus and fish. After conducting interviews in Toliara and purchasing supplies, I managed to find a sailing canoe en route to Morombe, the owner of which agreed to drop me off in Salary Varatra.

The time spent in Salary Varatra preparing the canoe for sea, put me back into the midst of Vezo village life and the feeling of a continuum with the previous year's fieldwork. As to be expected, many Vezo came by the family compound where I was working on the canoe. There were discussions on sailing rigs and the sailing strategies for heading north toward Morombe, particularly how to tackle the three passes. These discussions on sailing strategies ensued after the Vezo recognized that I could not be dissuaded from sailing north, alone in such a small canoe (especially one with such a bizzare sailing rig). I conducted formal interviews at the homes of Vezo in Salary Varatse and Salary Roa. It was during this initial stage of the 2004-2005 field research that I first got the notion of the complexity of the Vezo ethnic group composition. This notion precipitated my writing in my fieldnotes that the Vezo were a multi-group society within the larger polyethnic society of Madagascar. It was revealed, as well, during this stay in Salary Varatra, that the Sarambe were fishing in Madagascar before the Vezo-

Mahafaly progenitors arrived. During an interview with an elder in Andravona, the next village north of Salary Roa, the idea of the Vezo as a multi-group society was compounded, and this prompted my asking the names of the karaza (patrilineal descent groups) in each Vezo village as I continued north.

From Salary Varatra I sailed north in my outrigger canoe, camping, conducting interviews, and engaging in forms of participant observation other than sailing, such as the various fishing activities. I spent anywhere from a few days to three weeks in the coastal villages. In areas where there were two villages connected by proximity and other ties, such as Beangolo and Bevohistse, Andavadoake and Nosau, I would either sail or walk between them a number of times during my stay.

In Beangolo, one interview threw another proverbial wrench into the works, and as a result further modified the fieldwork trajectory. In my interviews, I would often toss out provocative statements that I thought to be incorrect, obviously looking for both negative confirmation and assurance that the informants were not telling me what they thought I wanted to hear. In the midst of this particular interview with a Vezo-Sara elder in Beangolo, I said, "*Any Madagascar ny olo, mipetraka anis ny riake, mandeha ambon ny riake, sy tena mahay ny riake, Vezo yabi*; *tsy misy koa hafa, ny miasa avao fa Vezo.*" His response was, "*Misy ny Antanosy a Ft. Dauphin, ny Antandroy a Lavanono, Bezamgoa, sy Soamanya, sy misy ny olo a Majunga tsy mahay ny anarana, ny olo yabi tena mahay ny riake, tsy Vezo".* In English, my statement: In Madagascar the people who live by the sea, go out on the sea, and truly know the sea, are all Vezo; there is nothing else, only the work makes one Vezo. I expected him to refute my statement, but his response was an eye-opener: There are the Antanosy at Ft. Dauphin, the Antandroy at Lavanono,

Sakalava-Boina laka with lateen rig. At Mahajanga.

Bezamgoa, and Soamanya, and there are a people at Majunga, I don't know their name, all of these peoples truly know the sea, but are not Vezo. Toward the end of this roughly two hour, very informative, fortuitous group interview, with the fairly typical format of one elder essentially presiding, other Vezo occasionally interjecting, and all, myself definitely included, caught up in the recounting, the elder revealed that he spoke decent French. He did not reveal this earlier because he was the only Vezo there who did speak French, I was getting along well in the Vezo dialect, and the group was thoroughly enjoying this latter fact.

This revelation of a new, and quite large piece of the puzzle, was incorporated into all subsequent interviews as I worked my way north along the Fihereña Coast, in the obvious attempt to corroborate. In my somewhat limited field experience in cultural anthropology, one is at times privy to unprompted, well-targeted discourse in the midst of an interview, but for the most part, there seems to be a direct correllation between the depth of probing inherent in the line of questioning and the amount of pertinent information received. Sometimes, though, one asks a backdoor sort of question, expecting one type of response, but receives a bonus bit of information that throws open a different door.

By the time I sailed into Morombe, after two months on the Fihereña Coast, I knew the additional, unanticipated places that I needed to visit, but was not sure of the best sequence. Within the course of one day's mid-course aborted sail north from Morombe, the final sequence was decided. Morombe is one of my favorite places in western Madagascar. It is large enough to have access to most amenities, such as refrigeration for the sublime treat of a cold Malagasy beer, but difficult enough to reach and with lack of

Antandroy setting out to haul jarife. At Lavanono.

Antanosy molanga. At Ft. Dauphin.

tourist-oriented infrastructure. Possibly most importantly, there is an impressive admixture of Vezo karaza and a long, long stretch of their outrigger canoes along Morombe's beach.

Not having been in Morombe for over a year, and never having sailed into it in my own canoe, I nonetheless was able to land the outrigger's bow on the beach right in front of the same rustic collection of thatched bungalows where I had stayed in 2003 - *Le Crabe.* After two months of camping, this was like coming to the big city - 20,000 FMg (two dollars) a night for a bungalow with outside shower and toilet. Actually, I much preferred the woods for this latter, but the only option in Morombe was the beach. The most attractive thing about the place was the location. My canoe was chocked right in front of the hotel. I could walk out of the bungalow just before dawn with my two paddles and fishing gear and drag the canoe down to the water's edge for a day's fishing. The placement was also convenient for working on the canoe. This latter I did for a week, modifying the canoe as previously described, for the attempt to sail north to Morondava and Betania.

The suggestions from the Vezo with whom I discussed the sail north and from those who gathered around the canoe while I was working on it, were either that I should pay a botry to haul the canoe to Morondava as deck cargo or I should sell the small canoe, buy a substantially larger one and take a crew with me to help with the handling of the rig and for counterweight against stiff breezes. The unanimous conclusion was that it was suicide to attempt the trip alone in such a small canoe. I pondered all this, including the memory of the hard time we had the first day of the trip the year before in the eight meter canoe. The decision was to continue with the modifications (which the Vezo all found

Modifications to my laka that included increased freeboard, planks for lashing baggage, and trolling fairleads. At Morombe.

innovative, but insufficient for such a voyage), take the canoe out on a few fishing trips as test runs, then head north when the wind was favorable.

I stood on the beach before dawn watching the tops of the palm trees, my belongings ready, for three days in a row. Though I am not anywhere nearly as good as the Vezo in predicting the wind, especially the multiple shifts during the day, I had learned a bit from them. Additionally, I asked each afternoon for the next day's wind conditions, as I had done the entire time further south. The Vezo look to the eastern sky in the latter afternoon, studying the cloud formations. The east is the same direction in which the hazomanga points and the compass point (figuratively speaking, as the Vezo use no instrumentation) for fishers returning from sea. All three of these are interrelated for a marine fishing people living on a western coast.

On the third morning before dawn, having seen three eight meter outriggers heading out, ghosting to the north with the faint breeze from the east, I launched my four meter canoe. The eight meter canoes, with their huge sails and crew to hold down the fanare once the breeze picked up, soon left me far behind. By noon I was not far from the same parallel as the mouth of the Mangoky River and getting pounded by unabated waves and wind from the west. Even with the increased freeboard I was shipping water and the canoe was doing its fair share of pitching. Leaning on the old adage that discretion is the better part of valor, I jibed and headed back to Morombe, arriving on the beach in front of *Le Crabe* latter afternoon. There were no jokes among the Vezo about my not making it. They were surprised that I had even attempted the trip, this despite my saying that I was going to. *Iha adala, tsy matahotra* was the general comment - you're crazy, you have no fear.

During the sail back to Morombe, I devised the sequence that I would follow the rest of the field research. The patron of *Le Crabe* agreed to let me leave my canoe inside his fenced compound. Three of his workers and I lifted it over the fence, I chocked the hull and fanare, removed the sailing rig, wrapping all around the mast, and stored all gear under the roof of one of the thatched bungalows. Palm fronds were placed over the hull to prevent excess dessication. Taking a rucksack only, I caught the 0300 *taxi brousse* to Toliara. The trip was of interest, as it runs north-south along a rough dirt road, well to the east of the coast, passing through mostly Masikoro but also Antandroy agricultural and agropastoralist communities. This route covers the same spread of latitudes that I had covered on sea, and allowed me to see some of the communities from which the Masikoro come to the Vezo villages far to the west, their oxcarts laden with produce. It is an eighteen hour ride, crowded, bouncy, and hard on the buttocks, but the Malagasy, as on other public transport trips that I took, maintained impressive equanimity. I hung out the window, took lots of photos, and asked dozens of questions about the country through which we were passing. Being the only foreigner on the truck and a serviceable Gasy (commonly used, shortened version of Malagasy) speaker at that, the other passengers, of various ethnic groups, readily answered my questions.

The southeastern and southern extremes of Madagascar were next on the agenda, into the heart of Antanosy and Antandroy territories. I decided to fly to Ft. Dauphin, then make my way overland back toward Toliara. The purpose of going to Ft. Dauphin was to confirm what Vezo informants had told me, namely that the marine fishers in this area were not Vezo. This I did in interviewing Antanosy fishers. Some additional points of interest here: according to oral histories, the Antanosy fishers were in Madasgacar prior

to the Sarambe fishers, who were in place when the Vezo progenitors arrived; the Sarambe adopted the Antanosy *molanga* (single-hulled dugout canoe), then later adopted the Vezo *laka* (outrigger canoe); the Antanosy continue to use the molanga, though they have been exposed to the Vezo laka: according to Antanosy informants, a few Vezo have come for short stays to fish for shark in the Ft. Dauphin area, bringing their lakas overland on taxi brousses (I have seen and photographed lakas being carried this way).

To enter Antandroy territory, I also went overland on a taxi brousse, arriving twenty-six hours later (after a snooze in the village of Tsihombe) at Beloha, that is situated in the heart of Antandroy country. The Antandroy are agropastoralists with an impressive reputation, having given both the Merina and later the French, more than they could handle in battles over control of the South. They are also known as the strongest pullers of the *pousse-pousse* (rickshaw, also called *poussy* by the rickshaw pullers, something I felt obliged to translate *sotto voce* into Malagasy for a few of these pullers when they solicited me for a ride) in Toliara. A number of young Antandroy men have migrated to the provincial capital for this purpose.

Vezo informants on the Fihereña had told me that there were Antandroy marine fishers on the extreme southern tip of Madagascar, in the villages of Lavanono, Bezamgoa, and Soamanya. I needed to visit only one of these, I felt, to confirm informant information. I, without hesitation, chose Lavanono, which translates as long breasts. Any village with a name like that was worth visiting. As market centers among the Antandroy are located well inland, transport to the few coastal villages is very sketchy. I walked the 42 kilometers to Lavanono with my rucksack and a bottle of water. Once again, and as I expected, my Vezo informants were correct. There are Antandroy

shark fishers in Lavanono, and they definitely do not identify themselves as Vezo. I walked the 42 kilometers back to Beloha, knowing that it was not necessary to have gone to Lavanono, nor for that matter, Ft. Dauphin, but content that I had followed, detective-fashion, these leads furnished by Vezo informants.

The Antandroy I met along the dirt road found it quite strange that a vazaha would be walking and such a distance. One man, when he found out how far I was walking, reached in his sack and pulled out some manioc, saying, "Here, you'll need this." This area is known as a spiny dessert, for good reason. The walk was interesting from the standpoints of meeting Antandroy doing the same, but shorter distance, and seeing how apparently healthy the population of reportedly endangered tortoises was/is in this region. This prompted me to find out the cultural basis for this, a faly, the oral history of which I shall recount later.

From Behoha, I took a taxi brousse to Toliara, another long, rough trip, with inauspicious beginnings as we got stuck within the first ten kilometers. From Toliara, the plan was to conduct interviews in the coastal villages to the south of there, and in particular, find out why the Sarambe had been referred to as the first Vezo. A bush taxi ride to Grottes de Sarodrano, from which I took a canoe to the village of Sarodrano, was later followed by another bush taxi ride to St. Augustin. From there, another canoe trip put me in Soalara, from which I walked the 15 kilometers to Anakao. There were particularly fruitful interviews in Sarodrano, St. Augustin, and Anakao.

It was in Anakao that I got the answer to my main dilemma in the historical aspect of the cultural model. In an interview with the *mitankazomanga* (the holder of the *hazomanga*, the ritual pole) of Anakao, a Vezo-Sarambe (the Sarambe were the first

settlers of Anakao, the *tompontany*, so the mitankazomanga would be a direct descendant of the founding lineage), it was revealed that the reason why most Vezo say the Vezo-Sarambe were the first Vezo is due to their having been in place and fishing when the progenitors of the Vezo-Mahafaly arrived on the southwest coast. These Vezo progenitors learned of the local marine environment from the Sarambe. The outrigger canoe as well as the taboos are attributed to the Vezo-Mahafaly. The Sarambe adopted the outrigger canoe, abandoning the molanga design that they had taken from the Antanosy. They adopted the taboos of the Vezo-Mahafaly, thus being culturally integrated. Like the other named patrilineal groups within the Vezo society, they maintain their lineage distinction as denoted by the hyphenated name with which they identify themselves and are referred to by other Vezo groups. This interview was of interest as well from the standpoint of yet another instance of the knowledge displayed by Vezo women. Whenever the Sarambe elder would falter or draw a momentary blank within a response, his sister would provide the answer, to which he would readily agree. During later interviews back on the Fihereña Coast, this point of clarification as to the Vezo-Sarambe and Vezo-Mahafaly, was confirmed, While many refer to the Sarambe as the first Vezo, this is indeed due to their having preceded the Vezo-Mahafaly in the southwest area. However, the Vezo-Mahafaly are regarded as the cultural basis of the Vezo society.

Within the course of an interview in St. Augustin I was told of the village of Ankilibe, fourteen kilometers from Toliara. It was described as a village inhabited by *Vezo pure*, as the elder put it. After my return to Toliara, I went to Ankilibe, where I found out that the *Vezo pure* term was in reference to the predominant group there being

Vezo-Mahafaly. The elder whom I interviewed in Ankilibe was a font of knowledge on the oral histories of arrival in Madagascar and the subsequent migration north along the Fihereña Coast. His explanations corroborated oral histories to which I was privy in villages along the Fihereña.

The fieldwork next took me roughly a thousand kilometers north of here by the way the crow flies, to Mahajanga, that was negociated overland by way of Antananarivo. In Mahajanga, interviews with the marine fishers confirmed that they were indeed Sakalava-Boina and not Vezo. Once again, this was not a surprise based on the consistency of informant information from among the Vezo. I lingered in Mahajanga for a few days longer than was necessary to confirm this, due to my interest in the Sakalava-Boina outrigger canoes - their design, planked contruction, and lateen sailing rig. Some of these are certainly large enough to make the trip across the Mozambique Channel to East Africa, given favorable weather conditions. Like the Vezo, these fishers use sail power only.

From Mahajanga there was another two part overland trip to Morondava. My time in the Morondava area was mainly spent in Betania with interviews there aimed at settlement history, integration into the Vezo cultural group, subsistence strategies, distinctions between Vezo and Vezom-potake, and seasonal migrations. As this was Astuti's home turf, so to speak, I particularly wanted to address our conceptual differences within the realm of Vezo identity, to learn if this was due to inter-group variations between northern and southern populations, or was this a result of our different angles of approach as field researchers. My cultural model was presented and critiqued. At the tail end of the Betania/Morondava stay, I wrote in my fieldnotes that I not only felt

good about my understanding of the Vezo as a cultural group, but recognized that I could call it quits, having accomplished what I had set out to do. However, I wanted to rejoin my outrigger canoe in Morombe and take back up where I left off within that essential cornerstone of my fieldwork, participant observation.

This proved a good call, as during the several weeks that I spent in the Morombe area, going out on sea on a regular basis and talking informally with Vezo, I conducted some pertinent interviews that helped to work the kinks out of some of the minutiae of the model. This time could be viewed as analagous to other researchers getting away for a bit to analyze their data, at least preliminarily. However, I did this data analysis while in the midst of the culture that I was studying. Not only was this participant observation theraputic for me, as I love the sea, fishing and sailing, but this involvement in the Vezo way of life held open the previously broached doorway, and proved mentally provocative as well. This time allowed me to continue to present the model and solicit Vezo help in working out the aforementioned conceptual kinks.

With Morombe being one of my favorite Vezo villages, suitably situated for visiting the several outlying islands, logistically favorable for access to my canoe and fishing excursions, this was an especially propitious choice of place in which to end my field research.

CHAPTER FOUR

AL KOMR: ISLE OF THE MOON

Lying in the Indian Ocean, separated from East Africa by the Mozambique Channel, Madagascar, named by the Arabs as Al Komr - Isle of the Moon, is the fourth largest island in the world (after Greenland, New Guinea, and Borneo). With a land area of 587,000 square kilometers, Madagascar is a bit larger than France, its former colonizer. Madagascar was the last large landmass on Earth to be permanently settled (Tyson 1996).

Malagasy Origins and Settlement Dilemmas

The origins of the people of Madagascar as well as the time of their arrival on the island were the subjects of much interest and controversy throughout the twentieth century (Dewar 1995), and the settlement of Madagascar still remains an enigma (Allen 1995; Tyson 1996). Since the mid-nineties, no new light has been shed on whence came the first visitors and settlers of Madagascar, and this mystery continues into the twenty-first century. The first traces of human activity on Madagascar come from two sites in the southwest - Ambolisatra and Lamboharana, both wetland areas close to the coast. Seven femora of the extinct pygmy hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus lemerlei*), that were clearly cut and hacked by metal tools, were excavated at the turn of the twentieth century by Alfred Grandidier. The bones were rediscovered by MacPhee in the collections of the Musée d'Histoire Naturel in Paris. Using accelerator mass-spectometry age estimates, MacPhee and Burney (1991) placed these bones within the first century A.D. The dates

associated with the bones can be tentatively accepted as the oldest evidence of human presence on Madagascar (Dewar and Wright 1993). There were no artifacts associated with these bones.

It has been shown that at around 2000 B.P there was an abrupt increase in what were, prior to this point in time, low levels of charcoal in the sediments. This suggests that fires became increasingly prevalent locally (Burney 1996). In a 1987 publication, Burney suggested an earlier than generally acknowledged date for the arrival of humans based on the appearance (around 2000 years B.P.) of pollen of introduced plants found in sediment cores from several lakes in the southwest. Prior to these relatively recent bits of information, archaeologists and historians had placed first arrival dates anywhere from 500 to 900 A.D.

This combination of paleoecological evidence with the date for the modified hippopotamus bones suggest, according to Dewar and Wright (1993) two possible explanations:

1) Human settlement began in the southwest of Madagascar sometime during the first three centuries A.D.; however, there has yet to be found archaeological evidence of such occupation.
2) Non-resident visitors were hunting in the southwest of Madagascar during this time period.

It is possible that Madagascar was visited a number of times before the establishment of permanent residence. With the southwest as the area with these earliest indications of human presence and its position directly across the Mozambique Channel from Mozambique, one would be tempted to make this connection. Southall said that though

Bantu influence has made its presence known through linguistic, cultural, and biological means, in particular along the west coast of Madagascar, whether this is due to early immigrants from Mozambique, Arab influence, or slave trade is difficult to establish (1986).

The only Vezo karaza that was linked to the slave trade is the Makoa. They were the *tompontany* (first inhabitants, possessors of the land) of Betania. These were slaves of the Sakalava-Menabe. Makoa were brought from Mozambique to Madagascar as slaves. Some Makoa in Betania were integrated into the Vezo foko by way of their contact with Vezo-Marofohy from the south (Nosy Lamboara). Because the Makoa came as slaves, there is still a stigma attached to them, and some restrictions on marrying a Makoa due to this. Oral histories of the Vezo-Mahafaly tell of their predecessors having come to Madagascar as free men onboard Arab dhows.

Lakas from Africa

The remaining issue within what Southall outlined is the possibility of early immigrants from Mozambique. In my quest for more clearly defining the Vezo as an ethnic group, indeed establishing that they are an ethnic group, I included in my oral history questions those directed toward where they came from, that is the East Africa connection. Within this were questions as to the presence of lakas in East Africa and oral histories of laka movement between East Africa and Madagascar. What I found out from Vezo informants has led me to believe that the original settlement of Madagascar could well have been by inhabitants of East Africa who came in sailing lakas. The essence of these oral histories is that long ago there was marine traffic between Africa and

Madagascar in sailing lakas. These lakas were similar to those used today in Mahajanga, that is the main hull of carvel planked construction. They were similar as well to the lakas that the Vezo-Mahafaly ancestors used in East Africa, likely Mozambique. The following interviews with Vezo elders produced oral histories of sailing laka connections between East Africa and western Madagascar: Vezo-Sara in Anakao; Vezo-Sarambe in Anakao; Vezo-Kimija in Morombe; Vezo-Ohisoso in Morombe; and Vezo-Mahafaly in Ankilibe.

There could have been numerous fishing settlements along the west coast as well as hunting and gathering activities in the interior, neither of which would have left much in the way of archaeological evidence. Vérin (1986) recovered ceramics, fish bones, marine shells, and associated radiocarbon samples from the vicinity of Sarodrano, a Vezo village on the southwest coast. The ceramics bore a strong similarily to contemporary ceramics in Vezo villages and were dated at 1460 B.P. plus or minus 90 years. Vérin indicated that he felt a reservation concerning this date, and decided to return to Sarodrano to continue excavation. Unfortunately, cyclone Dany completely destroyed the site before Vérin could return.

James Hornell, who has extensively studied outrigger canoe construction and distribution throughout the Indian Ocean (1919, 1920, 1934), stated that it was quite improbable that Madagascar was colonized by East Africans by their own unaided efforts. "So far as historical and other evidences go, no Bantu tribe has ever adventured oversea or out of sight of land; as far back as A.D. 1154 we find Edrisi stating definitely that 'the Zenj (i.e. the Bantu of East Africa) have no ships for voyaging'. Except they were carried to Madagascar as prisoners or slaves, there is no satisfactory alternative

solution to the problem of the presence of Bantu tribes in Madagascar" (Hornell 1934: 309-310). Alfred Grandidier is recognized as "the most important and influential Malgachisant of all time" (Kent 1970: 9). For nearly a century (1865-1955) Alfred and his son Guillaume collected oral traditions, compiled old travel accounts, purchased Arabico-Malagasy manuscripts - in short, they amassed a mountain of information about nearly every aspect of Madagascar. Along with this seemingly tireless work recording Madagascar's history, went what must be viewed as an extremely opinionated personality. According to Kent (1970) Alfred Grandidier singlehandedly turned opinion away from the possibility of African influence in the formative stages of Madagascar's development. Grandidier not only viewed Africa as a "cultural wasteland" (Kent 1970: 32), but thought that Africans had no maritime skills, were incapable of open ocean travel, and had no history of overseas migration that was not forced. Like Hornell, Grandidier thought that the only way Africans had come to Madagascar was as slaves or prisoners, brought by Arabs or Europeans. Deschamps (1968, 1972) began the turn away from denying African influence in Madagascar, and Vérin (1975, 1986) much more emphatically insisted upon Africa's undeniable contribution.

I suspect that both Grandidier and Hornell are incorrect on the issue of there not being a seafaring tradition in East Africa. In addition to oral histories that I collected, there is the very real issue of the proximity of Mozambique to western Madagascar, as well as the earliest evidence of human intrusion into Madagascar having been along the southwest coast. The monsoon winds blow from the northeast from the beginning of December until the end of March, and from the southwest from May or June until the end of November. Despite the southerly flow of the strong Mozambique current, utilizing the

southwest winds, Bantu or Bantu/Indonesian fishers/seamen could have sailed to western Madagascar. This is assuming a material culture which included sailing canoes at least somewhat similar to the ones found among the contemporary Vezo. However, there is no archaeological evidence to indicate that Africans (or anyone else, for that matter) occupied Madagascar before the proto-Malagasy arrived (Tyson 1996). Kent stated that "to 'crack' the Malagasy origins has been the stated or secret dream of most Malgachisants" (1970: 2). Pursuit of this dream has resulted in a century of speculation and dispute, with no evident resolution (Dewar 1995).

Linguistics

The most closely related surviving language to Malagasy is found in the Barito Valley of central Borneo (Kalimantan), home of the Maanjan tribe (Brown 1979; Dewar and Wright 1993). Malagasy is an Austronesian language that demonstrates a long contact with Bantu languages. The Bantu influence is found in elements of phonology, morphology, and vocabulary. The means by which this occurred are not known, but the following scenarios have been presented: it could have been a result of early Indonesian visits or settlements on the coast of East Africa; there could have been early Bantu speakers on Madagascar; or this may have happened on Madagascar after the Indonesians landed there (Dewar and Wright 1993). Vérin has written, "It should be stated emphatically that the ancestors of the Malagasy were of Indonesian and African origin and that the predominantly Indonesian character of the language does not give us the right to deny the important part played by Africa in populating the country" (1986: 34).

This was in response to earlier views of Malagasy settlement that were strongly biased toward Indonesian influence. The major differences found in relatively recent views on early settlement lie in the sequence and number of migrations. But, once again, these are only views, with little corroborating archaeological evidence.

Based on the linguistic work of Otto Cristien Dahl, who compared Malagasy and Ma'anyan, most Malgachisants agree upon 1900-2000 years ago as the time when Malagasy speakers first diverged from speakers of Ma'anyan (Tyson 1996). This is correlated with when Indonesians left Indonesia for Madagascar. Although archaeological evidence is limited, it seems to corroborate this estimate. Another piece of evidence which fuels the argument that Madagascar was uninhabited until 2000 years ago is the apparent lack of a Stone Age on the island. Archaeologists have found no indication of a stone tool industry (Brown 1979; Dewar 1995; Tyson 1996), and even the earliest known settlers appear to have been reliant on iron tools. This scenario differs markedly from both prehistoric Africa and prehistoric Southeast Asia, and allows scholars to infer that there was likely no settlement on Madagascar prior to the transition to exclusive use of iron tools. The general consensus is that iron did not replace stone in either Africa or Southeast Asia until at the earliest 200 B.C. What this all points to is an agreement as to time frame for possible first human presence on Madagascar between linguists and archaeologists.

Indonesian Influence

Vérin (1986) postulated that an original Afro-Indonesian population was in Madagascar as early as 400 A.D. and certainly no later than 900 A.D. A widespread

trade network that included the Indonesians was in place in the Indian Ocean 2000 years ago (Vérin 1986; Allen 1995; Tyson 1996). *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, a document written by an anonymous Greek merchant living in Alexandria in the first century A.D., describes thriving ports during this time period that stretched from modern Kenya all the way to what is today Sri Lanka. He tells of ships sailing from the East African coast to India, where they traded aromatic gums, tortoiseshell, ivory, and slaves for cotton cloth, sugar, grain, oil, and ghee.

Of the two possible sea routes, most scholars prefer a northern coastal route (Kent 1970; Vérin 1986; Allen 1995; Dewar 1995; Tyson 1996). While trade winds and currents are favorable for a direct route across the Indian Ocean from Indonesia to Madagascar or East Africa, only the Mascarene archipelago (Mauritius, Reunion, and Rodrigues) lies along this route for provisioning during the nearly 7000 kilometer trip. None of these islands shows evidence of human contact before the arrival of Europeans (Tyson 1996). The northern coastal route would have the Indonesians coming in their outrigger canoes along the Southeast Asia coast to Sri Lanka and India, then across to Arabia and down the coast of eastern Africa, reaching Madagascar by way of the Comoros Islands.

Vérin (1986) among others has proposed two distinct waves of arrival on Madagascar between the fourth and twelfth centuries. The first wave consisted of a paleo-Indonesian people who intermarried with Africans either on the coast of East Africa, in the Comoros Islands, or on Madagascar itself, forming a proto-Malagasy people - these are sometimes referred to as the Vazimba. The second wave was composed of a neo-Indonesian group, who were the ancestors of the contemporary

Merina. These latter likely came more directly from Indonesia (India to the east coast of Madagascar) between the 8th and 12th centuries. Indonesian sea voyages to the western Indian Ocean apparently stopped in the 12th century, likely due to pressure from Arab sea power (Allen 1995).

Dewar (1995) stated that there is no known archaeological evidence to support either the hypothesized Indonesian or Afro-Indonesian communities on the coasts of East Africa. He went on to say that "what is perhaps most surprising is that the recent decades of archaeological work on the island have failed to identify any decisive evidence of Indonesian migration to the island. The dominance of Malagasy as a language and the evidently important contribution of Indonesians to the island's gene pool have yet to find their analogue in the prehistoric material culture" (1995: 315). Others, while recognizing the paucity of archaeological evidence, feel that Indonesian influence and presence can be shown by the present-day distribution of the Indonesian outrigger canoe in the Indian Ocean. These outriggers can be found in Sri Lanka, the Maldives, the East African coast, the Comoros Islands, and the west coast of Madagascar (Hornell 1919, 1920, 1934; Kent 1970; Brown 1979). Additionally, proponents of Indonesian influence in the western Indian Ocean point to the practice of sea turtle "fishing" in Indonesia, Madagascar, and East Africa, but nowhere else in Africa (Kent 1970; Brown 1979). It is believed that Indonesians also introduced coconuts, breadfruit, yams, bananas, and taro to East Africa.

Early Artifacts

The earliest evidence of human presence, in the southwest and extreme north, indicate no long-term settlement. The evidence may have been from activities or

transient visitors to Madagascar. The oldest confirmed artifacts have been found at Lakaton'i Anja, a rockshelter near the coast in the extreme north of the island. The deepest archaeological layers here have radiocarbon dates corresponding to the 4th century A.D. Associated with these layers were faunal remains and a very limited artifact assemblage (Dewar 1995). Other than the one isolated and unconfirmed carbon-dating of the ceramics (mentioned earlier in conjunction with the Vezo) from around 500 A.D. at Sarodrano in the southwest, archaeological excavations have not produced evidence of human occupation on Madagascar earlier than the 8th century (Brown 1979; Southall 1986; Dewar 1995). The islet of Nosy Mangabe is the oldest known continuous occupation, dating to the 8th century. This is also the age of the oldest known sites on the Comoros Islands. The assemblages at Nosy Mangabe consist of earthenware ceramics, iron slag, and traces of chlorite schist vessels. However, this earliest continuous occupation provides no clear connection with any region outside Madagascar. Therefore it is not possible to specify any particular region or peoples as being the basis of Malagasy culture. As well, Malagasy oral tradition has apparently revealed nothing as to the ocean itself nor when and how the first settlers crossed it (Allen 1995).

Early Settlement History

During the period from the 9th to the 11th centuries, communities were established along the coasts of Madagascar (Kent 1970; Wright and Rakatoarisoa 1997). By 1350 A.D., there was human occupation along nearly the entirety of Madagascar's coastline as well as the beginnings of permanent occupation of the central highlands (Dewar and Wright 1993). In conjunction with this settlement expansion, there is firm evidence of

the majority of the traditional economic pursuits: rice cultivation, cattle herding, fishing, iron smelting, and participation in oceanic trade (Dewar and Wright 1993; Allen 1995; Wright and Rakotoarisoa 1997). Settlements ranged in size from urban trade centers to tiny hamlets. That Madagascar had an extended history as part of a western Indian Ocean trade network is inferred by the presence of obvious tradewares in artifact assemblages from Nosy Mangabe, as well as most coastal sites in the "Middle Period" (from the 11th to mid-fourteenth centuries A.D.) (Vérin 1986; Dewar and Wright 1993).

The establishment of the entrepot of Mahilaka on the northwest coast in the 12th century marks the beginning of urban life in Madagascar (Dewar and Wright 1993). Here there was a wall enclosing a center of some 70 hectares within which were masonry residences, workshop areas, and at least one mosque. Evidence for the aforementioned participation in an Indian Ocean trade network comes from imported ceramics of both Near and Far Eastern manufacture. These ceramics are also known from trading communities on the east coast of Africa (Vérin 1986). It has been conjectured that in its entrepot capacity, Mahilaka was an exchange center where island products such as tortoise shell, chlorite schist, gold, crystal quartz, wood, tree gum, and iron were traded for ceramics, glass beads, and cloth from outside the island (Dewar 1995). In the following centuries until the arrival of Europeans in the 16th century, Mahilaka was succeeded by several trading centers on both the north and northeast coasts. None of these, however, was nearly as large as Mahilaka. In other parts of the island were established regional centers with populations of around a thousand, which were surrounded by five to ten villages. The concentrations of trade goods in these centers suggest that they may have been associated with a concentration of wealth and political

power along with the development of social hierarchy (Dewar and Wright 1993; Dewar 1995).

Dramatic changes on the island occurred shortly after the arrival of Europeans. Military conflict escalated, population relocations and reorganizations of political power occurred with all three tied to the importation of guns and the slave trade (Dewar 1995). The relatively rapid increase in population density in the central highlands along with the increase in political complexity there, led to the formation of the Merina state in the 18th century. Although they did not reach the state level of organization, in two other geographically distinct areas of the island, royal lineages came into being fairly concurrently, with the result being the imposing of larger political organization on the village-centered petty chiefdoms. Despite these regional increases in political complexity, in some areas there was little change in subsistence patterns established in the 14th and 15th centuries (Dewar 1995).

Political Transformation

The contemporary peoples of Madagascar can be divided into three broad groups: the people of the west coast and the south; the people of the central plateau; and the people of the east coast. Among these, the groups that formed the most extensive political and economic bases during the historical period are the Sakalava and the Merina. The Sakalava are the best known of the west coast peoples. Beginning in the 16th century, the Sakalava princes established dynasties that controlled most of the western part of Madagascar, including the Vezo and Masikoro (Southall 1986; Allen 1995; Middleton 1999). The southern Menabe and the northern Boina dynasties were loosely united under

the Maroserana dynasty (also known as the Volamena dynasty). With the aid of the French and East African (Swahili) trade partners, the Sakalava expanded their influence until they controlled a third of Madagascar. Invasion by the Merina in the early 19th century brought an end to this period of prosperity.

The Merina are by far the most extensively studied of the Malagasy peoples, due undoubtedly to their being the largest and most historically prominent as well as the only group to form a state-level society (Southall 1986; Allen 1995; Middleton 1999). It has been conjectured that they are the descendants of the second wave of Indonesians to come to Madagascar (Vérin 1986). They settled on the central plateau and were virtually unknown to the outside world until the late 18th century. Until the 18th century the Merina were organized in small chiefdoms typified by fortified villages. Then a technological breakthrough involving intensive paddy rice cultivation supplanted *tavy* (slash-and-burn agriculture) (Allen 1995). The complicated social arrangements that were necessitated by the need to control the flow of water that was the basis of this paddy cultivation led to a more integrated political configuration. The Merina began an expansion of influence and control around 1780, under the dynasty of Andrianampoinimerina. Within the course of fifty years, the Merina had taken over most of Madagascar. The Merina state that emerged held sway over approximately four million people and this political landscape instigated a cultural transformation that was based on the Merina dialect of Malagasy as the lengua franca. Whereas the sparsely populated, semi-arid grasslands and the extensive cattle herding practices of the Sakalava provided a poor base for state formation, the central highland environment exploitation in

the form of intensive, irrigated rice cultivation allowed the Merina a stable base from which to form a centralized state (Southall 1986).

Arab Influence

At least by the early part of the second millenium A.D. and perhaps as early as the 8th century A.D., Arab influence had made its presence known in Madagascar (Kent 1970; Southall 1986; Verin 1986; Allen 1995; Middleton 1999). Via trading posts set up in the north on both the northwest and northeast coasts, Muslim traders integrated with the East African Swahili world which included such port cities as Kilwa, Zanzibar, Mombasa, Malinda, and Lamu, as well as with the Comoros Islands. Islamic culture is recognized as having had a lasting impact on Madagascar. The Portuguese swept into the Indian Ocean in the 16th century, systematically destroying the Arab trade network in the region, including the Arab trading posts in northern Madagascar. However, contact with the Swahili world of East Africa was not lost as this was maintained by way of Arab settlements in the Comoros Islands. As noted earlier, the Sakalava dynasties of western Madagascar established trade as well with East Africa. Slave trading by Arabs extended into Madagascar even into the late 19th century despite British efforts to eradicate this and their anti-slavery pact with the Merina monarchy (Allen 1995).

European Influence

After the Arabs, the most important cultural contacts for the island were with the Europeans. Beginning with the Portuguese then followed by Dutch, Americans, Hanseatic Germans, and British, supply stations were established initially along the west

coast, then later on the eastern side of Madagascar (Allen 1995). Due to its position along the route from Europe to India, Madagascar was of vital importance for European nations to restock their vessels with rice, beans, beef, and fruit. Before the opening of the Suez Canal, Madagascar was of strategic importance as well, viewed as such especially by the British and French.

Although there are ethnographic and historical accounts from the 17th century onward, beginning with the 18th century events are much better known thanks to texts left by the French (Rakotoarisoa 1997). The British defeated the French (1810-1811), thus giving them "rights" to Madagascar, Mauritius, and Reunion, however, their interests in Madagascar were relatively limited: enforcement of the anti-slave trade treaty signed originally with Merina King Radama I in 1817; protection for the British missionaries; and sustenance for Mauritius, which was retained by the British in 1811 (Allen 1995).

Even though Britain seemed to have no real colonial designs on Madagascar, its influence was marked in two areas: the introduction of Christianity by British missionaries and the politico-military alliance established wtih the Merina. The former was facilitated by the latter. In the second decade of the 19th century, the British governor of Mauritius decided to extend British influence into Madagascar. Under the auspices of his alliance with the already powerful Merina of the highlands, his agents trained the Merina army following the European model and supplied them with modern British weapons from Mauritius. This facilitated the Merina expansion over most of the rest of Madagascar. This alliance also facilitated the introduction of the London Missionary Society into Antananarivo. The Society not only came to identify with the Merina, but also openly served the political and economic intents of the monarchy (Kent

1970). That the Missionary Society's impact was felt is evidenced by Protestantism being established as the official religion of the Merina state in the 1860's.

The British and French signed a treaty in 1890 within which England authorized French imperialist intent in Madagascar. This was in exchange for France's staying out of British affairs in East Africa. In a similar fashion to the Arabs earlier, the French did not change the essence of Malagasy culture, rather they "grafted privileged cosmopolitan layers onto a fundamentally Malagasy culture" (Allen 1995:11). Thus the French influence in Madagascar was not like the immersion in French culture that occurred in Reunion or Seychelles, but the establishment of an elite European class within a uniquely Malagasy civilization.

Madagascar became a French colony in 1896 and remained so until 1960. Although the Merina had managed to conquer most of the island (noted earlier, they never managed to subdue the south), Madagascar was unified politically and administratively for the first time under French rule. However, the lengthy power struggles among the various factions (Merina, Sakalava, British, and French) had a lasting effect on relations among the Malagasy peoples. This is especially true between the peoples of the coastal regions (les cotiers) and those of the highlands (Merina). Social divisions were exaccerbated by differential access to education, administrative policies that dealt with the various regions differentially, as well as regional bias in development of the economy during the colonial period, and these divisions have carried over into the modern era (Middleton 1999).

Anthropogenic Impact on the Landscape

Understanding the early role of human impact on the landscape of Madagascar requires placing this within the context of global climatic dynamics in the presettlement period (Burney 1996, 1997). According to Burney there is a gap in the knowledge about the role of abiotic factors in environmental change in Madagascar's past, but that this can be rectified somewhat by looking for parallels in other areas, Africa being a likely candidate. Paleoclimatological evidence indicates that by the mid-Tertiary the climate was cooler and drier in Africa and other parts of the world. This resulted in the decline of forests, their replacement by grasslands, and the emergence of large grazing animals. In the past two million years, the climates of the world have cycled about twenty times through glacial and interglacial modes.

The Holocene, which has already lasted 11,000 years is an interglacial. In the early Holocene there was the expansion of forests in East Africa and large lakes formed in the Sahara region. By the late Holocene, the cooler and drier climate instigated a return of much of the forested areas to savannah in Africa. There is no reason to assume that Madagascar would not have undergone such climatic changes as were experienced by the rest of the world. As Burney pointed out, this picture of Madagascar as dynamically changing prior to the arrival of humans was directly opposed to the notion of stability that was previously adhered to (1997). Following the above, there were likely major changes in vegetation in presettlement times that were in synch with the glacial-interglacial time scale. Contained within this framework one would expect shorter scale disturbances (such as fires) as well as changes based on longer geomorphological scales. These ideas are in accord with modern ecological concepts such as global dynamics as well as

understanding the role of scale when addressing environmental change (Burney 1987, 1996, 1997; Dewar and Wright 1993; Wright and Rakotoarisoa 1997).

At around 2000 B.P. there was an abrupt increase in what were previously low levels of charcoal in the sediments. Although there were fires within the region prior to this, the above suggested increased local prevalence of fires. Two possible scenarios have been suggested by Burney (1987, 1996):

1) With the decline of grazing animals (such as the pygmy hippo), accumulation of dead grasses would have provided fodder for increased prevalence of fires. This scenario would have been aided by a drier climate.
2) The fires could have been anthropogenic had humans arrived on the island sooner than was previously supposed. As mentioned earlier, this distinct possibility has been compounded by the dating of modified hippo femurs.

What Burney was positing is that the juxtaposing of human arrival with a climatic period marked by natural desiccation produced a synergistic effect that resulted in environmental deterioration as well as extensive extinctions. Existing data show that most of the Holocene megafauna on Madagascar had survived numerous shifts in climatic conditions with the concurrent shifts in vegetation type prior to the appearance of humans. Human activities such as hunting, modification of the various habitats, as well as the introduction of exotic species, combined with climatic changes to precipitate these megafaunal extinctions (Burney 1996, 1997; Dewar and Wright 1993; Dewar 1996). Most of the large animals in Madgascar, the elephant birds, giant tortoises, pigmy hippos, and all the larger species of lemur (those over 6 kg), have disappeared within the Holocene, with some during the last 1500 years. During this same latter time frame,

there have been a number of animal species introduced to the island: cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, as well as the nearly inevitable mice and rats. These are in addition to the aforementioned, introduced plant species.

Evidence presented indicates that landscape changes began around 1900 years ago in the southwest and 1300 years ago in the central highlands. This latter change was the result of tavy similar to what has been seen in the tropics worldwide. Increasing cattle herding went hand-in-hand with increasing prevalence of fires. Fires were used to open new pasture land for cattle, control parasites (ticks in particular), reduce cover for cattle thieves, as well as to instigate regrowth of grazing grass during the latter part of the dry season - the "green bite" (Paulian 1984; Wells and Andriamihaja 1997). The landscape changes were relatively slow initially with accelerated alteration
over the course of human occupation (Jolly 1988). What initially began with deforestation resulted in bare earth, as the grasses which replaced the trees were themselves stymied by repeated fires. With no vegetation to serve as an anchor, erosion from wind and rain removed the superficial layer of soil. By 1960, only 21% of Madagascar was covered by trees (Jolly 1980).

Brief Geophysical and Climatic Overview

Along the 1600 kilometer length of Madagascar runs a backbone of mountains that parallel the east coast. While the highest point does not exceed 2899 meters, the eastern side of this range rises sharply and effectively blocks the trade winds that sweep across the Indian Ocean. The western side of the range descends gradually toward the coast. The result of this is a much wetter climate along the east coast. The north is also wetter

than the south, thus there is a rainfall gradient from the northeastern part of the island to the southwest. Correspondingly, natural communities are characterized by humid evergreen forests in the northeast, the interior of the country is covered for the most part by grasslands and savannah, while the southwest is covered in dry, spiny forests (Jolly 1984; Dewar and Wright 1993; Kaufmann 1998).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WEST COAST AND ITS ENVIRONS

As an exemplar of this part of Madagascar I shall concentrate on the Fihereña Coast and the Mikea Forest to the east. In this broad section of discussion, the intent is to describe the coastal and near coastal environment, in short the resources available to the Vezo. Additionally, I shall work in the other groups that occupy and conduct their subsistence activities in this region. Of particular import are the interrelationships among these groups that allow, in fact, promote their co-existence. Concentration on the Fihereña Coast, when the entirety of the Vezo range extends from Androka in the south to Maintirano in the north, is not problematic for the following reasons: 1) this part of the Vezo range is the origin of the Vezo cultural group; 2) it is the most traditional stretch of the Vezo coastal territory and the most readily described from both environmental and interethnic standpoints; 3) it is likely the area where such interethnic relations developed; 4) the Fihereña is imminently applicable in all these aspects to the entirety of the Vezo range.

Geophysical Considerations

The Fihereña coastal area is characterized by a narrow strip of sandy and rocky littoral paralleled by a xerophytic forest to the east. This latter is known as the Mikea Forest, though no one is sure whether the forest was named for that group of mainly foragers or whether the Mikea were named for the forest. This forest is characterized by

spiny trees and bushes, most notably of the families Euphorbidae and Didiereaceae, but with outstanding additions such as huge baobobs (*Adansonia sp.*) and farafatse (*Givotea madagascariensis*). This entire area is arid for the reasons presented earlier: the rainy or monsoon season is characterized by winds from the northeast, coming across the Indian Ocean. Most of the rainfall occurs on the northern and eastern sides of Madagascar with little precipitation left for the western side of the central mountainous backbone. This season lasts from the first of December until the middle to end of March. The dry season occupies the rest of the year. In June and July the nights along the coast are quite cool (nights sleeping alongside my canoe on the beach felt more on the cold side, with my looking for a fire at 0500). The period just before the start of the rainy season (the month of November and the first of December) is very hot, restricting productive strenuous activities to the very early morning (by 0900 it is too hot to work in the sun, unless on sea) and late afternoon.

The Fihereña Coast is fringed by the provincial capital, Toliara, to the south and the regional center of Morombe to the north. At both of these centers there are extensive mangrove areas. These provide wood for construction (framework of the traditional Vezo houses, racks for drying salted fish), the crabs which are integral to the Vezom-potake label, as well as a vital nursery area for the juvenile stages of important target species of both finfish and invertebrates. There are mangrove stands as well at Bevato, though my walk through this area seemed to point to near decimation from overharvesting. South of Ambatumilo the fringing barrier reef separates a protected lagoon from the open ocean.

This lagoon is wide (up to around two kilometers) and relatively shallow. Most fishing takes place in the lagoon, with ventures into the seaward side of the reef occurring mainly on fair weather days. North of Ambatumilo the barrier reef is intermittant and closer in to shore. Beginning at Andavadoake there are barrier islands. Just north of Ambatumilo is the first *vava rano* (pass, literally the water's mouth) for the sail north towards Morombe; these passes can be dangerous if not approached at the right tidal stage. They should be taken early in the ebb tide, with the ideal being when this coincides with the early morning breeze off the land. Continuing with the northward sailing route, the second vava rano is just north of Bevohitse, and the third just north of Antsiepke. This latter is the most dangerous, passing directly into the Mozambique Channel, with nothing to break the waves between your canoe and the East African coast. The sailing direction from Antsiepke north passes to the west of (the island of) Nosy Lamboara which is situated in the mouth of the Baie des Assassins; the village landing site north of here is Ampasilava or Andavadoake.

Thus from Ambatumilo north, the coast is more exposed to the open ocean. The barrier islands beginning seaward of Andavadoake are Nosy Hau (Nosau), Nosy Anjamimbala, Nosy Ve, Nosy Danlati, Nosy Mitata, Nosy Be, and Nosy Lava. These latter two are near Morombe. There are Vezo who have lived for a longtime on all of these islands. On Nosy Ve and Nosy Be there are schools (one on each). Potable water is a problem on Nosau, Nosy Danlati, Nosy Mitata, Nosy Be, and Nosy Lava. This must be transported by outrigger canoe during the dry season from Andavadoake or Morombe. During the rainy season the inhabitants catch rain water.

While along the southern part of the Fihereña most fishing activities take place in the lagoon, in the northern part activities center around the barrier islands with more offshore fishing; this is a matter of necessity as the lagoon areas are vastly reduced or nonexistent. Rocky and coralline areas accessible or exposed at low tide for *mihake* (gleaning on foot for invertebrates) are prominent in the northern half of the Fihereña at Beangolo, Bevohitse, Ampassilava, Anadavadoake, and Bevato, as well as the barrier islands of Nosau and Nosy Ve. In the south similar bottom is found at Fitsitike, Fiherenamasay, and Andravona.

Administrative Considerations

From an administrative standpoint, the southern half of the Fihereña is administered by Toliara, with the sub-prefecture in Manombo. The coastal villages include Ifaty, Mangily, Fitsitike, Fiherenamasay, Tsifota, Tsandiamba, Karamifoke, Salary Varitra (*varitra* is translated as north; this is often used to distinguish Salary from Soalary or Soalara south of Toliara which is pronounced virtually the same), Salary Rua (*rua* translates as two, thus this smaller village one and a half kilometers north of Salary Varitra, is the second Salary), Bekodry, and Andravona. Both Toliara and Manombo tend administratively toward a laissez-faire approach, with no apparent restrictions imposed on fishing gear nor harvesting of forest products. These issues are decided by *midinike* (village council meetings). I said earlier that the Fihereña Coast was the most traditional part of the Vezo range. To precise this further, the southern half of the Fihereña, in particular the villages between Fiherenamasay and Salary Varitra, inclusive, is the most traditional. This area, according to oral histories, is the origin of the Vezo

culture; as well, it is the most self-governing, and is the most aware and protective of village boundaries. These issues will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter where I use Salary Varitra as a prime example of a typical Vezo village.

The northern half of the Fihereña is administered by the prefecture in Morombe, and the sub-prefecture is in Befandefa. These administer not only the coastal villages, but those villages situated to the east as well. The coastal villages are Ambatumilo, Beangolo, Bevohitse, Antsiepke, (a number of Vezom-potake villages situated along the Baie des Assassins, such as Kitambana and Tampolove), Lamboara, Ampasilava, Andavakoake, Bevato, as well as the aforementioned barrier islands. In the district of Morombe there are many restrictions placed on fishing and harvesting of the forest. According to an informant in 2003, these had been acted upon within the past five years. Within the fishing sector, there are restrictions on mesh size for nets (gill and seine), on the taking of juvenile fish, and just the day before this interview, a restriction on the eating or capture of *fano hara* was announced. This reef turtle can be dangerous to eat due to the algae on which it feeds; apparently in some areas the algae is toxic. The day after I sailed from Ambatumilo, 13 became sick and one Vezo died from eating one of these. The restriction was based on this incident. According to this same informant, in 1989, 23 died in Salary Varatra from this same species. There are restrictions from the forestry department in Morombe on cutting trees in the forest. To do this, one must fill out a form, making a formal request, then pay some sum of money for the right to go into the forest to cut wood. All of this is in stark contrast to the administration in the south.

Neighboring Groups

The Vezo of the Fihereña Coast have economic ties with possibly two groups that for the most part occupy territories to the east, the Masikoro and the Mikea. I wrote "possibly two groups", for these may be subsistence variations on a single theme, as is discussed later. The other indecisive part of that statement was due to the fact that there are Masikoro and Mikea who live on the coast. Vezo economic ties with the Masikoro are based on the exchange of fish for beef and agricultural products such as manioc, ignams, corn, and less frequently, assorted fruits and vegetables. Their economic ties with the Mikea consist of exchange of fish for such forest products as honey, wild tubors, and traditional medicines like *hazo zanati*, a cure-all wood that is ground on a stone with a small amount of water, then drunk with honey.

These inter-group relations are apparently longstanding along the Fihereña Coast. As has been discussed earlier in this dissertation, the proximity at times of these distinct groups, indeed the coexistence in certain coastal areas, has apparently proved confusing to outsiders as manifested in lumping of groups and subsequent ethnonym vagaries. However, the groups themselves recognize group distinctions and boundaries, regardless of juxtaposition of existence and mostly superficial similarity of subsistence. Ethnic boundaries are what separate “us” from “others” (Kent 2002). These boundaries are intact within this region, based not only on subsistence and the faly, but on more prosaic distinguishing features such as differences in dress (from sandals to cloaks), the hairstyles of both men and women, the general body build, and carriage, particularly of the men. Ethnic boundaries can be maintained by a limited set of cultural features (Barth 1969), and in instances where Masikoro (or Mikea) and Vezo exist in proximity, and the

Masikoro extract a part of their subsistence from the sea, distinctions can be made by the initiated based on these more prosaic features and enhanced by close questioning.

Niche and Resource Partitioning

That niche classification functions in the formation and maintenance of distinct ethnic boundaries has been sustained by Barth (1956, 1969), Abruzzi (1982), and Kent (2002). This is niche from the Eltonian definition, emphasizing the context of community. Barth translated Elton's concept of niche from the realm of animal ecology to that of human culture; for him, niche was the place of an ethnic group in the environment as defined by its relations to both resources and other occupants of that environment (1956).

When two or more groups exploit different ecological niches, that is their subsistence patterns demonstrate little overlap, they can maintain cultural distinction despite longterm contact as Haaland (1969) noted for the Fur and Baggara in Sudan. Resource partitioning, utilizing only part of the natural environment and leaving the rest of it open for exploitation by other groups is analogous to what is found among nonhuman animal species in an environment (Barth 1956). Sympatric species can partition resources temporally (the nocturnal and diurnal hunting of great horned owls and red-tailed hawks, respectively) or spacially (the elevation differences between red and gray squirrels). As to why resource partitioning occurs in non-human animals, possible answers lie within the benefits to relatively rare species co-existing in a multispecies situation, as well as the linking of shared resources with shared predators.

Within humans, the advantages in utilizing only part of the natural environment and leaving the rest open to exploitation by other groups are contained within interethnic economic ties, that is interdependence. In his work in the Admiralty Islands, Theodore Schwartz (1975) categorized peoples into what he called "ecological groupings", the three prominent ones there being fishing, gardening, and mixed fishing and gardening. Schwartz felt that the most important interethnic relations are those that are cross-ecological, to wit, the ties between groups of fishers and those who engage in gardening.

Returning to southwestern Madagascar, why do the Vezo not occupy the total environment, that is farm, have cattle, and forage in addition to oceanic fishing? The resource partitioning about which we have been discussing, this interdependence between "ecological groups" is of particular importance for marine fishers, whose occupation requires extensive cognitive maps, skill and knowledge of the marine environment to be successful (Foreman 1967; Cordell 1973, 1980; Johannes 1977, 1981), thus making involvement in a mixed economy difficult. As mentioned earlier, some Vezo do forage, some few plant corn during the rainy season, and some very few have cattle. However, these activities are insignificant in the total scheme of subsistence activities. It would seem reasonable to view the interethnic or inter-group economic ties maintained between the Vezo and their neighbors as subsistence risk reduction for the basically purely marine oriented Vezo. Surplus marine products are traded[4] for agricultural products. Confidence in their knowledge of the marine environment and their ability to exploit that

---

[4] Prior to 1970, exchange among these groups was based primarily on bartering. Post 1970 trade entered into a money economy.

environment reduces tendency toward a mixed economy among the Vezo and promotes trade with their more terrestrially oriented neighbors. During the rainy season, when climatic conditions preclude the normal exchange between groups, the Vezo have a stockpile of their staples to carry them through this period of greatly reduced fishing actvity - *fia sira* and *bala hazo* (salted fish and manioc), this latter from their Masikoro neighbors to the east.

North and South of the Fihereña Coast

As stated earlier, the Vezo range extends from Androka in the south to Maintirano in the north. North of Morombe, heading toward Morondava, the northernmost regional center within the province of Toliara, the coastal villages are sparsely distributed, particularly between Andranopasy and Belo sur Mer. From Morondava through Maintirano, the Vezo population is low. South of Toliara, the coastal villages are closely situated as far as Anakao, becoming widely distributed south of here until the southernmost point, Androka.

South of Toliara

Proceeding initially southeast then south of Toliara, one first encounters the village of Ankilibe, which is surrounded by mangrove. The predominant group here is Vezo-Mahafaly. The mangroves continue almost to Sarodrano to the south. The village of Sarodrano is set on a sand spit that extends out into the ocean. This village and its environs contain the site where Vérin found the assemblage that he dated to nearly 1500 B.P., an assemblage with ceramics similar to what is found in contemporary Vezo

villages. The vulnerability of this spit allows one to appreciate the ease with which a cyclone could destroy such an archaeological site. Sarodrano contains a very diverse assemblage of Vezo karaza, to my knowledge the most heterogeneous of any Vezo village outside of Morombe. I include this latter even though it is a regional center, for its relative isolation, lack of tourism (due at least in part to this isolation), undeveloped infrastructure, and general layout, all give it the feel of a large village. A walk down its beach (Morombe translates as big beach; *be* is big), with its array of lakas as far as one can see, does nothing to diminish this impression.

Returning to heterogeneity, the following Vezo karaza are found in Sarodrano: Vezo-Sara, Vezo-Tsivoky, Vezo-Sakoandahy, Vezo-Besakoa, Vezo-Timangotio, Vezo-Voroneoke, Vezo-Tifanotro Mainty, Vezo-Tifanotro Fotsy, Vezo-Timoita, Vezo-Kotronaomby. Sarodrano is a small village, and according to informants, one with a long history. There was some debate among my informants as to which was older, Sarodrano or Lovocampy to the south. The reasons for such karaza heterogeneity in Sarodrano may be due to a combination of its longevity and projecting coastal situation which allows both easy access to apparently productive fishing grounds and to the larger marketplace of Toliara. There are drawbacks as well in the form of saltwater intrusion in the drinking water (there is a communal well) and lack of continuous terrestrial transport to Toliara. This latter entails taking a laka to the Grottes de Sarodrano where one can catch the bush truck from St. Augustin.

St. Augustin is located at the mouth of the Onilahy River (recognize the redundancy here, as *ony* translates as river, thus river Lahy river; this is similar to Ronrico rum and La Brea Tarpits as examples in translating names from Spanish to English). This river

marked the southern boundary of the Andrevola dynasty's territory. St. Augustin has a diversity of Vezo karaza that nearly rivals Sarodrano. Directly across the mouth of the Onilahy is the tiny village of Lovocampy. This is a Vezo-Sara village, and as indicated earlier, reputedly one with a long history. Lovocampy's only access is by canoe as is the case of the next village heading basically south - Soalary. From Soalary to Anakao there is a fifteen kilometer sand track. Anakao has a lengthy beach that runs from northeast to southwest, which the Vezo residences parallel. The Vezo-Sarambe, whom we touched upon earlier as the molanga fishers from whom the progenitors of the Vezo-Mahafaly learned of the local marine conditions, were the first to settle Anakao, and are thus the tompontany. However, their current numbers are relatively low in Anakao. Essentially, Anakao is divided among three contiguous *quartiers* that are occupied by the three most prevalent karaza: the Vezo-Sara, Vezo-Tankaroke, and the Vezo-Tsivoky. Their quartiers are positioned to the southwest, central, and northeast, respectively.

Between Anakao and Androka, there is a rough sand track that parallels the coast and passes close to the Vezo villages of Beheloka and Itampolo, both of which are inhabited by Vezo-Sara and Vezo-Mahafaly. From Toliara south, there has always been a logistical problem with access to farafatse trees for the main hulls of the outrigger canoes. The roughed out hulls are brought down from the north, either on sea or by oxcart, depending on the distance. As most of the trees for large hulls, those that measure eight to ten meters, come from the vicinity of Bevoay on the Mangoky River north of Morombe, these are transported on sea. The various techniques and configurations for doing this are interesting, and I have a number of photos of these. The new, but unfinished hull can be lashed upside down, fore and aft, to the two *varone* (aka, the two

beams that connect the main hull to the fanare, or ama). Another technique that is commonly used is to construct a temporary catamaran, utilizing the new roka as the second hull. To do this, the fanare is either removed (unlashed) or the fanare is left in place and the new hull is lashed just inboard of this, creating a twin-hulled vessel, albeit one with an offset sailing rig, for the maststep and mast remain with the original roka. It is from this transport of new, unfinished hulls south that the name of the village of Androka comes. This was and is the arrival place of the roka, the mainhull of the outrigger canoes. Androka is the southernmost Vezo village, with the predominant karaza being Vezo-Sara. Of note is that the Vezo-Sara are highly touted mariners and fishers. Their reputation and influence in the southern part of the Vezo range has been extensive, and they were responsible as well for introducing the jarife and laka to the Antandroy of Lavanono.

The land to the east of this stretch of coast south of Toliara is dominated by xerophytic vegetation. It lacks, at least in its current configuration and in my experience, the larger species of trees that are associated with the Mikea forest, such as the aforementioned farafatse and baobobs. The agropastoralist groups with whom the Vezo maintain economic interaction are predominantly the Tanalana for the more northern of these coastal villages, Sarodrano through Anakao; and the Mahafaly for the more southern coastal villages. Both the Tanalana and Mahafaly have similar subsistence patterns to the Masikoro and live in the interior, but they are not Masikoro, rather they are separate and distinct groups.

North of Morombe

Following the coast, just north of Morombe one encounters the mouth of the Mangoky River. This marks the northmost limit of the Fihereña Coast and the southernmost limit of the Sakalava-Menabe region, of which Morondava (another long beach, and this is how the name translates; Morondava is a combination of the words *moro* - *beach,* and *lava* - long) is the capital. While there are Vezo-Sakalava-Menabe, perhaps most numerous in Belo sur Mer, the majority of the Vezo along this stretch of coast are of various karaza from the Fihereña Coast. Near the mouth of the Mangoky River lies the village of Ambohibe. Prior to 1920, Ambohibe was the regional center. Morombe was only a tiny fishing village. In 1920, the French made Morombe the regional center, and it grew accordingly. Now the roles are reversed, with Ambohibe as the small fishing village.

Just north of here, the coast turns ninety degrees to the east. At the juncture where the coast turns north again, lies the village of Andranopasy. This is a sizeable village with terrestrial connection (albeit a slow, rough track) to Morombe and a port of call for *botry* (engineless coastal schooners). I use the term port quite loosely, for access is only at high or near high tide, otherwise there is a very muddy labyrinthine system of quite narrow channels. The botry anchor out if they arrive at lower tidal stages, awaiting the flood tide.

Although there are a few molangas at Morombe, it is north of here, particularly Andranopasy, where their appearance and usage becomes regular. There are no molangas found in use among the Vezo along the Fihereña Coast or south of Toliara. Unlike the heavy molangas that the Antanosy of Ft. Dauphin use, the single hulled

dugout canoes of western Madagascar are made of farafatse, the same light wood used for the mainhulls of the outrigger canoes. The Antanosy use hardwoods such as *kinini* and *ifitoana.* These are Antanosy words and I do not know the Latin binomers. I do know that these are dark, heavy hardwoods with large diameter trunks and can be found within the Ft. Dauphin area. There are no farafatse in southeastern Madagascar. In Andranpasy and Ankevo sur Mer, the molangas are associated with Vezom-potake. There are no sailing rigs used with the molangas; they are paddle powered only. In Ankoba, those who own molangas also own lakas. They are Tena-Vezo. The molangas are used to set nets relatively close to shore when the sea is calm. This is due to the ease of launching the molangas, and as this is a paddle only endeavor, the molangas, which paddle easily and are very maneuverable, are ideally suited.

Ankoba, a several hour sail, is the next village north of Andranopasy. Ankoba is a hamlet that has taken on some sense of permanence from its origin as a seasonal fishing camp. It was apparently established fairly long ago, because the elder with whom I spoke at length, was born there. Traditional *trano Vezo*, the vondro huts, are the only structures there, much like on Nosau. There are permanent residents, like the *nahoda* (elderly man) mentioned above. There are others who come from Andavadoake and Morombe to fish during the dry season, then return the end of November to their homes to the south. The beach at Ankoba is unprotected, so if there is wave action, particularly with winds out of the west, landing and launching a laka can be tricky, necessitating counting the waves and waiting on the fourth one. To the east of Ankoba is xerophytic forest like that found parallel to the Fihereña Coast. There are sizeable farafatse trees in relatively close

proximity to the hamlet. While I was in Ankoba there was under construction a seven meter laka, with two more mainhulls that had recently been completed.

To the west of the stretch of coast from Andranopasy to Belo sur Mer, approximately thirty kilometers out, are three islands that are utilized as sites for fishing camps during the dry season. The southernmost island is Nosy Andriamitaroke, a favored site for shark fishing with jarife, followed by Nosy Andriangory, and Nosy Andrahovo, which is due west of Belo sur Mer. The two former islands serve as seasonal fishing sites for Vezo from the Fihereña Coast, while the latter is frequented by fishers from Belo.

With favorable winds, it is a near six hour sail from Ankoba to Belo sur Mer. I can be more precise about this sailing time, because it was in the afternoon with consistent southwest winds. The sail to Ankoba from Andranopasy was more sketchy as it was marked by initially light variable wind which picked up later in the morning. Between Ankoba and Belo, the coastline is rough and precipitous. It is marked as well by large trees and virtually no people. Belo sur Mer is set in a shallow embayment that is tricky to enter at near low tide due to extensive sand flats. One must know the channel.

Belo sur Mer is most readily characterized by its botry construction. While there is botry construction along the beach in Morombe and Morondava, the per capita capital is unquestionably Belo. There are the hulls of these coastal schooners, in various stages of completion, scattered about the village in full view. The construction is often a family affair, with two to three generations involved. For details of the construction techniques used, see Appendix E.

North of Belo lies the small coastal village of Ankevo sur Mer. About two kilometers to the east is the Masikoro village of the same name, Andevo. The residents

of Anvkevo sur Mer are oceanic fishers, while those of Ankevo are agropastoralists. On the eastern side of Ankevo sur Mer is a tidal lagoon fringed with mangroves. Some Masikoro (at least they are referred to as Masikoro, possibly due to subsistence strategies) from Ankevo keep molangas here which they use for chasing crabs in the mangroves. There are economic ties between the Vezo and Masikoro, with the typical exchange of fish for agricultural products.

A half-day sail north of Ankevo sur Mer is Morondava. The coastal villages of Betania and Lovobe are situated just south of Morondava, each separated by a channel. Morondava has a sizeable marketplace, where fresh and salted fish are sold. On side streets there are women selling salted fish from woven baskets. One of the main target species for the fishers of Betania is *lamatsa* (king mackerel, *Scomberomorus sp.*), a desirable pelagic predator of schooling fishes. While these can be caught offshore throughout the dry season, the greatest abundance is found during the months of August and September. These are the months when the surface temperatures of the ocean begin to warm, small schooling fish are more abundant, and thus the larger predatory pelagic fishes as well. The Vezo from Betania go out quite far to the west to *maminta* (handline) for the king mackerel. Morondava is connected by a paved road in fair condition to the capital, Antananarivo, which is situated on the high, central plateau. There is transport of a variety of marine products along this route.

Typically when one talks of the Vezo range, this is expressed either as between Androka and Morondava, or between Anakao and Morondava, as these south-north coastal delineations are where the major concentrations of Vezo are found, particularly the latter. However, there are Vezo who live and fish as far north as Maintirano, which is

some 300 kilometers north of Morondava. Following the same pattern discussed earlier, this northernmost displacement is the result of seasonal migration, with the Vezo electing to stay rather than sail south at the end of the dry season.

The Vezo have made coastal contacts beyond their reputed range, with some few going as far as Ft. Dauphin in southeastern Madagascar and Mahajanga in the northwest. The former information, from Antanosy, recounted how Vezo from Toliara have lashed their dismounted outrigger canoes to the typical, large bush trucks that run between Toliara and Ft. Dauphin (a rough three day trip) in order to fish for shark in the southeastern waters. This manner of displacement is more logistically attractive than the difficult sail from the southwest to the southeast coast of Madagascar. However, there does not appear to have been any transfer of fishing techniques or material culture from Vezo to Antanosy as occurred with the Antandroy in Lavanono.

The same holds for the northwest. When I was in Mahajanga, I met a Vezo family from Toliara who had established themselves there three years previously. They were effecting repairs on a sail spread out on the beach when I stopped to talk. After the first two sentences of my Vezo dialect (quite distinctly different from the Sakalava-Boina dialect), they asked if I lived in Toliara. This, of course, cracked me up. Here I was more than a thousand kilometers from Toliara, encountering a family from there, not to mention people who immediately called my number on my Malagasy. We ended up talking for a while and they told me their story. In lieu of either the long sail or transporting an outrigger from the south, these Vezo elected to adopt the planked outrigger with lateen sail of the Sakalava-Boina. In both the cases of the Antanosy of Ft.

Dauphin and the Sakalava-Boina of Mahajanga, the Vezo were encountering well-established fishing cultures with a long history of such.

CHAPTER SIX

VEZO VILLAGE LIFE AND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

The Vezo are a pre-industrial fishing people whose social organization has remained constant despite access to more modern materials and greater exposure to wider markets in recent decades. The pre-industrial label that I am applying means that they do not use mechanized propulsion for their fishing vessels, nor is their fishing gear aided by mechanization.

Vezo Population

Koechlin (1984) estimated the Vezo population at 8000 in 1975. Working from the 3% growth rate for the general Malagasy population (Covell 1987; CIA World Factbook; Bureau of African Affairs), and assuming a similar growth rate for the Vezo, their current population should be slightly over 20,000. Hopefully I did the math correctly. Gut feeling is that this number is high. The Vezo are widely scattered along the southwest and west coast of Madagascar, with the greatest population density between Anakao and Morombe. Even this latter range of coastal habitation gives the impression of being fairly sparsely populated when sailing along it, as the villages are well-spaced. As for village populations, I am not a great estimator of this, and neither were my Vezo informants, but I can present what is likely a reasonable estimate. A hamlet such as Ankoba would be hard pressed to exceed forty or fifty inhabitants, with some of these being transitory (seasonal). A very small village, as represented by Beangolo, likely has

a population of around seventy-five. Larger villages like Anakao, Salary Varitra, Andavadoake, and Betania have populations that number in the several hundred.

Situation of Vezo Villages

Most of the Vezo villages are built on a sandy promontory, well elevated from storm surge and with protection from the mostly prevailing southwest winds. The enormous sand dunes to the south of Bevohitse, situated on the central Fihereña Coast, are an example of how such a situation can prove problematic, as these dunes serve as fodder for days with strong winds from the south or southwest. The residents of Bevohitse live with the very real danger of being buried, and there is a continuous battle that entails digging out around their houses.

Village wells are located in low lying areas well away from the coastal side. Villages such as Andravona, Bevohitse, and Andavadoake have very sweet well water, while saltwater intrusion is problematic in Salary Varitra, especially as the dry season advances. The orientation of the houses is toward the sea where the outriggers are hauled daily and positioned well above the high tide mark, with the roka and fanare chocked to reduce contact with the moist sand. In a village like Anakao, where the long beach is able to accomodate the population size, the houses are strung out parallel to the beach with the outriggers hauled virtually in front of the respective domiciles. There is little stacking of houses to the east. Contrarily, in Salary Varitra, where the beach is less expansive and demarcated by dunes north and south, growth in population has necessitated stacking of residences to the east.

Salary Varitra

It is Salary Varitra that I am going to use as an example of a typical Vezo village, with respect to layout, material culture, and social organization. I know the village quite well, as this was where my second outrigger canoe was built. Salary Varitra is situated north of Toliara, on the southern half of the Fihereña Coast. There is terrestrial transport in the form of taxi brousse (bush taxi; this is the same term used in all former French colonies for rural, public transport), which is a rugged, often Mercedes, truck with ample ground clearance, and a separate area in the rear for passengers, who sit on hard benches; "windows" consist of canvas that can be rolled up or down. There is one that runs every day between Toliara and Manombo, the seat of the sub-prefecture for the southern half of the Fihereña. Another taxi brousse runs every other day between Manombo and Andravona. In 2003, the northern terminal village was Salary Varitra, so the northern extent has expanded. The road between Toliara and Manombo is a dirt track. Between Manombo and Salary Varitra the track gets rougher, varying between thick sand and rocks. This latter leg of perhaps fifty kilometers takes five hours by taxi brousse, an indication of the condition of the route.

When I arrived at Manombo for the first time in 2003, the taxi brousse to Salary Varitra was *en panne* (broken down). I decided to walk to Salary Varitra with my gear. My first night on the Fihereña Coast was spent camping just north of the village of Fiherenamasay. It was full moon, so there was lots of activity, as not only was there abundant light but it was famonta, the spring tide. One of the twice daily low tides occurred around midnight, so the Vezo from Fiherenamasay were taking advantage of the improved access to the reef area. There were Vezo spearing *zanga* (sea cucumbers,

several species of the family Holothuroideae, the most desirable being *Holothuria nobilis*, known by the name, *benono*, in Vezo) using wooden torches to improve visibility. There was also net fishing activity in the lagoon, with Vezo slapping the water surface with their propulsion poles, driving fish into the nets. This audio animation combined with the stunning visual array of dozens of torches strewn along the barrier reef, made for an impressive introduction to the Fihereña Coast.

The next morning at dawn, as I was packing my rucksack, a Vezo man with whom I had talked the day before in Manombo, Sofiavy, (this name, as that of all my informants, has been changed; all of the fictitious names used are legitimate Vezo names) walked up. He was returning to Salary Varitse, and had decided to take the same recourse as I. We walked together, arriving in Salary that evening. This, as well, was quite fortuitous, as Sofiavy speaks decent French (I had a whopping vocabulary at that point of two Malagasy words, *salama* and *veloma* - hello and goodbye) and he knew quite a bit of the history of the Fihereña Coast, as well as the Vezo subsistence.

As we walked, we talked, and by the time we arrived in Salary I had a fair introduction to the Vezo. I ended up staying in Sofiavy's extended family compound, and he introduced me to the village elders and the most respected fishers. It was with him, as well, that I began to amass a vocabulary of the Vezo dialect, so that by the time I sailed north three weeks later, I could ask what I needed to know, albeit in a less-than-refined manner, when there were no bilingual Vezo present (as was most often the case).

Settlement of Salary and Present Situation

According to oral history, as recounted by the descendants of Beketampo, founding father of Salary Varitra, the first village established on the Fihereña Coast was Tsymalahovola, which was situated approximately two kilometers north of present day Tsandiamba. The move to the current site of Salary Varitra was precipitated by territorial dispute with Mahafaly agropastoralists from the interior that progressed to fighting. As the Mahafaly were numerically stronger, the Vezo moved their village north. There were no other people living on the southern half of the Fihereña Coast when the Vezo-Mahafaly made their trek north from Toli.

Present day Salary Varitra is predominantly Vezo-Mahafaly. The village territorial limits extend to the east into the Mikea Forest for approximately twenty kilometers, abutting Masikoro territory. The seaward limit extends to the west past the barrier reef to the thirty meter mark. Beyond water thirty meters deep is considered open territory, a limit that was contested during my stay in Salary. To the north the boundary is located at a group of trees on a promontory. The trees are known as *Ankonkomby*, the name derived from their resemblance from a distance to cattle (*omby*). To the south Salary waters extend through the hamlet of Karamifoke to a group of trees known as *Akasberav* - this is the boundary with the village of Tsandiamba.

Social Organization

As has historically been typical of both hunter-gatherer and horticulturalist societies, the Vezo, as maritime hunters, are an egalitarian society. Due mainly to differential access to resources, egalitarian societies are on the wane in modern times. The Vezo

have not been imune to the effects of contact with global systems, and there have been modifications to apparent village political organization[5] as well as the emergence of what is in essence a "middle class" in economic terms. However, these changes in the twentieth century have not disrupted what is still an egalitarian social organization. Beginning during the French colonial occupation, for reasons of some semblance of political control, particularly over outlying areas, and continuing with post colonial administrations, there is a *chef du village* in each village who is (as I understand) appointed by the sub-prefecture.

His seems to be organizational power only, as can be demonstrated by the conflict that arose during my first stay in Salary Varitra. This is a good example, for it includes elements of territorial dispute, egalitarianism, the economically priviledged, and the relatively nouveau political organization. After *vomby akio* (shark fins), zanga is the second most valuable marine product. Prior to 1980, there was no ready market established for zanga. Then the Hong Kong connection was established by way of Chinese entrepreneurs in Toliara. Vezo middlemen would buy the zanga from Vezo fishers and divers and then prepare these for selling in Toliara (later Morondava became an entrepot as well). Preparing the zanga consists of devisceration, followed by salting for two to three days. They are then boiled after which they are placed in the sun for two to three days. The zanga are then ready for market. Zanga can be harvested with *volos* (marine spears, single headed gigs) either from a canoe along the barrier reef as was

---

[5] Political organization assumes its definition as the means by which a society establishes and maintains social order.

described for Fiherenamasay, or on foot during the *famonta* (spring tide) as I witnessed at Nosau. This latter approach is ancillary to mihake horita.

The largest and most valuable species of zanga are harvested by divers. This is particularly attractive to young Vezo males (who dominate the diving) due to the potential money they can make. The following is an example that I witnessed during my stay on Nosau for a week in 2003 during the *bory vola famonta* (the full moon spring tides). *Benono* (literal translation is big breast, due undoubtedly to the body form and smooth surface of this species of sea cucumber) can bring 20,000 to 25,000 a piece (in 2003 the *Franc Malgache* was 5800 to the dollar). A young Vezo diver arrived with five benono and two *borosy* (prickly redfish, *Thelenota ananas).* The Vezo collecter from Anadavadoake paid him 110,000 FMg., a big payday for diving during one low tide. To put this in perspective, a new four meter outrigger canoe costs 150,000 FMg. So the attraction is obvious.

However, this sort of payday has become increasingly rare in recent years, due to overfishing the bottoms up to the approximately twenty meter depth to which the Vezo divers are limited due to their free-diving technique. Diminishing returns on diving forays not only mean reduced paydays for the Vezo divers, but also reduced profits for Vezo middlemen. This brings us to the crux of the intended story. The wealthiest member of the Salary Varitra community, the man with the largest compound, a prime example of the emerging (or emerged) middle class among the Vezo, and the primary collecter of zanga, decided to take matters into his own hands to augment harvests of zanga, thus boosting his profits. The plan was carried out in conjunction with a Chinese enterpreneur in Toliara, who employed the services of another Chinese to recruit scuba

divers from Mahajanga and bring these to Salary Varitra. All of this was executed without the knowledge of other Salary residents. This crew began to dive for zanga beyond the thirty meter depth limit claimed by Salary. As this was virgin territory, well beyond the depth limits of the Vezo free divers, they harvested a lot of zanga, one day coming in with six large rice sacks (50 kg sacks) of product.

The whole village of Salary, was up in figurative arms over this. Especially vocal were the young Vezo divers and the patriarchs of their extended families. Anger produced talk of scare tactics. However, the main concern expressed by the residents was for the future of profitable diving. At the rate that the scuba divers were harvesting, stocks could not sustain the pressure. The Vezo recognized dwindling stocks within the relatively shallow waters of the lagoon, and they saw the deeper waters beyond the barrier reef as a recruitment area for the lagoon. Cultural continuity was viewed as linked to both resource and economic stability. Similar concerns for resource stability (read conservation) had been decided upon earlier with regards to net mesh size (reducing harvest of undersized fish) and restrictions on sea turtle harvest during the nesting season - November and December. All the Vezo males called for a *midinike* (a meeting for deciding on an issue of general concern). This took place with the chef du village presiding. His role was to keep order, but his vote was no more weighted than any fisher's. The divers from Mahajanga were present as requested by the Vezo. The decision was to allow the diving to continue for two more weeks, the entepreneurs involved would pay the village of Salary 2,000,000 FMg, at the end of two weeks the scuba divers would leave, and at this time the westward territorial limit of Salary would

begin its new designation at the forty meter mark (oceanic depth of 40 meters). This decision was effected.

Religion and the Ancestors

According to the Bureau of African Affairs (January 2005), 45% of Madagascar's population is Christian, 7% Muslim, while 47% adhere to traditional beliefs. In Salary Varitra there is a Protestant church (though without the bell - actually a tank, apparently acetylene - hanging outside, one would be hardpressed to recognize the rough structure as such). The Catholic church is located in Salary Roa, one and a half kilometers to the north. Possibly the numbers given for Madagascar as a whole apply to the Vezo. I can only say that there is substantial attendance on Sunday morning to the Protestant church in Salary Varitra.

However, all the fishers have ties to the *hazomanga* (literally black or blue wood), the ritual pole that points to the east and is situated beside the house of the oldest male member of the founding family of the village - the *mitankazomanga* (the holder of the hazomanga). In the case of Salary Varitra, the mitankazomanga is the eldest male member of the family descending from Bekitampo, the founding father of the village. The Vezo, like other groups in Madagascar, are very ancestor oriented. The hazomanga is essentially the Vezo church and serves as the connection between the living and the *razambe* (the ancestors). To maintain contact with and curry favor and support of the ancestors, each month the Vezo fishers give money to the mitankazomanga, who in turn makes "sacrifice" to the ancestors in the form of alcohol (usally *toa gas*, the local rum) that is liberally sprinkled around the base of the hazomanga. In pleasing the ancestors,

the fishers hope for good luck in their fishing ventures as well as safe return from sea in their outriggers.

Though the mitankazomanga exercises no real control over the other Vezo in the village, his is a cultural leadership position. In addition to maintaining lines of communication with the ancestors, he sanctions marriages. The couple to be married kneels before the mitankazomanga in order to receive his benediction. As stated, the hazomanga functions essentially as a church, and as was explained to me, the Vezo hazomanga is different from the Masikoro hazomanga in much the same way as the Catholic church is different from the Protestant. This analogy is in keeping with the fundamental differences among the *fombandrazana* (the customs or ways of the ancestors) of the various ethnic groups.

The hazomanga also dictates the way that *fano* (sea turtles) are butchered by those who *mive fano* (literally paddle for sea turtles; this is the traditional hunting of sea turtles with *teza fano* - the turtle harpoon). These specialists must trace out a rectangle on the ventral side of the turtle's shell and cut this out with a hatchet. Following the proper procedure is to please the ancestors and ensure continued plenitude of turtles. Turtles that are caught in nets or shot with spearguns on the bottom, do not have to be butchered following this regimen.

The Extended Family

The basic social unit in the Vezo village is the patrilocal extended family household. Extended family households exist most often in societies with sedentary agricultural economies, while nuclear families are more frequently associated with hunter-gatherer

subsistence economies. The former is normally predicated on the disadvantages of dividing finite land holdings, and the latter tied to the necessity of mobility for placing oneself in an advantageous position or situation with respect to resources. Marine fishers are hunters of both mobile (pelagic, seasonal, or migratory) and localized (sessile, benthic, or demersal) prey. Along the southern half of the Fihereña Coast in particular, the longterm, permanent situation of the Vezo villages is possible due to both the giving environment in the form of the adjacent lagoon, and the semi-nomadic seasonal mobility that allows exploitation of remote areas.

Although the various Vezo families live in close proximity within the village, they function analogously to a hydroid colony (i.e.: Portuguese man o' war) as opposed to the single entity, unibodied jellyfish. That is, the families, though part of a whole that is the village, function as independent units. Vezo, like most marine fishers everywhere, can be and usually are an independent lot, and as such the village components that are these extended family households, are loosely grouped. Unlike the cooperation that was pre-historically the case in big game hunting, (and still is among certain hunter-gatherers such as some of the San groups), and has often been necessary in agricultural societies since the Neolithic for harvest purposes, most pre-industrial marine fishers function singly or in family-derived crew configuration. The exception to the latter is the community cooperation necessary among contemporary hunters of large marine mammals, such as the whalers of northern latitudes (Inuit) and those on the Caribbean islands of St. Vincent and Bequia. Vezo do cooperate across families in hauling and launching the larger canoes (above four meters), and in cutting, rough-shaping, and moving from the forest to the coast of large farafatse trees and subsequent hulls for the outrigger canoes. As

described earlier, they function as a whole when decisions are necessary for the good of the entire village, this in the form of the midinike.

The patriarch (the eldest male member) of the extended family household is deferred to due to his extensive cognitive maps of the local and distant marine environments. It is he who makes the decisions as to marine species targeted, where to fish, as well as how and to whom the fish are sold. Vezo men are considered at their peak powers of fishing skill and knowledge of the marine environment when they reach their mid-forties. This is only shortly before they reach "retirement age", for most will cease fishing activities when they are fifty. Thus, my having two informants in Salary Varitra who were still active fishers at age 68 when I first met them in 2003 was a rarity. When I returned in 2004, they were still active, each solo maminta fishers for demersals. Not only were (likely the present tense would serve here) they active fishers, but patriarchs as well, directing their respective extended family fishing efforts.

Although the average life expectancy of Malagasy males in general is 54.2 years and females 57.8 years (Covell 1987), I met many Vezo whose ages greatly exceeded these data. My oldest informant was 91 (he jumped over two meters down from the gunnel of a botry to shake my hand when we first met in Morondava), and my three favorite informants were an 81 year old male in Salary Varitra, an 80 year old living on Nosau and in Andavadoake, and an 86 year old in Betania. Another informant in Bevohitse still net fishes at 75. He takes one or two young men from his extended family with him to help handle the net, but he takes the helm of the outrigger canoe. When we sailed past each other either going to or coming from the fishing grounds, the standing joke was to call each other Vezom-potake, followed by genuine laughter. The ages of these Vezo is

verifiable by looking at their identification cards (which I did). Vezo, as well as other Malagasy, are required to carry these cards as they move about the region or between regions.

That Vezo may well exceed the national average in longevity might not be surprising once one has spent some time among them. Vezo claim that they are strong and healthy, especially by comparison to their neighbors, the Masikoro, due primarily to their seafood diet. They are generally a robust people who give the impression of not being in a hurry and not being overly burdened emotionally. On more than a few occasions while helping to haul a fisher's outrigger up onto the beach, no catch in his bilge, this the second or third day in a row, he would smile and say to me, "*Tsy manahe, misy amaray"* (No worries, there is always tomorrow). There is this recognition that though theirs is a giving environment, it is not one that necessarily gives every day. This is the inherently unpredictable nature of a subsistence system that is based on the harvest of wild species, particularly true of the marine enviroment, where humans are alien creatures.

It is from the essence of this latter statement that the patriarch of the extended Vezo family derives much of his respect. Fish behavior is not random, nor is the distribution of fish on the fishing grounds. Successful fishers are characterized by their knowledge of the patterns of fish behavior and their ability to locate fish relative to the lunar cycle, the tidal cycle, as well as the seasonal and climatic variations (Foreman 1967; Cordell 1973, 1974, 1978; Johannes 1973, 1977, 1978). While fishers share a generalized knowledge of the area of the sea that they can access, particular fishing spots which have over time yielded good catches are known to particular fishers. Fishers are hunters, but of a prey that often cannot be seen and which exists in an environment divorced from that of the

hunter. To be successful, fishers must know intimately the area of the sea in which they fish as well as the patterned behavior of the target species. This knowledge comes with experience and gives a fisher who has an association with an area that goes back several generations, a competitive advantage.

Codification of fishing knowledge as demonstrated by the understanding of these patterned behaviors is incorporated into a system of orientation toward the marine environment. This traditional, intimate knowledge of fish behavior grafted onto particular marine environmental conditions can perhaps best be designated by the term, ethnoichthyology. Others, such as Foreman in the 1960's, described this same culturally based knowledge of the behavior of fish (specifically, but applicable to other marine creatures). However, the term ethnoichthyology should be attributed to Morrill (1980), who said that this indigenous knowledge may be best understood by studying the particular fishing methods used and the observations that they require or permit. The level of respect accorded elders in the Vezo culture is similar to that found in most of the less industrialized parts of the world, and is based on the very real premise that a person whose senses of sight, hearing, taste, and feel function and have for well over half a century, cannot help but have learned a few things that are worth knowing.

Merie, Vive and Mandarine

These three men, having spent their entire lives in the village of Salary Varitra, ranging in age from late sixties to early seventies, are patriarchs of their respective families. Interviews with the first two, who are the two oldest active fishers in Salary (the men referred to earlier), were centered on fishing activities and how these have

changed during their lifetimes. The third, older and retired from fishing, was a fount of information on Vezo history, reaching far back into the past to their arrival at Toli.

Merie and I sat on an outrigger sail spread on the sand in the shade of one of the traditional trano vondro that dominate his family compound. His fingers and toes are borderline grotesquely gnarled, he smokes Gauloise Caporels, and at 68 (2003) he is the eldest male member of his extended family. When he was a young man, Merie dived for *beedza mena* (casque rouge, *Cypraecassis rufa*, a gastropod mollusc prized for its shell; the animal is not consumed). These were sold to *Karani*[6] businessmen in Toliara, who in turn shipped them to Italy where the strongest market is. Only a few divers target beedza mena today, and most of what is brought in is ancillary harvest. Young divers forego beedza mena to target the more profitable zanga. Merie dived for thirty years without a mask, using only his open eyes. He had a reputation as the best diver for casque rouge in Salary Varitra. When he began having problems with ringing in his ears, he had to quit diving. In his latter forties, he began handlining for demersals. This fishing approach he follows today, going out as he always has, solo in his four meter outrigger. Merie said that he has secret fishing spots just as he had secret diving spots.

Vive and Merie are the same age, grew up in the same village, and are both maminta fishers. Despite these similarities, with respect to disposition and approach to life, the

---

[6] What Malagasy call Indo-Pakistani who dominate much of mostly small business enterprise in Madagascar. Indo-Pakistani because their arrival was in the 1850's, when this part of Asia was a British Colony and undifferentiated. These are from what is today northwestern India or Pakistan, strongholds of the Muslim religion. The Gasy term, Karani, is derived from The Koran.

two men could hardly be more different. Whereas Merie is very tranquil, quiet, inclined to listen, Vive is very animated, talkative and boisterous. He is indeed quite the character. And yes, he likes his toa gas, the local rum fabricated by Masikoro, and the cheapest way to get an alcohol buzz going - *un quart* (a quarter of a liter; throughout Madagascar, the French term for this is used) costs 2000-2500 FMg, depending on the village and proximity to Masikoro who manufacture this ($.20-.25 U.S. in 2004). Vive's father was considered the best sea turtle hunter in Salary. This was in the era well before spearguns were introduced. His father used the technique of mive fano, whereas the turtles were harpooned with a teza while they were at the surface for breathing. The teza is (this technique is still used among the Vezo) attached by a line which is tied off to a thwart on the outrigger canoe. When the turtle tires, he is hauled in. Vive went out with his father as a kid - his father in the bow with the teza and Vive in the stern paddling. When his father retired from going out on sea, staying in the family compound and still directing fishing activities, Vive took over as turtle harpooner. A younger member of the extended family assumed the role of paddler. The turtles not to be consumed in the household were sold in Manombo, the money used to buy such things as sail material. Vive turtle fished until he was 28 years old, at which point he began diving for beedza mena, like Merie. This continued until his late forties when he began to handline for demersals, an activity that Vive still pursues. As in the case of Merie, Vive is the oldest surviving male member of his extended family household, and hence the patriarch, making the decisions as to where to fish and for what.

Custe, one of Mandarine's sons, is considered the fastest small outrigger canoe sailor in Salary as well as one of the best maminta fishers. I met Mandarine as a consequence

of having had a number of conversations with Custe on the beach. Like Merie and Vive, Mandarine started handlining when in his forties. As a younger man, he dived for *betampa* (Vezo name for a gastropod mollusc whose Latin binomer I do not know), which, like the beedza mena, is sold to Karani businessmen in Toliara. Mandarine is 71 and has been retired from fishing for a number of years. Mandarine, as patriarch of the extended family, directs the fishing efforts. He and his sons talk every day, the conversations centered mainly on fishing (What else do elderly fishers talk about? This is univeral.) - there is another son who is a jarife fisher, going after shark beyond the lagoon. Mandarine loves to tell fish stories. When the conversation centers on more prosaic topics, Mandarine sits quietly. However, as soon as any talk touches upon fishing, he immediately becomes animated.

The Roles of Women and Children

While there is division of labor along gender lines, there is substantial overlap in a number of areas. Women bear the brunt of most child rearing duties, but Vezo men are caring and even doting fathers, showing apparently equal attention to male and female offspring. Women do all the washing of clothes and carry out most cooking chores. However, Vezo men by necessity know how to cook (this from dry season fishing camps and overnight, up to several day canoe trips) and at times do, even in the family compound. Women are well versed in the Vezo subsistence patterns, though for the most part, their marine activities center around mihake, especially horita with volos during the famonta. This they may do with a baby or very young child secured to their backs with a

lamba. On Nosau during the famonta, I witnessed Vezo-Kimija women return with fifteen kilgrams of octopus each from a single low tide harvest.

Women do not by necessity limit their marine activities to gleaning on foot by the seashore. In Salary Varitra, Bevohitse, Bevato, and Morombe, I saw on numerous occasions lakas go out under sail with crew consisting only of women, to harvest octopus during low tide from the barrier reef or outlying rocky outcroppings. As well, women maminta and *mihaza* (fish with nets). There are husband and wife teams that bottom fish at anchor from outrigger canoes. There are women who go out together and handline for demersals. I have seen women hauling beach seines along with men in Morombe, Lovobe, and Morondava, as well as women in teams of two seining the tidal sloughs at Morodava and Betania.

Although in most of the cases where I witnessed women going out under sail, the spread of canvas was small, geared much more toward conservative propulsion rather than speed, some women really know how to sail a laka at speed. I have seen women take the helm of heavily canvased lakas at Morombe with a male family member handling the halyards and sheets. However, the most impressive case was undoubtedly in 2003, near the island of Nosy Be, south of Morombe, when under a stiff breeze I passed, headed in the opposite direction, a Vezo woman at the helm of a six meter canoe with a man hiked out on the *varone* (aka); they were figuratively flying. A Vezo man said, "*Ny ampela iroi Tena-Vezo*!" (The woman there is truly Vezo!).

That Vezo women know so much about sailing and marine oriented subsistence as well as *ny tantara Vezo* (the Vezo history), initially surprised me (pleasantly), then continued to impress me during my stay in western Madagascar. The first time that I

interviewed Lenda, an 81 year old Vezo man in Salary Varitse, who is regarded by Salary residents as very knowledgable about issues of Vezo history, his wife did not participate. For the second interview, his wife pulled up a chair to where we were seated in the shade. She did not hesitate to interject while we talked about Vezo subsistence, such as naming the months when king mackerel were most plentiful along the southern half of the Fihereña, when her husband hesitated with the answer. This was my first exposure to this depth of knowledge harbored by many Vezo females. Subsequent reflection made me realize that this is an inevitable byproduct of living in such an environment, where life and sustenance are oriented toward and derived from the sea. On another occasion when I passed by Lenda's house to talk informally about the sailing rig that I was putting together for my outrigger canoe, not only did Lenda's wife talk knowledgably about sailing, but two other women came over to contribute to the conversation.

During an interview in the southern village of Anakao with a Vezo-Sarambe, the mitankazomanga of this karaza, the tompontany of Anakao, this elder frequently referenced his sister on issues of Vezo oral histories, and in each instance she was able to fill in the blank. Often, throughout the Vezo range, when I would sit down with Vezo elders for an interview or to present the model, there would be Vezo women present, and their contributions were always welcome.

Children begin their involvement in Vezo subsistence activities at a young age, often in the form of play acting. This centers around sailing in the shallows very detailed models of the outrigger canoes, made from pieces of farafatse left over from full size canoe construction. They learn to set the sail according to wind direction and steer these along with a stick. When their older family members return from the fishing grounds, the

children help haul the canoes and help carry the gear and catch to the family compound. Vezo boys, as young as nine or ten, may go out in pairs in small outriggers to handline or dive for octopus. Others in the same age group may go out with older siblings to fish with nets. Young girls go out on sea with their mothers and other female family members during low tide to harvest octopus. These same girls start quite young gleaning for octopus close to shore.

By the time Vezo reach adolescence, they have a solid foundation in the marine environment, the climatic and seasonal variations, subsistence patterns, as well as material culture, particularly as applied to this orientation toward the sea.

The Extended Family Compound

The extended family household is often demarcated by an enclosure in the form of saplings[7] which are secured at the bottom in a trench and midway vertically by horizonal saplings that are lashed to the vertical ones. The various housing and cooking structures are arranged about this, leaving room for repair of nets and other fishing gear, outrigger canoe construction or repair, and the sewing of sails. Normally each married couple has its own hut, which may or may not house their children, depending on age. For the extended family there will be one enclosed structure designated for cooking, which is

---

[7] Mangrove is frequently used, but straight forest species, preferably with relatively few branches, will serve the purpose as well. The choice is dictated by location: Salary Varitse is not close to mangroves but is situated next to the Mikea Forest.

done over wood or coal. Water, carried from the well in buckets, is stored in a barrel either in or just outside the cooking structure. A small enclosure with walls only is usually designated for both urinating and bathing. A sufficiently large stone is placed in the center of the sand floor. One stands on this for bathing, thus divorced from the sand on which one urinates. In some compounds there are two structures for these two mutually exclusive activities, while in other compounds there is one structure which is designated as a bathing area only. In the latter case, the family members urinate usually on the beach. A very few compounds have outhouses for defecation. Where these do occur, they are usually reserved for the women. Men, in nearly all cases, either go to the forest or on the beach for this purpose.

While the latter three sentences may be more than some readers might wish to know, these are not only very real logistical concerns for quotidian existence, but have farther reaching concerns. In a village like Salary Varitra which has both the forest and beach conveniently close, the adults defecate in the forest, while children go to the beach for such. In Morombe, where the forest is not convenient, and there are virtually no outhouses, most people of all ages defecate on the beach. This is not only a sanitation and hence a health concern, but it exercises a stymying effect on any aspirations to develop tourism. Morombe has a burgeoning population, as it is a regional center, but it is, as stated earlier, essentially a large, mainly fishing village with little in the way of infrastructure development. The setting is gorgeous, with the very long beach, palm trees, and nearby islands. However, constant vigilence as to where one steps when walking down the beach is offputting to the few tourists who go there.

I talked with a former mayor of Morombe, a Vezo-Ohisoso, and current president of *F.I.V.E.* (a Vezo fisher association in Morombe whose acronym follows the Vezo noun for paddle) about the possibility of putting a series of outhouses running parallel to the beach, well above the high tide mark. He said that the same idea has been floating around for some years, but never acted upon. Nosy Kely, the most touristic part of Morondava has a clean beach, due to a decree by the *chef du quartier* prohibiting using it as a public toilet. To the south, the villages of Anakao and Sarodrano both have clean beaches. The former is already established as a tourist designation, while the latter is aspiring to the same.

Influence of Local Conditions on Settlement Patterns

We have looked at the settlement of Salary Varitra in conjunction with its predecessor, the village of Tsymalahovola, placing them in historical context with the aid of Vezo oral histories. Now I would like to turn the attention briefly to two other coastal villages whose geographical conditions played major roles in their settlement history.

Beangolo and Bevohitse

Beangolo and Bevohitse are neighboring villages on the northern half of the Fihereña Coast, with only five kilometers separating the two. Beangolo, the more southern and smaller of the two, is set in an embayment with protection from southerly and southwesterly winds in the form of a rocky promontory, thus the waters adjacent to the village are relatively calm. When Vezo from the south arrived during the dry season in their outrigger canoes long ago, they encountered small numbers of Masikoro and and

even fewer Mikea who practiced a mixed economy, gleaning mainly invertebrates from the nearshore waters as well as engaging in agriculture, some herding, and exploitation of the forest. During the famonta, when the waters receded more than normally at low tide, a few more people came from the east to harvest octopi. Some of the Vezo stayed, exploiting the offshore resources. There was no interethnic conflict as they exploited a different part of the environment.

The situation of Bevohitse just to the north of Beangolo is quite different. When the first Vezo arrived from the south, there were no other people living in the area that is now occupied by the village of Bevohitse. Taking in the geographical components of the village's situation, one can understand the logic and hence the pattern. The sea adjacent to Bevohitse is rough, being right at a vava rano (a pass) and the intermittant barrier reef is relatively close in to shore, both of which allow waves to reach the beach unobstructed. There is no embayment, and the sole obstacle to winds from the south or southwest is partial deflection provided by an enormous white sand hill on the southern fringe of the village. As noted earlier, this proves problematic in the case of strong southerly winds due to the piling up of sand around the houses and the constant battle that implies. Additionally, the Vezo there routinely positon their canoes on the beach with the bows facing south to reduce, but not avoid completely, a layer of sand in the bilges, and there is the abrasive effect of wind-blown sand. As may be surmised, Bevohitse is not an inviting place for those who do not know the sea well. This is in direct contrast to Beangolo, which due to relatively calm seas afforded by the protected embayment, is an inviting place to those who exploit the very nearshore enviroment, such as mihake. An ensuing logical question would be why did Vezo settle and continue to live in Bevohitse. The

answer lies in the abundant offshore resources. In order to exploit these, the Vezo of Bevohitse have developed what I consider extraordinary skills in the handling of the outrigger canoes, something that is evident even in pre-adolescent boys, and something that never ceased to impress me during my stay there.

Coastal Settlement Generalities

Seasonal fishing camps have, in many cases, become permanent villages or permanent additions to existing settlements, as the Vezo have not been the original settlers in numerous coastal areas in which they are currently found. The following general conditions can be used to predict the settlement history of a village or hamlet prior to the inception of interviewing, as I did for the village of Betania. The attraction of being able to predict such is that this is an indication of a general pattern, a piece, however small, of the model sought.

If the coastal area is one of unprotected beach (such as Ancoba and Bevohitse), with the open ocean directly facing the shore and little hindrance to the crashing of waves on this, Vezo (of whatever karaza, but following the subsistence patterns and other ethnognomonic features of the Vezo-Mahafaly) will have been the tompontany (the original settling group). If the coastal area is characterized by an embayment or a rocky promontory that encourages relatively calm nearshore conditions in all but tempestuous weather, and especially if there is the presence of mangroves or abundant rocks that are accessible at low tide, the settlement history will indicate that groups from the interior arrived first.

CHAPTER SEVEN

VEZO MATERIAL CULTURE

Some parts of the Vezo material culture have already been touched upon, while some of the following may be viewed as tangential to actual material culture. What I wish to purvey is some of the essential components for Vezo existence.

Logistical and Raw Material Concerns

In these coastal villages there is often a problem with saltwater intrusion in the wells, especially in the latter part of the dry season. Looking again at Salary Varitra, there are two wells. The water from the one to the north is the saltier, and is used for bathing and for washing clothes, with some of the former and most of the latter taking place in the vicinity of the well. The well to the south provides drinking water as there is little saltwater intrusion there, but for that same reason, its level is perennially low beginning halfway through the dry season. The status of the southern well dictates from where cooking water is drawn.

Not so long ago, the Mikea Forest provided virtually all the bases of the material culture. It is still the source of the vast majority of raw materials that the Vezo use to support their existence. However, particularly since 1970, more modern materials have replaced traditional ones derived from the forest in such areas as fishing gear and rigging of the canoes. Although the thatched rooves are in the majority for house construction, corrugated metal rooves have been making increasing inroads. Most of this will be

discussed in the section on changes that have occurred since 1970. The framework for the traditonal Vezo houses comes from the Mikea Forest, as does all of the woodwork and fasteners that go into the construction of the outrigger canoes. Just for the outrigger canoes alone, there are ten different species of tree used in the construction (see Table 1, Appendix B). The famanta trees (*Euphorbia stenoclada*) provide sap that the Vezo use (after manipulating) for coating the bottom of older canoes and repairing hulls. Just as in the canoes, there are no metal fasteners used in the construction of the *trano Vezo*, the traditional Vezo houses. And, of course, there is the fuel used for cooking. Charcoal and and some of the firewood is bought from Masikoro, but the Vezo collect much of their own firewood.

In Salary Varitra, like most sizable Vezo villages, there is a Masikoro market set up on the eastern fringe of the village. The Masikoro come from a village reputedly a ten hour walk to the east. They come in their ox carts bringing *bela hazo, bile, chaco* (manioc, ignams, and corn, respectively), in addition to various vegetables and fruit. The staple items, the first three listed, are often represented, whereas the vegetables and fruits may or may not be present. The Masikoro normally have their carts unhooked and positioned about, with a variety of activities taking place among these. Their wares are displayed on the ground, usually spread out on rice sacks. All the normal cooking activities as well as smoking fish that they have purchased from the Vezo take place here. The Masikoro have learned how to smoke fish from the Vezo, and these they take back to their village to the east for sale to other Masikoro. Thus the round trip to Salary Varitra entails transport of merchandise on both legs. There is an oxcart trail that runs east of

Salary Varitse. My first venture into the Mikea Forest to look for specific laka parts (meaning wood), was in the back of a Masikoro oxcart.

A number of Vezo in Salary, particularly those with enclosed compounds, keep animals such as chickens, ducks, turkeys, and sometimes a pig. Except for the pig, which will be kept tied up and fed some very unappealing slop, the other animals, when present, are allowed to range freely. In Salary Varitra there is a Vezo family that has a half dozen cows. These require virtually no maintenance, as they range freely and come every morning at dawn to the north well, at which they mill about and low until one of the younger family members comes to draw water. This owning of cows by Vezo is not the norm. Exceptions to this are the villages of Fiherenamasay and Tsifota, where there are three and two oxcarts respectively. As these villages are reasonably close to Manombo, the seat of the sub-prefecture, some Vezo use oxcarts to transport marine product there. Salary Varitra is too far for this to be a reasonable option.

There is no wheeled transport of any kind in Salary Varitse that belongs to Vezo - no oxcarts, no bicycles. Other than the taxi brousse that comes through every other day, connection with neighboring coastal villages is mainly on sea in the outrigger canoes, though Vezo are not adverse to walking.

Ny Laka Vezo: Sailing Characteristics

The centerpiece of the Vezo material culture is the single outrigger canoe, which was developed in situ on the Fihereña Coast, but with "memory" of the canoes that the Vezo progenitors used along the East African littoral. A Vezo's thatched roof may leak a bit, but his canoe does not. There is pride in the appearance, speed, and seaworthiness of the

outrigger canoes. This latter is of primary concern as the fisher's life depends on these seemingly frail craft that evoke images of an exotic water strider (insect) that has had a mishap, losing part of the legs on one side of its body. The smaller canoes (3-4 meters) are usally single occupant and are used for handlining or diving. The larger canoes (6 to rarely 10 meters) will accomodate usually three or four fishers using nets, though diving is done from larger canoes as well.

The roka (main hull) of the outrigger canoe is of farafatse (*Givotea madagascariensis*), a very light, balsa-like endemic tree. The length given for the canoes is not l.o.a. (length overall) like western vessels, rather it is derived from the straight line distance from just inboard the bow to just inboard the stern, thus the straight inside length of the hull. The unit of mearsurement is the *tratra*, the breadth from fingertip to fingertip of outstretched arms. This is the same system used by Arab fishers in the Mediterranean (Tunisia), where this distance is called *kumra* (phonetic transliteration). This is used in the western world in the form of the fathom, traditionally employed for measuring oceanic depth, but length as well. In all three cases, the unit is equivalent to six feet. So, in the case of the Vezo, when one talks about a *laka telo tratra* (a three fathom canoe), this is an outrigger hull with an inside length of six meters.

For the larger canoes (larger than six meters), the farafatse often comes from the Mangoky River, north of Morombe, especially in the vicinity of the village of Bevoay. Farafatse for canoes three meters and less can be found in a number of areas east of the Fihereña Coast (the Mikea Forest), as well as in the forested areas east of the coast between Morombe and Morondava. The fanare (ama) of the paddle only canoes, which

Transportation of roka onboard eight meter sailing laka. At Morombe.

usually have main hulls of four meters or less, is of farafatse. However, farafatse is too light to be used for the fanare of sailing canoes, generally regardless of size. For these, *boi* (*Jatropha curcas*), a much heavier wood, is most often sought.

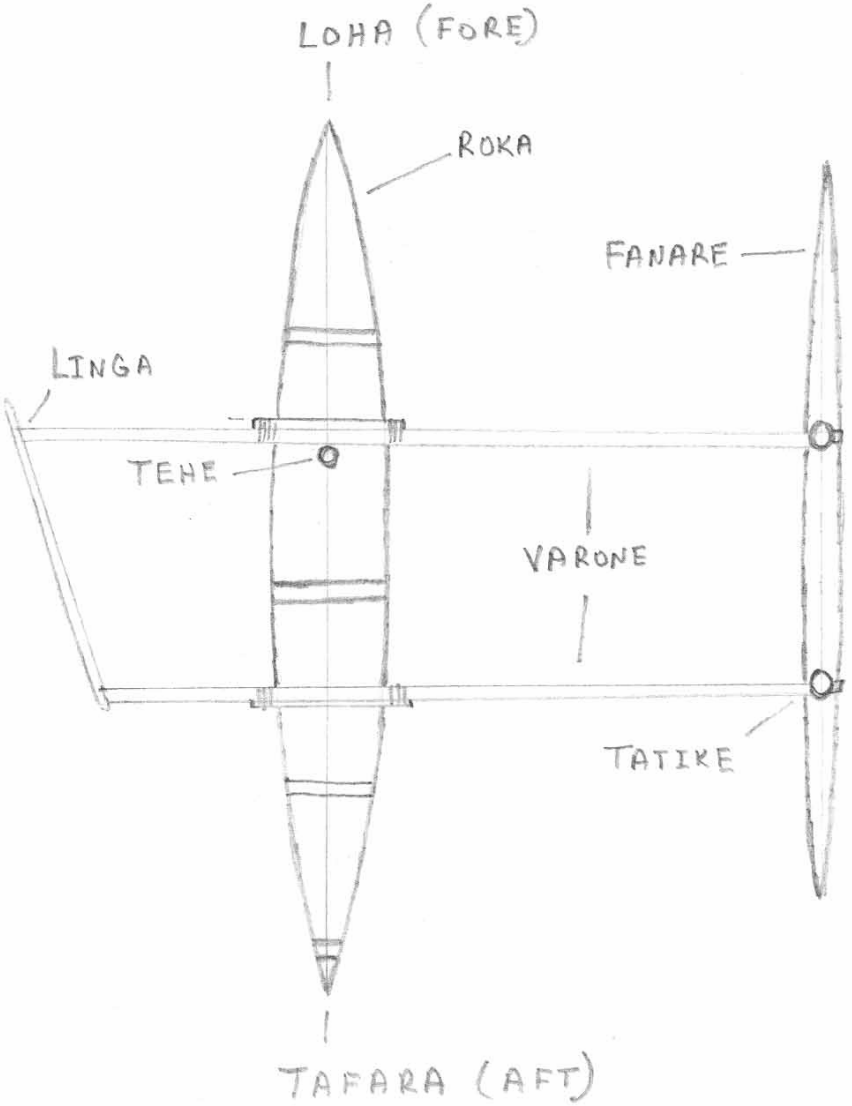
Within the extensive realm of sailing vessels, there are two broad categories of hull types: monohulls and multihulls. What these categories represent can be deduced from the names - monohulls have a single hull while multihulls have more than one. Within the broad category of multihulls there are three general types: proas, which have one main hull and a single ama (outrigger or float; ama is a Polynesian word that has been adopted by the English language); catamarans, which are twin hulled vessels with both hulls the same size and shape; and trimarans, which have one mainhull and two amas. Single outrigger sailing canoes, such as those found in Madagascar, and Micronesia, are proas. Double outrigger sailing canoes, such as those found in East Africa, as well as Indonesia and parts of Melanesia, are trimarans. There are some few double voyaging sailing canoes, in particular within the recent traditional sailing revival in Polynesia; these are catamarans. The single hulled sailing canoes found along the West African coast, Honduras, Panama, Colombia, and Nicaragua, are, of course, monohulls.

Concentrating on proas, the single outrigger sailing canoes of Madagascar are fundamentally different from those of Micronesia, most notably on the islands of Ifalik and Pulawat. This fundamental difference has nothing to do with the notable differences in construction techniques or sail form. The Micronesian proas are shunting[8] proas,

---

[8] Coming about when sailing on the wind; the bow becomes the stern and vice-versa; thus the vessel must be symmetrical fore and aft.

LAKA VEZO



while those in Madagascar (both of the Vezo and Sakalava-Boina, though their sailing rigs are very different) are tacking[9] proas. To my knowledge, the proas of Madagascar are the only sailing single outrigger canoes that tack. The shunting of the Pacific proas involves always keeping the ama (outrigger float) to windward, thus it has to be held down, normally by body weight of the crew, to keep the canoe from flipping to leeward where there is no buoyancy to prevent a rollover. The Vezo proa[10] is sailed like a monohull or a trimaran with only one ama - the outrigger float is alternately positioned to windward or to leeward. When sailing on a starboard tack, it is necessary to position a crew member out on the *linga* (the crossbrace connecting the two varone on the port side of the mainhull) in order to keep the fanare from being driven under and the outrigger canoe pitchpoling. When sailing on a port tack, it is necessary to position a crew member on the forward varone to starboard, or out on the fanare, in order to keep the fanare from lifting too high out of the water, thus preventing a capsize to port. These are very fast vessels, but as can be surmised, require not only skill to sail them well, but constant vigilance for changes in wind strength and direction.

Multihulls generally have very narrow mainhulls and very shallow draft, features that figure heavily into their potentially high speed under sail. Because most monohull sailboats (and virtually all ocean-going ones) are displacement hulls, their potential

---

[9] Coming about when sailing on the wind; the bow passes through the wind.

[10] I use the Vezo outrigger canoe as the example because the Sakalava-Boina outrigger with its cumbersome lateen rig derived from the Arab dhows, is more easily jibed than tacked. Jibing is turning the bow away from the wind in order to head off on another sailing direction rather than passing the bow through the wind. The Vezo proa is a true tacking proa.

top speed is limited by the length on the waterline of the hull: the square root of the length of the waterline times 1.34 gives this potential. This limiting factor is due to the bow and stern waves created by a displacement hull. So, regardless of the sail area, strength of wind, or the horsepower of the auxillary engine, monohull speed is terminal. Multihulls have no such limitations on potential top speed. Due to their lightness and shallow draft, a multihull can plane, lifting the hulls on top of the very waves that limit the top speed of a monohull, and surfing down their face. Putting this into perspective, taking a monohull with a length on the waterline of thirty feet (overall length of the vessel depends on bow and stern overhang, but let us say 35 feet l.o.a.), its potential top speed is 7.3 knots. A lightly laden, well-designed multihull of the same l.o.a. could likely do 20 knots.

The initial stability of multihulls is high, and this comes from the wide beam, that is the spacing between the hulls: i.e., on a trimaran there are three hulls, the mainhull and the two amas which are auxillary hulls. So at anchor or moving along under sail in a light breeze, multihulls maintain a level attitude, that is the deck (if there is one, for open fishing boats like the Vezo laka have no deck) is horizontal. Under a press of sail, with a stiff breeze, multihulls still maintain a level attitude, thus the initial stability is high. However, the inherent ultimate stability of multihulls is low, for sailing in a fresh breeze or strong wind with a full spread of sail can cause one hull to fly (come out of the water); when the flying hull reaches a certain angle, there is a point of no return, and the vessel will capsize, usually ending keel up. Before this occurs is the time to reduce sail in order to keep the windward hull (in a tacking proa, there may or may not be a windward hull)

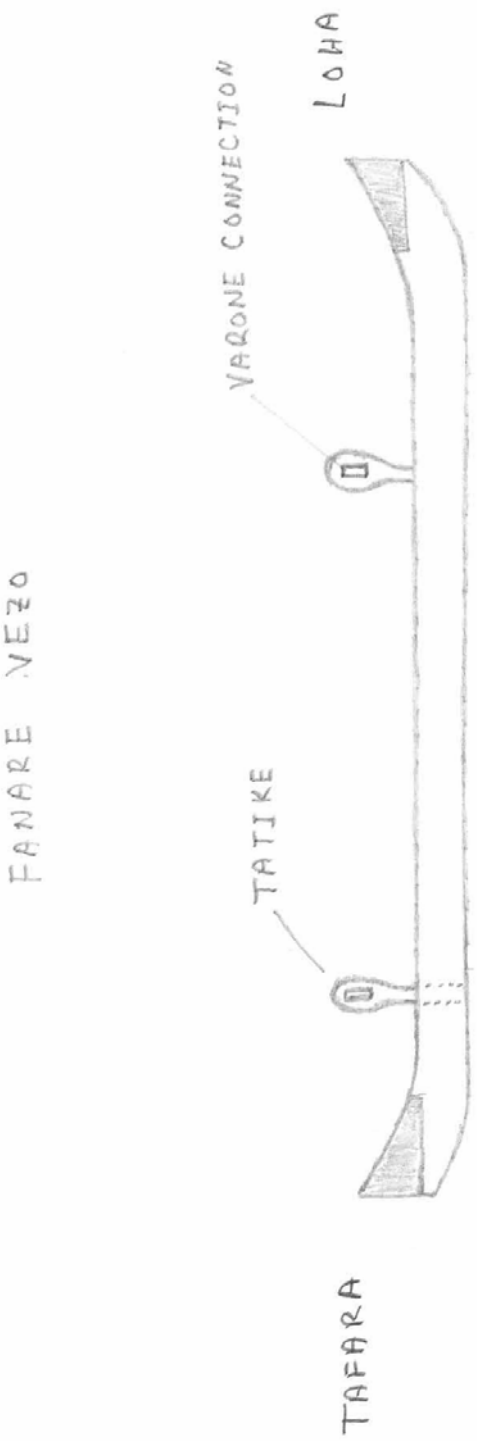
from reaching a critical height. The Vezo either scandalize[11] the existing sprit rig or replace it with a smaller sail. In all but the smallest multihulls, like the various makes of beach catamarans, righting a capsized multihull is not feasible without outside help and machinery. The one saving grace is that most multihulls will float indefinitely in such a position, for they carry no ballast.

Monohull sailboats generally have low initial stability, but high ultimate stability, this latter due to their carrying ballast. Most monohulls have relatively deep draft with either a lead insert built into the keel near the shoe, or internal ballast usually in the form of movable lead pigs boxed into the bilge, or on more traditional vessels this internal ballast may be in the form of stones. In either of the latter two cases, it is important that the ballast not shift when underway. Even when sailing under a relatively light breeze, a monohull will heel, thus the deck is not horizontal. This attitude becomes more pronounced the fresher the breeze. The angle of heel usually reaches a point and stops. Like in the case of the multihull, under a strong wind it is necessary to reduce sail. A monohull will however, capsize, and the results are like that of an anchor - it goes to the bottom, this due to the ballast.

The Vezo outrigger canoe, like the Micronesian outrigger, due to its high intial stability and ample beam, makes a very stable platform from which to fish, especially at anchor. In both cases, however, while the ama provides sufficient flotation at anchor,

---

[11] This is the manner of reducing the area of the rectangular spritsail by removing the sprit spar and bringing the sail's peak down to the tack and lashing it, thus creating a triangular sail from a rectangular one.


FANARE VEZO
TAFARA
TATIKE
VARONE CONNECTION
LOHA

when paddling, and under sail with a light breeze, the purpose of the ama under sail is not to provide flotation. To the contrary, the ama serves as a counter weight, and its ideal position for speed and ease of steering under sail is skimming the surface of the water. Maintaining this position for the ama, depending on the tack, requires personnel (*ny panampy*) in addition to the helmsman.

Larger canoes carry an impressive spread of sail and are not sailed singlehandedly. Agile crew are necessary for hiking out on the varone, either to port or starboard to keep the laka in balance. The fanare (ama) on the Vezo laka is always to starboard, for unlike the fore and aft symmetry of the shunting Micronesian canoes, the Vezo mast is stepped well forward of midships, being lashed to the forward varone. To port the varone extend out quite a ways, but not at far as on the starboard side. The foreward varone extends further to port than the aft one. Instead of a fanare on the port side, there is a linga, a crossbrace that connects the two varone and is lashed so that it maintains tention on both of these port extremes. It is at the conjunction of the forward varone and the linga that a crew member will hike out when the laka is on a starboard tack. It is at this juncture as well that the port shroud (mast stay) passes before continuing on to the the mast base where it is lashed. The starboard shroud passes around the juncture of the varone and *tatike* (the stout peg through which the end of the varone passes, and which in turn passes through the fanare; thus, the tatike serves as the connection of the fanare to the varone) before continuing on to the mast base where it is lashed.

There is contradiction between Vezo oral histories and the conclusions reached by two researchers within the field of nautical architecture, specifically outrigger canoes. James Hornell, the late, noted, and oft-referenced maritime historian who studied outrigger canoes throughout the world, concluded that the linga of the Vezo laka was

vestigial - a remnant of an earlier design that was a double outrigger. Hornell went on to say that this transition from double to single outrigger had taken place relatively recently (1920). Vezo oral histories indicate otherwise, that the laka has always had a single fanare. According to the Vezo, the varone that extend well out to port with the connecting linga that maintains its position well clear of the water, is the result of the advent and development of the sailing rig. The wide varone extension to port allows a wide base for staying the mast as well as a perch for hiking out when on a starboard tack. The oral histories that deal with laka development are consistent with both modern multihull design and sailing logic, as well as born out in contemporary Vezo outrigger canoes. This latter is corroborated in the paddle only, quite small outrigger canoes that have no varone extension to port, nor the presence of a linga.

In studying the Austronesian outrigger canoes that were used to settle Oceania, I.C. Campbell (1995) concluded that the proas of the Pacific developed the sailing rig before the ama, that the outrigger configuration was a necessary offshoot of the inherent lack of stability in a narrow hulled canoe when under sail. Once again, turning to Vezo oral histories, these outrigger canoes that were developed along the southwest coast of Madagascar had an ama when they were paddle only. Thus, development of the sailing rig came after the development of the basic hull and outrigger configuration that exists today. Though one cannot automatically assume similar development of similar vessels in disparate parts of the world, the contemporary Vezo outrigger canoes in conjunction

Laka at speed with panampy on the linga. Near Salary Varitra.

with the connecting oral histories could provide some insight into the history of outrigger canoe development for a more universal application.

Without consideration of the oral histories on Vezo laka development, I would take the position that the reason the Vezo single outrigger canoes are tacking canoes is because they developed from paddle only outriggers. The contemporary paddle powered outriggers have the same positioning of the varone fore and aft as the sailing outriggers. In the development of the sailing rig, the most structurally and logistically sensible positioning of the mast step is forward of midship, so that the mast can be lashed to the forward varone, this in the absence of a deck and mast partners. That the Vezo oral histories consistently present the same sequence of development further compounds these logical observations.

Before moving on to laka construction, I should comment on the speed of the Vezo laka. The notion that multihulls are potentially quite fast was presented earlier. On a favorable point of sail, a beam or broad reach, with a fresh breeze, an eight meter (approximately thirty feet l.o.a.) Vezo laka could hold its own in a contest of speed, with a modern thirty foot racing trimaran or catamaran.[12] A race with a modern cruising multihull would be no contest - the Vezo laka winning hands down. What makes this particularly impressive is that the Vezo laka is a dugout canoe with a single, handsewn

---

[12] There is no mention of proas because these have been extremely rare in modern application, the notable exception being *Cheers*, designed by American naval architect Dick Newick. This proa entered and placed third in the 1968 Single Handed Trans-Atlantic Race, sailed by American Tom Follett.

sail that literally has the technological advancement of a bedsheet[13], and a mast that is a less-than-perfectly-straight tree. The total cost of this eight meter canoe ready to sail is the equivalent of approximately $150 U.S. A modern racing multihull of equivalent hull length would be constructed of exotic materials, with a carbon fiber mast and multiple, computer designed sails. While the ready to sail cost would be highly variable, the lowest figure should be around $200,000 U.S.

Ny Laka Vezo: Construction

Piasalakana is the Vezo term used for a skilled outrigger canoe carpenter. While all Vezo can repair their own canoes, and most can build a canoe, there is, in each village, a Vezo who is particularly adept at this construction. Likewise, while all Vezo know the forest and where to find the various trees necessary for canoe construction, there are those few who are especially knowledgeable. Sometimes it is the piasalakana who goes into the forest to find the farafatse for the mainhull, as well as the other trees whose wood goes into the laka construction, though this part of the process may fall to one of the knowledgeable woodsmen among the Vezo. In any case, the farafatse tree is cut down, then roughly hewn on the outside and hollowed out on the inside. Both of these former tasks are accomplished using a hatchet and *hamboara* (a relatively long-

---

[13] The spritsail used by the Vezo is flat-cut rectangular sail that achieves the necessary "belly" for the aerodynamic shape when sailing on the wind by way of controling the peak halyard that allows proper positioning of the sprit spar. An eight meter outrigger canoe will normally carry a sail that is thirty square meters: six meters on the luff and five meters on the foot.

handled wood working tool, with a curved, spade-like blade; the cutting motion resembles somewhat that of digging). If farafatse of sufficient size can be found in the nearby forest, this roughly worked hull will be transported either by Masikoro (or possibly Vezo) oxcart or carried by several men to the village where the work will be finished by either the piasalakana or Vezo fisher for whom the canoe is being built. If it is a larger hull that is desired, the farafatse will likely come from farther away, with the unfinished hull being transported on sea using techniques already discussed.

Once in the village, the hull is finished to the desired shape, thickness, and smoothness with the hamboara. In order to stabilize the hull for working the interior, the keel is buried in the sand. For finishing the exterior, the hull is placed upside down on strongbacks. Only the smallest canoes have the mainhulls consisting solely of a dugout farafatse log. Outrigger canoes four meters and larger have additional farafatse planks added to increase freeboard, this to improve seaworthiness by reducing the shipping of waves. These planks are attached with hand-shaped *tailo* (dowels) that are tapered on either end and made of *hazo haranza* (a very hard wood whose Latin binomial I do not know). The top surface of the dugout part of the hull is not cut straight, rather there are curves introduced that are symmetrical for the two sides. The bottoms of the added farafatse planks are shaped accordingly. This system helps to prevent the hull from "working" while on sea due to wave action or press of sail. To match these mating surfaces, charcoal is rubbed along the top surface of the dugout, then the farafatse plank being fitted is put in position. The places along the plank bottom that turn up black are worked down with a hatchet until there is consistent black along the entire length of the plank. As there is no caulking used in this construction, it is critical that these mating

Fitting farafatse plank with tailo of hazo haranza. At Salary Varitra.

surfaces be precise. Holes are drilled for the dowels in both plank and dugout. The technique for precising this alignment is both simple and ingenious. First the holes are drilled (by hand, of course, like all this construction, but this is not a drill per se, rather a spiralled, long tapered spike which is driven into the soft farafatse with a hammer and then retrieved with a rotating motion, thus clearing the hole of wood) in the plank to be fitted. Then these holes are filled with fine sand. Following this, the plank is offered up to its proposed position. The sand spills out onto the top of the dugout, forming tiny mounds which mark the correct position for the holes to be drilled in the corresponding surface. There are two more substantial pieces of farafatse to be installed, one each bow and stern. These serve to raise the freeboard even more for the extreme ends of the canoe hull and abut the farafatse planks.

Once the farafatse planks have been installed, these are planed smooth on top, and four notches are cut for the *fihamike*, the two athwartship braces to which the varone (akas) are lashed. These extend approximately ten centimeters past the outboard portion of the hull on each side. A hardwood *firarafara* (railcap) is fastened along the gunnel on both sides of the hull with more of the tailo, though this time they are sharpened on one end only. This railcap serves two purposes: it gives durability to the topmost portion of the relatively soft farafatse, an area of high usage (paddling, steering, fishing gear handling, hauling the anchor rode); the railcap also holds down the fihamike, which are critical structural members as they are load bearing connections to the fanare by way of the varone. There are several more athwartship braces that end at the outboard portion of the hull. These serve as seats (though only a short while sitting on one of these will have you longing for something a bit wider) and are also notched and held in place by the

railcap. There is a vertical sternpiece made from the hardwood, *tohivoli,* that is pinned to the farafatse with dowels. Both this and the similar bowpiece provide an ostentatious flair to the extreme ends of the laka, for they stand quite proud, well above the farafatse, and Vezo often stream short banners from them.

In the bilge of the canoe, just under the forward fihamike, there is a pronounced ridge of farafatse that is carved out when hollowing the hull. This is essentially a raised floor on which the detachable maststep rests. The two varone and linga are made of the same wood, *voaovy* (see Table 1, Appendix B, for the list of wood types used in the laka construction), the size and round cross section corresponding to the tree chosen for that purpose. The fanare is not much shorter than the overall length of the mainhull. The bow of the fanare is roughly inline with the bow of the mainhull, while its stern ends a bit short of the mainhull stern. The fanare is canted with its topside angled toward the mainhull. Fore and aft it does not run parallel to the mainhull, rather the bow of the fanare is toed out approximately one *zehe,* another unit of measurement used by the Vezo that is equivalent to a handbreadth. Two throughholes are drilled into the fanare, passing topside to bottom. These allow the *tatike* (the vertical stantions that serve as connections between the fanare and varone) to pass through. The tatike are kerfed and wedged on the bottomside to prevent their sliding out. These tatike closely resemble upside down bolling pins. They have slots cut though their topsides to allow passage of the outboard extremes of the varone. The varone ends, as well, are kerfed and wedged to hold them in place. The tatike to fanare connections are placed well aft of the fanare bow, but relatively close to the fanare stern. This arrangement is similar to modern trimarans with

the purpose being to prevent what is known as "tripping" of the vessels when sailing down the face of a wave or under a stong press of sail when off the wind.

The *fantia* (maststep) normally has two holes carved into it, in a line running fore and aft. These accept the heels of both the mast and the sprit, both of which are called *tehe* (just as the general term used for both in English is spar) in the Vezo dialect and are made from the *akao* tree. The akao is the lightest, straightest long tree found within the Vezo range. The best area for finding these along the Fihereña Coast is in the Mikea Forest east of the village of Fiherenamasay. This wood, even when dry. is still quite heavy, and would not be considered a prime choice for spars in the western world. On the high plateau there are fir trees that would provide a much lighter spar, while at the same time one that was both straight and long enough. However, these have not been used among the Vezo. For both logistical reasons (the high plateau is not close, especially in light of Malagasy infrastructure) and traditional ones (for several centuries the Vezo have built their canoes using raw materials available within their range), the akao is in continued use.

When sailing off the wind, particularly when running, the heels of both mast and sprit are set in the maststep. The sail set thusly not only provides a large surface area for running before the wind, but closely resembles the *lamba* (cloak or wrap made of cloth and roughly measuring two meters by one and a half meters) from which it was derived. For sailing on the wind, the sprit heel is set in a rope snotter, with the other end of this line lashed near the mast base. The tack of the sail is wrapped around the mast and lashed to the sprit. A sheet from the peak of the sprit allows a belly to be introduced, thus

Laka with sail set for sailing off the wind. At Bevohitse.

creating the airfoil shape necessary for sailing on the wind. The sail is loose-footed, so there is no boom to duck when coming about.

Vezo outriggers are steered with a steering paddle that usually differs from a paddle used for propulsion in that the steering paddle is larger. Unlike the steering paddles used in some of the Melanesian outriggers or those that were used on the Viking longboats, the Vezo steering paddle is unattached, that is, not lashed to the hull. No rudder is used for four reasons: 1) the soft farafatse would be hardpressed to withstand the lateral strain of a rudder when underway; 2) even if the stern of the mainhull were of harder wood, attachment of a rudder would require mounting hardware, such as gudgeons and pintles, and as such would be more complicated; 3) for a rudder to be effective on sea, it needs to extend a ways into the water to provide bite, and as the Vezo outrigger is very shallow draft, this would create problems of clearance in shoal areas; 4) as the sailing outrigger canoe developed from the paddle-propulsed outrigger, the paddle would have been used to steer the prototype, so the tradition has continued, and there are always paddles onboard an outrigger for propulsion when the wind lulls or for maneuvering on the fishing grounds.

The mainhulls are coated below the waterline with *goudron*, the bitumen, discussed earlier, that is cut with kerosene until it reaches the consistency of thin paint. Several coats of this are applied to help seal and protect the hull. The fanare as well is coated with goudron. If the owner so desires and has the necessary cash available, the topsides will be painted, often a multicolor design that adds uniqueness to the otherwise sameness of the hull shapes. As well, the extreme ends of the fanare are painted to match the mainhull's color scheme.

Laka with sail set for sailing on the wind. At Tsifota.

While the mainhull of an eight meter outrigger canoe may last for five years before replacement is necessary, a four meter hull has usually reached its usable limits after two years, and looks a bit worn after one year. Like any piece of equipment, care and maintenance of the mainhull can prolong its life. Due, once again, to the soft nature of farafatse, rocks and the abrasive nature of beach sand are things to avoid. Canoes that are picked up and carried to haul or launch last longer than ones that are dragged up and down the beach. Likewise, the life of a hull is prolonged by luffing up when approaching the beach, taking down the sailing rig, and paddling in to shore. The contrary and hence abusive approach, is to sail straight up onto the beach, especially without slacking speed. As might be expected, the latter technique is more often used by young Vezo males, something which, for me, draws ready analogy to American adolescents burning rubber with their cars in the parking lot after high school. I've seen young Vezo fishers returning from the grounds in the early afternoon, figuratively flying with a fresh breeze, the fanare out of the water, whooping at the top of their lungs as they sail pell-mell up onto the beach.

Maintenance of the canoes comes in the form of chocking the mainhulls and fanares upon hauling, which reduces contact with damp sand above the high tide mark and allows the wood to dry a bit. Additional vigilance on the below the waterline part of the hull calls for periodic reapplication of goudron. When a hull becomes a bit worn, cracks of varying degrees of seriousness develop. These are repaired using *loko mahery* (literally strong paint). The famanta tree (*Euphorbia stenoclada*), which is ubiquitous in the xerophytic forest east of the Fihereña Coast, contains a milky sap. When the modified leaves of the famanta are cut, this sap drips freely. The Vezo will cut several of the

How not to approach the beach – young Vezo sailing full tilt with fanare flying. At Salary Varitra.

modified leaves and allow the sap to fall on the ground beneath the tree. In approximately two weeks, they return to harvest what has become grayish rock-like formations, resembling so many irregular pebbles. Depending on the repair to be effected, a quantity of these are placed in a pot over a fire. The famanta "rocks" begin to melt, producing a black substance that resembles tar in consistency as well as color. This is what the Vezo call loko mahery. This concoction is stirred until all of the rocks have been reduced to the thick liquid state. The loko mahery is spooned onto the crack to be sealed. It sets up quickly, but is not smooth. To render this smooth, important for the desired slippery nature of the hull in the water, a hot iron that has been kept in the same fire, is passed over the hardened loko mahery until it conforms to the hull around it. This repair is at least as strong as the rest of the farafatse hull. However, this sort of repair cannot indefinitely prolong the life of a hull, rather it is a stopgap measure on a hull that is in the proverbial autumn of its useful existence.

In addition to fishing vessels, the outrigger canoes are used for transport. Marine products, especially salted fish and zanga, are carried on sea to the regional centers of Toliara, Morombe, and Morondava. There is transportation of wood for house construction, especially from mangrove areas. Lakas serve as public transport, carrying passengers from one coastal village to another. I have seen many other things being transported in the outriggers, some when I had my camera handy, such as unfinished canoe hulls and all sorts of furniture (beds, tables), and others where I wished that my camera was handy, such as the eight hundred pound zebu with its legs trussed, being slid up a makeshift ramp onto an eight meter canoe.

CHAPTER EIGHT

VEZO SUBSISTENCE PATTERNS

I was once told by Merina in Antananarivo that the Vezo are generally a lazy people, that all they do is a little fishing, spending the majority of their time lounging about. In reality, the Vezo situation as maritime hunter-gatherers is not so different from that of terrestrial hunter-gatherers, who generally eat well without having to expend an inordinate amount of time and energy extracting what they need from their environment (Lee and Devore 1966; Sahlins 1966; Meehan 1977; Winterhalder and Smith 1981; Hawkes et al. 1982; Hill et al. 1987). Thus the Vezo could readily fall into the category that Sahlins famously termed, "the original affluent society" (1966).

Some few parts of the following discussion have been briefly touched upon in previous sections. They are included here as verbal glue to help bind into a coherent whole this weighty part of the Vezo existence.

General Overview

Within the coastal villages, the Vezo live in extended family households. The patriarch of these extended family households makes the decisions as to marine species targeted, where to fish, as well as how and to whom the catch is sold. Involved in fishing activities are children of both sexes; women (solo and in groups of related women) go out fishing (more rarely) or on octopus collecting forays (more often); husbands and wives

often fish together in the same canoe; men fish solo (handlining or diving); men fish in groups, most often related by blood or marriage (net fishing: seine, gill, jarife; diving). Men are considered at their full powers of fishing skill and knowledge when they reach their mid-forties; most retire from fishing when they are fifty or so. This by no means is an indication of reduced involvement in the extended family's maritime ventures, particularly from the standpoint of planning.

There is no mechanization used in Vezo fishing. The canoes are powered by sail, paddle, or pole; nets are set and hauled by hand; diving is free-diving; and both bottom fishing for demersals and trolling for pelagics are done with handlines. As well, all processing of marine products is done without any mechanical aids.

The Vezo contend with two radically different seasons in western Madagascar, and their activities reflect this. The rainy or monsoon season extends from the first of December until mid-March. This season has characteristic winds from the northeast, is punctuated by potentially severe cyclones, and is a time when the Vezo go into a type of survival mode. The dry season covers the rest of the year and is characterized by winds from the southwest. This is when most fishing activities take place as well as the migrations that have prompted researchers to refer to the Vezo as semi-nomades.

Dry Season Activities: Semi-nomadism

The seasonal migrations of the Vezo range from a week on nearby coralline islands during the spring tide to profit from increased harvests of invertebrates, particularly octopi and sea cucumbers, to six months in remote fishing areas to take advantage of less exploited fishing areas, seasonal movements of fish, market proximity, or to reduce

fishing pressure on the lagoon adjacent to the home village. Resulting from these dry season migrations over a protracted period of time, have been extended family relations often spread along hundreds of kilometers of coast, as well as the spread of Vezo material culture and subsistence strategies.

The nearby migratory tendency to exploit invertebrates during the famonta is more a northern Fihereña Coast phenomenon, due to the relatively narrow lagoons in this region and the presence of coralline islands. The southern half of the Fihereña is characterized by wide lagoons due to the barrier reef's lying much farther offshore; there are no islands in this area.

This short-term establishment of fishing camps on nearby coralline islands includes both sexes, which is logical, for in my experience among the Vezo, the women are at least as productive at mihake horita (gleaning for octopi on foot) as the men. Though other activities take place during the spring tides on these islands, such as very productive net fishing, the harvesting of invertebrates is the mainstay of subsistence and fruitful economic activity. The long-range semi-nomadic movements to remote fishing areas is almost exclusively a male activity. The ensuing marine activities in these areas far-removed from the home village, are not geared toward gleaning, rather they most often entail deployment of fishing gear such as jarife for sharks, and as such are more male-related activities. That these dry season excursions to remote areas have been male dominated has had historical implications in the spread of the Vezo cultural elements, facilitated by some of the males staying in the remote area and marrying local women in lieu of returning to the home village. The emphasis in this sentence is on the word

historical, for as we have seen, the spread of Vezo cultural elements apart from exclusively material and subsistence strategy realms, is a thing of the past.

Some percentage of the Vezo males in a village will migrate, usually returning before the beginning of the rainy season. Many of the males (in most villages, most of the males) stay in the home village and go out on daily fishing forays during the dry season. For the ones who migrate to remote areas and do not return at the end of the dry season, in addition to marrying local women in established coastal settlements, they also facilitate the consolidation of seasonal fishing camps into permanent settlements, like at Ancoba, north of Morombe.

Dry Season Fishing Activities

Fishing activities cover the temporal range of diurnal and nocturnal, as well as the spatial range of nearshore, inshore, and offshore. The following are the most economically significant marine species or products of those species, listed in descending order of value with accompanying processing, preparation, and preservation techniques:

1) *Vombony akio* (shark fins, sun-dried)
2) *Zanga* (sea cucumber, salted, boiled, and sun-dried)
3) *Tsitsike* (lobster, sold fresh, alive; kept moist, out of the sun)
4) *Fia sira* (salted fish, salted in brine, sun-dried)
5) *Beedza mena* (casque rouge, shell only, animal removed)
6) *Angissy* (squid, sold fresh, kept moist, out of the sun, or on ice if available)
7) *Horita* (octopus, sold fresh, kept moist, out of the sun, or on ice if available)

8) *Fia saly* (smoked fish, staked and distributed around an open fire)

9) *Fia* (fresh fish, kept out of the sun, or on ice if available)

Shark fins and sea cucumbers are sold to Chinese merchants in Toliara or Morondava. These are then shipped to Hong Kong, the main market and distribution center for mainland China. Salted fish goes all over Madagascar by a variety of means. The marketing of lobster, octopus, squid, and fresh fish is highly variable and depends on the location of the fishing grounds as well as, in the case of fresh fish, on the species and size of the fish (see Table 2, Appendix B, for fish and other marine creatures targeted by the Vezo). These four products may be sold locally - in the village itself, in the regional market if this is logistically convenient, or less frequently to hotels (in Morondava, Ifaty, Belo sur Mer, Anakao, and Mangily); along the Fihereña Coast, they may be sold to middlemen and kept on ice provided by the Toliara-based companies of ProPêche or Murex, whose trucks run north from Toliara (as far as the sandtrack goes, that is Andravona) or outboard skiffs from Toliara or Morombe, to carry these to the regional center that is more convenient. Casque rouge is sold to Karani merchants in Manombo or Toliara. These are then shipped to Italy, the principal market. Smoked fish is sold in the public markets in Toliara, Morombe, and Morondava. Fresh fish are sold as well to the neighboring Masikoro and Mikea, who in turn usually smoke these.

The following discussion on techniques for catching or harvesting the various marine species that provide these market products will begin with the most valuable product. The gear used for shark fishing are jarife, the large mesh gill nets specifically constructed for sharks, and to a lesser degree, the longline system. As with other fishing techniques,

these are deployed by hand, this despite the potentially large and dangerous prey being sought. As most species of shark must move constantly for respiratory purposes - passing oxygenated water over the gills (bull sharks being a notable exception), their lifespan once they are enmeshed in a net or take a longline hook, is not appreciably enhanced. As a result of this biological characteristic, most sharks do not arrive at the canoe gunnel green when the gear is hauled. What the fishers are left to deal with is the dead weight as opposed to the potentially dangerous attributes.

In some of the villages the Vezo have come relatively recently to fishing for shark with jarife, this a function of the increasingly attractive market value of the dried fins (as of 2003, the value of dried fins was 100,000 FMg per kilogram; at the same time, the annual pay for a public school teacher was 550,000 FMg). In some villages shark fishing has been going on for a number of decades, with the same product (dried fins) being sold to Chinese merchants. I suspect that there is a correlation between length of time that fishers from a particular village have been involved in shark fishing, and the location of the village with respect to access to productive shark fishing grounds. Vezo from Ampasilava who have been fishing with jarife only since the early 1980's, do all their shark fishing on the island of Andriamitaroka north of Morombe, establishing fishing camps during the dry season. Fishers from Bevohitse, who have engaged in remote shark fishing for generations, including at Andriamitaroka, also fish on the open ocean, five to ten kilometers due west of the village. My favorite informant in Bevohitse, a still active net fisher at 75 and patriarch of his extended family household, was a shark fisher when he was younger, traveling north during the dry season. They sold the dried fins to merchants in Morondava. His father was a shark fisher as well, but he did not migrate

during the dry season, restricting his fishing forays to the Bevohitse area. As of 2004, there were four 8 meter canoes in Bevohitse that specialize in jarife fishing for sharks. All four concentrate their efforts in the Bevohitse area.

Despite the very attractive market value of shark fins, in villages where there are fishers who target them, these fishers are usually a specialized minority. From a sustainable resource standpoint, this is a positive thing, for sharks in general have relatively slow growth, which translates as slow to reach sexual maturity, and their fecundity is low as well. Of note is that the Vezo do not merely cut off the fins and discard the rest. The shark meat is salted, sun dried, and marketed at 2500 FMg per kilogram.

While there are three outriggers fishing out of Morombe that use a rudimentary longline system to target sharks, most Vezo use jarife. The jarife have not only large mesh size, but also stout composition in order to withstand not only the strength of larger sharks, but their abrasive skin as well, which can be dried and used as sandpaper for woodworking. If the fishing area has water that shoals close to shore, such as at the island of Andriamitaroka, north of Morombe, or the village of Lavanono on the southern tip of Madagascar, sharks will be attracted to schooling fish that are drawn to the shoals, especially at night. The jarife can be set relatively close to shore and left overnight, to be hauled the following morning. In the case of Bevohitse as in Salary Varitra, the crew goes out as much as twenty kilometers, and stays on the canoe for two to three days, the nets soaking day and night, with several haulings per twenty-four hour period. Logistically this means that sleeping and cooking take place on sea. In all cases, bait is

used to attract the sharks, this in the form of small fish that are tied at intervals to the mesh.

Manirike, or diving, is used to target sea cucumbers, lobster, fish, and oysters. This latter I saw only at Morombe. Though the small mangrove and rock oysters are harvested at low tide in areas such as Bevato, these oceanic oysters dived for at Morombe are singles, of an undetermined species (at least by me), and absolutely enormous - the largest oysters I have seen anywhere. The Vezo call them *dix-huity*, eighteen in French with the typical Vezo way of putting a 'y' suffix on words that come from elsewhere (another example is boky, pronounced booky, which is the English book, and means the same in Vezo). This term seems to be a play on another French word, *huitre*, which is translated as oyster in English. These dix-huity are literally dinner plate size and shape on the lateral plane, and thick enough dorso-ventrally to weigh (shell included) several kilograms. There are three outriggers, each with a crew of two, that operate off the northern end of Morombe's expansive beach. They, of course, free-dive. Though some of the oysters are sold on the shell locally, the majority are processed by the family of the aforementioned Vezo, former mayor of Morombe. He walked me through the process, this after I had talked with some of the divers on the beach. The animal is removed from its shell, and the adductor muscle (the muscle whose function it is to close the two valves, and all one eats of another bivalve, the scallop) is separated from the rest. These are frozen as two separate products and shipped to Morondava.

Sea cucumbers are speared off the bottom with volos, either during the bory vola famonta (full moon spring tide) or diurnal low tides; harvested on foot during low tide, usually as ancillary harvest while hunting octopi; but the most productive way of

harvesting these is diving. As we saw earlier, diving for sea cucumbers can produce attractive paydays, and this draws young males to this marine activity. Sometimes the zanga are processed in the family compound and taken to either Toliara or Morondava to sell when a substantial quantity has been amassed. The diver is rarely the one who handles the marketing. More commonly, the divers sell the zanga to a middleman in the village, who handles all of the rest - cleaning, salting, boiling, sun drying, and transporting to one of the two regional centers to sell.

Diving for sea cucumbers began in 1980. Before that there was no established market for them in Madagascar, and zanga are not an invertebrate that the Vezo consume themselves. Prior to the inception of the zanga market, Vezo dived for casque rouge. Diving continues for this mollusc, but in most cases it is an ancillary product of diving for zanga. In addition to the potentially substantial payday, Vezo are drawn to diving for sea cucumbers because the intial investment is low, and the prestige if one is successful is high. With a mask and an outrigger canoe, one is equipped. Most often two or more Vezo dive from the same canoe.

With free diving, the depth at which they can harvest is restricted to twenty meters or less. The lagoons on the southern half of the Fihereña and the waters around the small islands situated just off the northern half of this coast have been the favored areas. Sea cucumber populations in these areas have not been able to withstand the harvest pressure. A similar scenario was played out in the Caribbean with another invertebrate, the conch. With the development of tourism came increased numbers of hotels whose restaurants demanded conch for their clients. Free divers in many of the islands exhausted the nearshore populations, and scuba gear was introduced to enable harvest of the deeper

water populations of conch. Overfishing was inevitable regardless, and local divers suffered an alarming frequency of the bends from diving too deep, too often.

As was demonstrated by the Chinese merchant backed venture at Salary Varitse, there are apparently strong populations of deeper water zanga. To access these requires expensive scuba gear, something financially well beyond the reach of most Vezo. Another side to this is that these deeper water zanga populations are not inexhaustible either, and they provide the recruitment for the lagoon stocks. This is the oft-repeated matter of a sustainable fishery being harvested at unsustainable rates due to outside market pressure.

In response to depleted locally accessible sources of zanga, some Vezo have resorted to what Vezo have always done, migrate during the dry season to exploit areas that still have healthy stocks. For divers from the Fihereña Coast, this migration may be as close as the village of Andravona, where there are few Vezo targeting zanga, or as far as the regional center of Morondava and the nearby village of Betania, where very few Vezo dive, period. The former is permissable if the Vezo, like in a particular case of a diver I know from Salary Varitra, has extended family relations in Andravona. The latter is permissable because the Vezo who arrive in the Morondava-Betania area to harvest zanga, are filling a niche that is unoccupied. Due to wave action and the gradual rise of the ocean floor as it approaches this stretch of coast, the nearshore water is not clear. For visibility one needs to sail out a number of kilometers to the west, thus the harvesting of zanga by diving or with volos has not attracted local residents.

Catching lobster requires no more equipment than harvesting sea cucumbers. Except in waters adjacent to villages that have developed some tourist infrastructure (Anakao,

Ifaty, Mangily, Belo sur Mer), lobster is not usually targeted per se, rather it is an ancillary catch to spearing fish or octopus. In addition to hunting octopus on foot among the rocks exposed at low tide, Vezo dive for these. The gear in both cases is the volos, a long handled spear.

While fish, as well, are speared with the volos, since 1980 the preferred equipment is the speargun. This was introduced to the Vezo by vazaha, likely French as these constitute 52% of all tourists, and the best spearguns are French made. Envision this scenario, because it is the norm for most if not all introduced ideas and equipment among the Vezo, as well as in a more universal sense. A vazaha, or a group of vazaha came to dive and spearfish in an area where Vezo fish and dive, such as Anakao or Ifaty. At the end of their vacation, one of the spearguns exchanged hands, likely for services rendered (taking the vazaha out diving in a Vezo outrigger). That this part of the story of how the initial speargun was introduced is general and a bit imprecise, despite its occurence in recent times, is not terribly important. The rest of the story is what is emphasized by the Vezo. While spearguns are available at one shop that I know of in Toliara, they are very expensive - between 400,000 and 500,000 FMg (in 2003). What ensued is typical of diffusion, particularly rapid among a people like the Vezo with such mobility and extensive coastal contacts. Vezo copied the manufactured speargun, using locally available materials. In lieu of the plastic stock of the manufactured gun, they used wood from, where else, the forest to the east. Bits of wire, metal rods, and inner tubes provided the rest - all available (cheaply) from the regional centers. Now in every village there are impressively constructed reproductions of a manufactured speargun.

Mihaza, fishing with nets for species other than shark, is a common and potentially productive activity among the Vezo. Although the setting of small gill nets from an outrigger is done solo, most net fishing, whether gill net, pelagic seine, or beach seine, is done by a crew of three to five. Beach seining, except during the monsoon season when the threat of rough weather restricts activities on sea, is not very often a Vezo (Tena-Vezo) activity. During the dry season, beach seining is done on a relatively limited scale by Vezom-potake, most readily observed in the regional centers, particularly Morombe and Morondava.

Apart from net fishing for sharks, or jarife, the most specialized of the net fishing is the pelagic seine, and for this reason in particular, those Vezo who direct this activity, that is the skippers of the net boats, are accorded a great deal of respect. Morombe is a center for pelagic seining, with a number of outriggers that target halfbeaks (*Hemiramphus sp.*). The ocean side, that is to the west, of the nearby island of Nosy Lava is a favorite fishing spot for these species. Catches are usually monospecific, that is the halfbeak, with possible incidental bycatch of needlefish (*Strongylura sp.*) that are feeding on the surface. *Antserac* (Vezo for halfbeak) is the best species to use as bait for my preferred fishing activity, trolling for pelagic topline predators like king mackerel and barracuda. In Morombe I would meet the seine canoes when they sailed in mid-afternoon. Since antserac is also a favorite *fia foriri* (fried fish), sold in the evenings along the dirt streets of Morombe by Vezo women, there could be a traffic jam, so to speak, around these canoes even before they had finished hauling up on the beach. Quite reminiscent of Griffon vultures around an abandoned kill in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is best just to stand back to avoid a tongue lashing. These scenarios were only hyper-

animated when the fishing had been poor for several days in a row due to less-than-ideal weather conditions. As I was always aware of such due to talking with fishers on a daily basis, as well as going out myself, I knew when to just watch. I would ask, "*Tsy misy aofa androany*?" (There's no bait today?). The fishers would laugh and say, "*Fa lany ny aofa*" (The bait's all gone). The way I viewed this situation was that I did not have to go out fishing, but these women had to fry and sell fish each evening to make ends meet. And, of course, there was the interaction that served as part of the continuum of interactions.

Maminta, or hook and line fishing, must certainly be viewed as the proverbial bread and butter of Vezo subsistence. It is a marine activity that is done solo in a single canoe, solo but in a group of several one-man canoes, and with two or (rarely) more in the same canoe; both sexes do it; and there is no age restriction, for indeed, some of the best handliners are well advanced in age. The majority of handlining is done at anchor, fishing on the bottom for demersals, but Vezo troll for pelagics as well. The Vezo hook and line fish in the day or at night.

The most common scenario throughout the Vezo range, is for a male fisher to arise well before dawn, drink a cup of coffee and eat a *mokary bala* (fried cake made of rice flour), and haul his fishing and canoe gear to the beach, leaving these beside his canoe. He takes his roa tratra (four meter) canoe off the chocks, and either drags the canoe down to the water's edge or he and another fisher help each other carry their canoes one at a time to the water's edge. The spars and sail are rigged, the rest of the gear, including *fivatoa vato* (the rock anchor) that holds the outrigger canoe in place on the fishing ground. The Vezo pushes off, the light early morning breeze from the land easing him

out to the west. Upon reaching his preferred fishing spot, he luffs up into the wind, and takes down the sailing rig, wrapping all in the shrouds and sheets and placing the neat bundle fore and aft along the two starboard varone, well out of the way of handling the fishing gear. He paddles a little around the general area until he is over the bit of bottom that he seeks. The rock anchor is tossed out and the rode is tied off at the stern. He gets out his bait - cut octopus that he has prepared the night before. The day's fishing begins. He has brought a bottle of water with him and maybe some tobacco, but nothing to eat. In the early afternoon, he rigs his canoe for the sail home. The anchor hauled, the wind from the southwest pushes him along at a good clip as he heads to the east. When he arrives near the beach, he luffs up, letting the wind spill out of his sail. He then takes the sailing rig down and paddles to the shore, pulling his canoe's bow up a little onto the sand. His wife and children are there to meet him. They help haul the canoe up above the high tide mark. While the fisher bails out the canoe with the wooden *lima*, his wife gathers his catch from the bilge, and his kids carry his gear to the family compound.

Squid are targeted during the day using nets. At the time of the full moon, some fishers go out trolling for squid. Squid migrate vertically in the water column. They are attracted to light at the surface. The full moon draws them to the near surface part of the water column, and it is here that the trolling rigs are effective. The fishers go out alone, the outrigger is paddled, and attached to a handline is artificial bait, a lure with multple barbless hooks.

Night fishing, *maminta haly*, is also done by Vezo going out in one-man outriggers, though sometimes several of these will go out together, anchoring in the same general area. The night fishers who know the *riva*, a generally broad area where the sea bottom

comes up from around forty meters deep to around twenty meters; this creates a deeper water shoal, and the eddies associated with this attract small fish, that in turn attract larger topline demersals, such as grouper and particularly snapper. Fishing the riva is especially effective at night, as the movement of the larger demersals is increased. The forty meter curve is usually out a ways to the west, well past the barrier reef where this exists. The bait used is most frequently either *vachitsa* (ladyfish, *Elops sp.*) or cut squid. Those few Vezo who specialize in maminta haly on the riva are likely the most respected fishers of all, regardless of gear type. These men, usually middle-age, go out alone, far, at night, and return at daybreak often with impressively large demersals. When they return to the beach after a successful fishing venture, they are invariably surrounded by admiring Vezo of both sexes, having a look at their catch. It is the inherent danger of going out so far, alone, at night, in a small outrigger, in conjunction with the fruits of their labor that imply the ethnoichthyology they harbor in knowing the movement of these large demersals in the deeper water. A fisher does not go out once or twice and return to shore with such a catch. The recognition comes from knowing that this depth of knowledge could only be gained by having braved these same elements time and time again.

While fishing the deep at night is a speciality that has not changed in essential gear used or approach for generations, there is another specialized marine activity that is apparently on the wane due, at least in part, to relatively recently introduced gear. *Mive fano*, hunting sea turtles with a *teza* (harpoon, similar to the volos used for octopus, fish, and zanga, but the turtle harpoon has barbs built into the steel head), is a time-honored tradition with a steep learning curve and intimate ties to the hazomanga. Due to this

steep learning curve, there is a good deal of respect accorded the harpooners. Two or three teza are carried in wooden racks built into and outboard of the canoe gunnel. The canoes that are used for hunting turtle are four to five meters - *roa tratra sy misy zehe*, as the Vezo would talk of the hull length of this class of outrigger - two fathoms with a few handbreadths. Two men (or as we have seen, a father and young son) sail or paddle out. When reaching the vicinity of a reef or other known, productive area, the Vezo in the stern continues to paddle (hence, the term, mive fano - literally, paddle for turtle) while the Vezo in the bow stands with the teza to which is attached a length of line. Turtles have to come to surface at intervals to breath, and it is for this opportunity that the Vezo are searching. This is where the steep learning curve factors in, for the harpooner aims for one of the turtle's appendages (flippers), and he only gets one try. As presented earlier, the bitter end of the line is tied off to the canoe, so in the case of a hit, the turtle sounds and is brought alongside the outrigger when it tires (and runs out of oxygen). Turtle hunting is one of the pieces of evidence tying together Indonesia, East Africa, and Madagascar; this maritime hunting activity is not practiced elsewhere in Africa. Turtle hunting is tied to the hazomanga and therefore the ancestors. This connection is believed to directly affect continued success in turtle hunting and dictates the processing procedure of the catch.

This connection to the ancestors by way of the hazomanga does not apply to turtles killed with a speargun. The time-honored connection between hunter and prey, as well as the long learning curve for becoming a successful hunter, are circumvented when using a speargun. Turtles often hide on the bottom, concealed among the coral. Young Vezo men with spearguns, usually hunting fish, will shoot these stationary turtles in the back of

the neck. The speargun, which is attached to the shaft by a length of line, is passed to another Vezo in the canoe. This line is tied off and the turtle brought alongside when tired. There is no strict procedure in the processing of turtles taken in this manner.

Other Dry Season Activities

Most other subsistence and material culture related activites that take place during the dry season are oriented toward the (mostly) nearby forest. The traditional Vezo houses need structural maintenance and repair to the thatched rooves in preparation for the upcoming rainy season. Existing outrigger canoes need maintenance and repairs that are effected during the dry season, as is the construction of new canoes. Forays into the adjacent forest focus on specific trees for building purposes or the harvesting of loko mahery for hull repairs. Forays much further afield during this same season may be necessary for harvesting farafatse, especially if a larger class of outrigger hull is desired.

The processing of fish and invertebrates for longterm storage, either as a hedge against the monsoon season or for sale in the regional centers, is a dry season activity as sun drying is a vital step in all but the smoked fish.

Rainy Season Activities

As noted, the rainy or monsoon season, that lasts from the first of December until mid-March, is a time of survival for the Vezo, survival until the next dry season. It is, of course, a time of replenishing fresh water supplies - reserves for the wells in villages that have these, and collection of rainwater in those places like Nosau that must transport water during the dry season. This period is not a continuum of rain and strong winds,

rather it is punctuated by inclement weather. The Vezo, great predictors of the weather that they are, are not too often surprised by the arrival of storms or more rarely, cyclones. Like during the dry season, they watch the sky to the east for forcasting the upcoming conditions. The absence or presence of clouds and their formations over the land are what they study during the dry season. During the monsoon season, the storms and cyclones come from the northeast, following the monsoon tradewind direction.

There is marine-oriented activity during the rainy season, but it is mainly concentrated close to shore. Beach seining for finfish and shrimp and gleaning for invertebrates are mainstays of activity. North of the Fihereña Coast, especially between Ankevo sur Mer and Morondava, shrimp are the most important catch associated with beach seining. Finfish take the place of shrimp along the Fihereña. Vezo do go out in their canoes to set nets and handline on the bottom, but they do not go out far, always on the watch for a shift in the weather.

When the foul weather hits, the Vezo may be confined to their houses for four or five days at a time. To weather (literally) these periodic episodes, they rely on staples with long shelf life, and these are rationed. Stockpiles of dried manioc, purchased from Masikoro, are supplemented by sacks of rice (Betsileo or Merina production, primarily, though there is imported rice from Pakistan and China on the market). For protein there is *fia sira* (saltfish), which has a shelf life of four months, *fia vendra* (sun dried fish) with a shelf life of three months, *horita vendra* (sun dried octopus), which is good for a year, or for the shorter term, smoked fish, which can last for three weeks. Barrels containing fresh water are close at hand, as is firewood or charcoal. Vezo families living on islands like Nosau, Nosy Be, and Nosy Lava, that have no permanent source of fresh water, do

not make the trips to the mainland in their outriggers for freshwater or supplies like during the dry season. Supplies are stockpiled and rationed to last through the monsoon season. Rainwater is collected and stored in barrels. During the windows of opportunity afforded by clement weather, nearshore fishing and gleaning activities supplement existing supplies.

In some of the coastal villages, two or three Vezo men may go into the forest, clear a patch of land, and plant *chaco* (corn). This is not cultivated in the sense of weeding or breaking up the soil for aeration. After the proper passage of time, the Vezo return to the forest to harvest the corn. This corn is for household consumption only. Some of the Vezo may forage in the forest, looking for honey or wild tubers. As will be discussed shortly, these latter activities do not occur as frequently as in earlier times.

Changes Since 1970

Around 1970 marked the beginning of change to the Vezo way of life, with their introduction to wider markets and more modern fishing gear. Heretofore unknown affluence (relatively speaking) afforded access to a much wider range of material goods, as they entered into a money market era.

Prior to 1970

Before 1970, the Vezo economy was based largely on a barter system. Trade with neighboring groups hinged upon exchange of Vezo fish for agricultural and forest products, from the Masikoro and Mikea, respectively. The relatively small part of their economy that was linked to cash flow came from sales of turtle meat in Manombo,

casque rouge to Karani in Manombo and Toliara, as well as limited sales of sea cucumbers to Chinese merchants in Toliara, and shark fins in Morondava.

While many sails were made from woven matting until as recently as three or four generations ago, matting of the type that currently covers the sand floors of the traditional tranoVezo, cloth sails have long been in use (as is known from the oral history of the development of the sail from the lamba), the material purchased from the regional centers with money from the aforementioned sales of marine products. However, until relatively recently, the shrouds, sheets, and halyards for the sailing rig, the lashings for the varone (akas), as well as the anchor rodes were all of natural fiber obtained from the forest. Fishing line and nets were constructed of natural fibers as well. These natural fibers are in still in use today for lashings in traditional house construction, containing bundles of wood brought back from the forest, stringers for holding fish, and octopus, as well as in the variety of woven baskets and mats.

Around 1960, at the time of independence, the federal government gave each Vezo village line for fishing, which from the description of the older fishers, sounds like some facsimile of kite cord; it was definitely not monofilament. Monofilament was not introduced until 1970, when Pro-Pêche made gifts of this and fish hooks to the Vezo along the Fihereña Coast. Previously, the Vezo had fashioned their own hooks out of bits of wire and other metal that they could obtain.

Prior to 1960, diving was done with unprotected eyes. In 1960, the federal government declared that it was illegal for the Vezo to dive anymore without masks, as it was brought to their attention, by way of the provencial capital of Toliara, that the Vezo were having a lot of eye problems due to this activity. Representatives of the government

in Anatananarivo distributed a certain number of masks to all the Vezo villages. However, the number of masks provided was not enough for the number of divers. Often for four divers in an outrigger, there would be only one mask among them.

During the time of the mainly barter economic system, Vezo were more apt to make forays into the forest for gathering of food items in addition to the wood and natural fibers that formed the raw material base of their material culture. The transport of what seafood products were sold was by way of sailing canoe or oxcart only. Turtle hunting was done uniquely with harpoons. The general image is of a well-rounded subsistence system that maximally exploited the environment in which the Vezo lived.

Post 1970

The increase in market access that began around 1970 was initially a result of the formation of seafood companies based in Toliara. Today there are three companies: Pro-Pêche, Murex, and Bio-Mar. The first two handle a wide variety of seafood products, while Bio-Mar concentrates mainly on marine macro-algae. These three companies established a rapport with the various Vezo villages along the Fihereña Coast that continues today. The trucks of all three companies collect marine products from the villages that are accessible from the rough sand track running north from Toliara. Pro-Pêche and Murex have outboard powered fiberglass skiffs that collect from those villages without road connection. As well, Pro-Pêche and Murex have provided ice chests and ice to the villages for preserving the fresh seafood.

With the advent of these seafood companies, came establishment of Vezo *sous-collecteurs* - individuals in each village who purchase the various target species and

preserve them on ice, in turn selling these to the corresponding seafood company at a profit. For example, octopus, squid, and most smaller species of fish are bought from the fishers at 2000 FMg per kilogram and sold to the seafood companies at 2500 FMg (2003 prices). This system, spawned by the Toliara-based seafood companies, has greatly facilitated the marketing of the Vezo catch.

Pro-Pêche, the largest of the three companies, made available more modern fishing gear, some in the form of gifts and other gear at reduced cost to the Vezo fishers. The aforementioned monofilament fishing line and hooks for handlining were gifts given to each village along the Fihereña Coast. In 1970, diving masks were given to each village in sufficient numbers so that all Vezo divers had access to a mask. Today these items are bought by the fishers from these same companies at below retail prices. Monofilament and synthetic rope (polypropylene) replaced the natural fibers that the Vezo had traditionally obtained from the forest. Additional gear and materials, to which they had access beginning around 1970, were lures used in night trolling for squid and snapper, braided nylon for seines and other nets, and synthetic ropes for canoe rigging and lashing of the varone, as well as the head and foot ropes of gill nets. While these gear changes may not seem especially advanced or modern, they effectively improved the existing fishing techniques of the Vezo.

Additional changes occurred around 1980. The issue of the speargun introduction has been broached. The Hong Kong connection for the marketing of shark fins and sea cucumbers was more firmly established, and this continues today. Shark fins are the most valuable marine product that the Vezo target, but it is the sea cucumber market that

has proven instrumental in maintaining the integrity of the Vezo extended family household.

In conjunction with the changes that have taken place since 1970, and particularly since around 1980, there has been a shift in the directed fishing pressure on certain target species and the establishment of other, previously underutilized species as target species. The improved connection to the Chinese market for sea cucumbers established these as a desired target, for the money that they can bring has made diving for them especially attractive to young Vezo males.

Another significant change since 1970 has been the shift away from the barter system between the Vezo and their neighbors, the Masikoro and Mikea. Not only is it a matter of money changing hands in lieu of exchanging products, but because the Vezo generally enjoy a stronger position economically than previously, due to what has essentially been merging into the global economy, they are less inclined to go into the forest to forage for wild tubers, honey, or the occasional tenrec (endemic mammal, somewhat resembling a hedgehog). The relatively recent preference has been to purchase either these same items or similar ones (such as *bile* instead of *balo* - yams instead of wild tubers) from Mikea or Masikoro. In essence the Vezo can afford to concentrate their efforts even more exclusively on the marine environment.

As for the coralline islands on which some of the Vezo set up temporary fishing camps during the dry season, changes over the past thirty years have taken the form of more permanent establishment. The *trano lai* (the tents made from the outrigger sail draped over the spars) have become trano Vezo, the traditional lashed pole and bullrush

huts. Schools have been built on Nosy Ve (near Andavadoake, to the north) and Nosy Be (near Morombe, to the south).

Cultural Continuity

Despite the above-mentioned alterations to their subsistence economy, Vezo fishing organization has remained essentially the same since before 1970. The extended family household as the basic social unit remains intact. The patriarch of this extended family continues to direct fishing effort, and the young Vezo for the most part remain in the coastal villages, though as we have seen, there is movement among the villages that is facilitated by the often widely scattered, extended family relations.

Sail-powered outrigger canoes are still the fishing vessels utilized, due at least in part to the consistency of prevailing winds along the west coast of Madagascar and the speed under sail of these canoes - they are very likely the fastest non-motorized fishing boats in the world. Fishing methods as well continue to be non-mechanized: free diving (no tanks); handlines used for bottom fishing and trolling; invertebrates harvested by hand or volos; and nets are set and hauled by hand. Increased fishing pressure on certain economically attractive target species has not been at the expense of directed effort toward the wide array of marine species that have traditionally formed the basis of the Vezo subsistence system.

On the spiritual side, the hazomanga has retained its influential position as the connection to the venerated ancestors and the focal point of good fortune in fishing ventures as well as safe return from the sea.

Outmigration

Koechlin (1984) predicted the disbanding of the Vezo family unit, thus a change in fishing organization, due to migration to the regional centers. To be recognized here is that Koechilin spent most of his time (1968-1970, according to informants) in the village of Bevato on the northern Fihereña Coast just prior to the increased contact with modernity addressed in the previous few pages. As well, one should note that the date given the reference, 1984, is due to the appearance of earlier writing in a book on fishing cultures of the world. Koechlin likely surmised that the Vezo youth would go the route taken by the young in most developing countries, seeking economic opportunities in regional centers and capitals.

Outmigration has not occurred on any scale that could be considered a trend. There has actually been little movement of youth to the regional centers of Toliara, Morombe, or Morondava. The reasons given for this were consistent across all age groups questioned: first of all, Vezo do not like to work for others; secondly, they can make substantially more money fishing, and especially diving, than they can working in the regional centers; and finally, life in the villages is pleasant, they have their family ties, and they are not locked into a rigid work schedule. Because the young males stay in the villages in lieu of seeking employment in the larger towns and cities, the young females are not inclined to outmigrate either.

CHAPTER NINE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

That the settlement history of Madagascar, this fourth largest island in the world, is not known and that the mechanisms for ethnogenesis, the formation of the contemporary ethnic groups in Madagascar, is poorly known, combined with its unique environments, flora, and fauna, all make this a particularly alluring part of the world in which to conduct research.

Understanding that there is little or any actual coincidence in life, that this is another way of saying that the causal reasons are not known or recognizable, taking historical, geographically disparate pieces of a puzzle and putting these in the most logical position or sequence, can permit improved insight into what was and is. That the earliest archaeological evidence of human presence on Madagascar dates to the first century A.D., that in this same century appeared *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* that discussed the extensive trans-Indian Ocean trade networks, that there is some evidence of Indonesian presence on the East Coast of Africa within this same time frame, that there was impetus beyond far-reaching trade for leaving Indonesia, this due to the territorially usurping intentions of Hindu movement into this area, that Indonesian outrigger canoe design influence is found in such far-flung reaches of the Indian Ocean as Sri Lanka, East Africa, and Madagascar, that the Vezo of western Madagascar not only currently use outrigger canoes, but their oral histories indicate that they did the same on the East African coast many centuries ago, that the Malagasy language has its closest

contemporary counterpart in central Borneo, that this same language has definitive Bantu influence, that the Malagasy people are physically an admixture of features that demonstrate both Indonesian and African components, are most likely not coincidences. The historical, anthropological, and archaeological communities have not yet quite enough pieces of the puzzle to reveal the entire picture, though contextualizing what is available allows hinting glimpses. Aside from the written word, which is admittedly sparse, there is a wealth of oral histories, many or most of which have yet to be recorded. Archaeological evidence is wanting as well. Finding an analog between oral histories and prehistoric material culture in the form of artifact assemblages, would likely allow tying all these somewhat disparate pieces together, and perhaps permit a clearer understanding of oceanic migrations in this region, the effect of the spread of cultural elements, and the settlement history of Madagascar.

In a somewhat similar vein, due to the paucity of written accounts for the pre-colonial period of Madagascar's history, oral traditions are a resource whose depths have not been fully probed. These traditions likely constitute a master key to unlocking the poorly understood meaning of ethnicity in Madagascar.

In Chapter Three, I acted as guide, walking the reader through the approach used to get at the overarching research question. Within the course of the other chapters I attempted to contextualize, historically, the formation of the Vezo society, as it took place in situ in Madagascar. The clearest window afforded me onto the historical context of this societal formation was by way of oral histories which I sought out from Vezo elders.

I tried to place these oral histories within existing literature, weaving them through the social evolution equivalent of punctuated equilibrium that has marked, in particular, the past five centuries of Madagascar's history and development as a pluralistic society.

The ethnic complexity that is inherent in the Vezo *foko* has not been fully revealed in the literature. To live by the sea and extract one's living from the sea in Madagascar is not enough to be Vezo, meaning that performative aspects and geographical disposition in and of themselves, are not sufficient ethnognomonic features for self-identification as a member of the Vezo society. The rich oral histories that are maintained by Vezo elders, particularly the mitankazomanga in the various coastal villages, are integral to revealing, from within and without, Vezo ethnicity and the Vezo as an ethnic group. Common origins and a shared sense of common history are defining features of an ethnic group. Oral histories pertaining to the origins of the taboos are an integral part of Vezo identity as well as an essential arena into which the researcher must enter in order to understand this identity.

The Vezo As Ethnic Group

An ethnic group is generally defined as a culturally distinct population, a group whose members share a common background, a collective name, common origins, and a sense of common history. These members define themselves as different from other groups based on distinguishing cultural features that may include language, religion, subsistence patterns, and association with a specific territory. Ethnicity is the *expression* of the distinguishing cultural features that define membership in a particular ethnic group.

The Vezo have a proverb that cuts close to the bone: *Vezo nenga-daka, tsy misy raha vitany* - A Vezo without a canoe can do nothing. The centerpiece of the Vezo material culture, the outrigger canoe, is also symbolic of their approach to the environment and as such is integral to their self-definition. Ethnognomonic features are those culturally defining traits that come most readily to a group member's mind when asked why he or she belongs to that particular group. When a Malagasy says he is Vezo and is asked why he is Vezo, the most readily evoked ethnognomonic features are the performative ones, those related to subsistence: know the sea, dive, fish the open ocean, sail long distances. Further probing will elicit the other prominent defining traits: the taboos against eating kibo and aondry, and along the Fihereña Coast, the taboo of manapak latak - circumcision.

The Vezo have common origins and a shared sense of common history. These along with the origins of the taboos are maintained within their oral histories. They certainly have a collective name, though this is often a source of confusion to outsiders, that is, the vagaries within this ethnonym. The Vezo dialect is a distinct one within the island-wide, ubiquitous Malagasy language. In my experience their dialect is vastly different from the official Merina dialect, markedly different from the Antanosy, Antandroy, and Sakalava-Boina dialects, and noticeably different from the Sakalava-Menabe and Masikoro dialects. These latter, the closest neighbors of the Vezo, have a number of words that are different, and both Vezo and Masikoro informants say that the dialects are different, but due to trade between the two, these differences may have become tempered. The Vezo associate themselves and are associated with a specific, though far-reaching territory, that

of the southwestern and mid-western littoral of Madagascar. By any definition of ethnicity and ethnic group, the Vezo constitute such a definitive group.

Vezo Origins

Before the arrival of the first Europeans, the Vezo progenitors came to Southwest Madagascar from East Africa, likely Mozambique (this due to proximity and Arab presence on the northern coast), onboard Arab dhows. These were men only, and they came as free men, taking a chance on a new land that the Arabs had described. The name of their people in East Africa has been forgotten, but they were coastal people, fishing from outrigger canoes. The Vezo believe that they spoke a language similar to that of the Arabs - likely Swahili. They landed in Madagascar at what was then known as Toli, "place of safe anchorage"; this is now known as Toliara. This arrival in Madagascar likely occurred prior to the early 16th century, when the Portuguese began to systematically destroy Arab trading posts in this part of the world. The Vezo response to when this took place is "*Fa ala be"* - a very long time ago. When these Vezo progenitors arrived, there were already two groups of marine fishers in southern Madgascar: the Sarambe living just south of Toli in the coastal areas now known as Soalara and Anakao; and the Antanosy of the Ft. Dauphin area, in the southeast. Both of these groups came from East Africa as well, and both were fishing from molangas in Madagascar. When either of these groups arrived in Madagascar is not known, but a site near Ft. Dauphin, excavated in 1957, revealed the presence of a maritime culture that was familiar with iron; Carbon-14 dating placed the assemblage at around 1100 A.D. (Kent 1970).

These progenitors of the Vezo brought their fishing gear with them (but no canoes). They fished the waters around Toli on foot. Contact with the Sarambe provided an introduction to the local environment, as well as gave them ideas for later canoe design and construction. The proto-Vezo stayed in the Toli area for two to three years, during which time they took wives from among the Mahafaly. The Mahafaly were (and are) agropastoralists who occupied areas to the south and southeast of Toli (Toliara). They learned the Mahafaly dialect of the Malagasy language. Thus due to this association, the descendents of these people are known as and call themselves Vezo-Mahafaly.

After this stint in the Toli area, these proto-Vezo and their Mahafaly wives headed north, on foot, to the southern part of the Fihereña Coast, where they established settlements in the area that is now demarcated by the villages of Fiherenamasay to the south and Salary Varitra to the north. There were no other people living on at least the southern part of this coast. On the Fihereña Coast, they continued to fish on foot as well as *mihake* (gleaning in shallow water) for invertebrates at low tide. They made forays into the forest to the east, not only for wood, but also to collect honey and *balo* (wild tubers) as well as vines for fishing gear.

Development of Material Culture

The hulls of the outrigger canoes that they had used on the East African littoral were planked. The razambe had this design in their heads and they knew of the farafatse tree in the Mikea Forest. The razambe had also seen the dugout canoes of the Sarambe. These three elements led to the building of laka with the roka based on the dugout canoe with additional farafatse planks added to increase freeboard. Interesting to note that the

Sarambe, whose molanga influenced the Vezo laka, later adopted this same laka, abandoning the dugout.

These lakas were paddle powered at first, and from this comes the ethnonym, Vezo. A group of these fishers were onshore, with their canoes partially pulled up on the beach, when they were attacked by others, a group of marauders who came from the interior. The fishers took to the sea in their canoes, calling out encouragement to paddle, "*Vezo, vezo*!" (paddle, paddle!). The attackers took this to be the group name of these fishers, and they have been referred to as Vezo by others (as well as refer to themselves as such) ever since. The noun, paddle, in Malagasy is *five;* the verb, to paddle, is *mive;* the imperative form of this verb is *vezo.*

The development of the sailing rig came much later. During the dry season (mid-March to the end of November) along the southwest coast of Madagascar, more often than not, the early morning breeze comes off the land (from the east), shifting to the west by mid-morning, then to the southwest by late morning, early afternoon. The Vezo-Mahafaly[14] would paddle out to the fishing grounds (to the west or southwest) and then paddle back late morning, early afternoon. In addition to handlines or nets, they carried *volos* (long handled spears or harpoons) for spearing octopi and fish (and in more recent times, sea cucumbers). One day, returning to the village from the fishing grounds, a Vezo stretched his *lamba* (a rectangular cloth, roughly two meters by one and a half meters, used as a cloak or wrap) between two volos, obviating the need for paddling as

---

[14] Note that I have begun to call these fishers, Vezo-Mahafaly. By this point in their ethnogenesis or ethnic speciation, they have developed the mainstay of their material culture, the laka; the two most prominent faly have been established - in short, they are a group with an identity and defining cultural features.

they made their way back with a following breeze. Thus the sailing rig was born.

The sprit rig that is used today resembles nothing more than two volos and a lamba. Of course, it has become more "sophisticated", but the origin is evident. With the advent of the sailing rig, came increased mobility, facilitating the seasonal migrations that resulted in contact with many other groups over the years, and subsequently the large number of named patrilineal groups under the Vezo ethnic umbrella.

Ny Faly

As there are oral histories that deal with the arrival in Madagascar, settlement on the Fihereña Coast, and development of the material culture, so there are oral histories pertaining to the faly. Universal among the Vezo are two faly, those of aondry and kibo, the eating of either forbidden. Along the Fihereña Coast, there is a third faly that is adhered to, that of manapak latak. There is a fourth faly that has limited adherence - *soraboa* (guitarfish, Rhynchobatus sp.). The following are the oral histories as presented to me by various Vezo elders, explaining the origin of each of the faly.

The faly of aondry was the first taboo established, this shortly after the exodus from the Toli area toward the Fihereña Coast. One of the razambe of the Vezo-Mahafaly died while eating the fat tail of a sheep - he choked on it. The sheep in Madagascar, like those in Africa, are easily distinguished from the goats by looking at the tail. While the goat tail is small and held erect, the sheep tail is grossly enlarged and hangs down. Since the death of the razambe, sheep has been deemed taboo.

The kibo faly stems from an occurrence in the forest now known as the Mikea Forest. A small group of Vezo went into the forest to cut a farafatse tree for a canoe hull.

This is a several day affair as the tree is cut and the canoe hull is roughly shaped in the forest to reduce weight for increased ease of transport back to the village. The Vezo sleep in the forest for the duration of this project. During one of the nights a group of bandits came while the Vezo were sleeping. The Vezo were warned by the call of a kibo and were able to parry the attack. Since that time, eating or killing kibo has been taboo.

The faly of manapak latak stems from an incident that occurred more recently (this in relative terms, as the other two incidents occurred hundreds of years ago). Six boys were circumcised and two of these died from complications (likely infection). Thus circumcision was declared taboo by those on the Fihereña Coast. Since at that point in time many Vezo from the Fihereña already lived north of Morombe, this a result of dry season migrations, this taboo is not adhered to by many of those in the northern part of the Vezo range.

For some few families only among the Vezo it is taboo to eat guitarfish. The guitarfish is a cartilaginous fish, and as such is related to rays and sharks. Indeed, it looks like a cross between a ray and a shark. The anterior portion of the body is dorso-ventrally flattened and broad like a ray, while the posterior portion of the body is elongated and resembles that of a shark. The name, guitarfish, comes from this body form, with the anterior part of the body corresponding to the body of the guitar and the posterior part corresponding to the neck of the guitar. This description is not extraneous for the body shape of the guitarfish is integral to the oral history. The laka of a Vezo fishing alone had a mishap far out at sea. After hanging to the overturned hull and realizing that he was getting no closer to shore, the Vezo decided that his only recourse was to swim. He swam and swam toward the coast, eventually becoming very tired. A guitarfish (a big

one, obviously) swam under the man, lifting him onto its broad head, and brought the Vezo safely to shore. For the descendents of this Vezo, eating or killing a guitarfish is faly. This is certainly my favorite oral history within those of the faly.

Thus, as we can see from the information presented so far, the Vezo cultural group was formed in situ in Madagascar, based on predominantly East African components. The Vezo material culture (the single outrigger canoe), the subsistence patterns, as well as the distinctive faly, all have their origins with the Vezo-Mahafaly. These are not considered the *Vezo vohalohany* (the first Vezo) - these are the Vezo-Sarambe due to their having been fishers in Madagascar when the proto-Vezo arrived and their later having been integrated into the Vezo group; this latter is the reason that the Antanosy of Ft. Dauphin are not a part of this discussion. Though not considered the "first Vezo", the Vezo-Mahafaly were the most influential culturally, and are thus the foundation on which the Vezo cultural group is based.

Semi-nomadism

With the sailing rig added to the outrigger canoe, the Vezo-Mahafaly were able to expand the range of their dry season migrations. Within the Vezo *foko* (ethnic group) reside at least forty-three *karaza* (named patrilineal descent groups; see Table 2, Appendix A). There are so many karaza that are *Tena-Vezo yaby* (all true Vezo) due to extensive seasonal migrations over a protracted period. These karaza have been integrated into the Vezo foko by the mechanisms of adoption of the subsistence patterns and acceptance of the taboos.

The semi-nomadic tendencies of the Vezo have been inspired by three subsistence-related factors:

1) Taking the fishing pressure off village territorial waters by looking for fishing grounds farther afield; this strategy reserves the local fishing grounds for the monsoon season when windows of opportunity for going on sea are scarcer; as such, this should be viewed as subsistence risk reduction.

2) Increased harvests in areas that are devoid of fishing pressure due to their being unpopulated or being populated by non-fishers.

3) Opening remote fishing grounds for specific target species due to economically inspired reasons.

The cultural implications of these semi-nomadic tendencies lie in the spread to other areas of the material culture and other cultural features of one group that has been successful in exploiting a particular niche.

Temporary fishing camps have been established in productive fishing areas that are unpopulated. In cases where Vezo return year after year, these can be elevated to a more permanent status, with traditional Vezo vondro huts replacing the *trano lai* (literally, sail houses, tents made from the laka sails). Examples of this would be the settlements of Nosau and Ancoba. The *fiavieni Vezo*, the seasonal migrations, often brought them in contact with other groups occupying coastal areas, groups that practiced a mixed economy, engaged in agriculture as well as mihake, gleaning for invertebrates at low tide. Vezo arriving in their canoes would pose no subsistence threat to these peoples, as their subsistence patterns were mutually exclusive, the orientation to the marine environment non-overlapping: the Vezo exploiting the offshore resources from their

canoes, and the local group exploiting very nearshore resources on foot. Examples of this situation would be Bevato, where Koechlin lived, and Betania, where Astuti did a substantial portion of her field research.

Often a few of the Vezo men would stay in the newly contacted village or settlement in lieu of returning to the home village at the end of the dry season. They would stay for reasons of age old attractions - marrying local women. As the Vezo are a patrilineal society, the offspring of such couplings would be Vezo, following the fathers' subsistence as well as adhering to the other cultural features inherent in the Vezo foko. The attraction to the Vezo way of life was not lost on other members of the local karaza.

Some of these began to learn the Vezo approach to the marine environment and eventually adopted completely the Vezo subsistence patterns. Usually immersion in the Vezo way of life went further than this, with adherence to the faly completing integration into the Vezo foko. As ethnic categories (understood as foko here) are culturally defined, they are mutable, whereas membership in descent groups (understood as karaza here) is usually determined at birth. Thus those members of the karaza newly contacted who were integrated into the Vezo cultural group, would retain their distinctive karaza and at the same time merge into the larger grouping that is the foko. It was during this formative period that distinctions within the newly contacted karaza were established. The members who adopted the Vezo way of life became known as Vezo (Tena-Vezo), while those members who continued with the former subsistence patterns (mixed economy) became known as Vezom-potake or Vezo-loatse, and adhered to the former faly. Subsequent generations followed these distinctions.

Vezom-potake and Vezo-loatse

In Chapter Two, I explained the terms, Vezom-potake and Vezo-loatse. As noted earlier in this chapter, the ethnonym, Vezo, came from other groups in Madagascar during the pre-colonial era. Within this ethnonym there are subsistence as well other cultural distinctions, most notably the taboos. Tena-Vezo are the true mariners, the Vezom-potake have a mixed economy, doing both agriculture and nearshore or onshore gleaning, and the Vezo-loatse do a little agriculture and nearshore fishing. The origin of the name Vezom-potake is from the hunt for crabs in the mangrove - *drakake baka ny fotake* (crabs from the mud; note that the f in fotake changes to a p when attached to another word, thus Vezom-potake); the mangrove crabs are found in the mud or heavy silt foundation that is trapped by the extensive root systems of the mangrove; not only are the crab hunters covered in *fotake* (mud), but so are the crabs; the mud is left on the crabs to keep them moist and they are sold in *ny bazary* (the marketplace) covered in mud.

There are Masikoro, presented earlier as agropastoralists, who come to the coast during the famonta to mihake horita (octopus). There are, as well, Masikoro who live on the coast practicing a mixed economy. In both situations, the people are Vezom-potake. There are Mikea, presented earlier as forest-dwelling hunter-gatherers, who mihake as well as collect wild tubers, honey, and medicinal plants in the forest. These, too, are Vezom-potake. Vezom-potake can be Masikoro, Mikea, or members of one of the Vezo karaza (such as Marofohy, Sara, Tanalana, Makoa, Kimija) that do not follow the subsistence patterns nor adhere to the faly of the true mariners of that karaza. All of these are often called Vezo by outsiders because they live by the sea or live in the interior and come to the seaside to glean for invertebrates.

If a Vezo man marries a Masikoro woman, because the Vezo are patrilineal and patrilocal (virilocal), the children will reside in the father's extended family compound and follow the subsistence of the father, that of fisher. If a Masikoro man marries a Vezo woman, the children will live with the father's family, self-identify with the father, and usually follow the subsistence patterns of the father, that of agropastoralist. However, if a son, upon reaching adolescence, decides to follow the subsistence of his mother's family, that of fishing the open ocean, he can do so. The son will likely move to the village of the mother's family. He can learn of the sea and adopt the Vezo subsistence. No matter how well he learns of the marine environment and how good a fisher and canoe handler he becomes, he will never be a true Vezo, rather he will always be regarded as a Vezom-potake. This is not his ethnic identity - that is Masikoro. The Vezom-potake designation is to distinguish him from those who are Vezo. His children will be called Vezom-potake or Masikoro, depending on their subsistence. This example points to two identity issues in southwest Madagascar that are somewhat convoluted. First, to be Vezo is not solely to perform Vezo-like activities, there are other cultural features that are vital parts of the mix. Certainly the most readily evoked ethnognomonic traits when one asks a Vezo what distinguishes him or her from others in Madagascar are performative traits - fish the open ocean, dive, sail long distances, in short, *vrai marins* (true mariners). These readily evoked traits are to distinguish the true Vezo from others who occupy coastal areas and are called Vezo. Further questioning will elicit the faly of sheep and quail, followed by circumcision if the area is the Fihereña Coast. Second, the ethnonym Masikoro is, in my opinion, another case of performative definition applied to an ethnic situation; by all indications, and I shall devote a short section to the Masikoro

later in this chapter, the Masikoro are an extensive ethnic group, similar to the Vezo, composed of numerous karaza, some of which are the same karaza that are found within the Vezo foko.

Vezo is an ethnic identity. Vezom-potake (as well as Vezo-loatse) is not an ethnic identity. It is an indication of subsistence only. It is in essence the antithesis of ethnic identity for it, as a label, indicates what one is not - they are not Vezo (true Vezo).

Climate of Political Unrest

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries marked a period of political transformation in Madagascar with the rise of royal lineages, political consolidation and ethnogenesis. These events took place concurrently with increased contact with Europeans, the introduction of firearms and an increase in the slave trade (Kent 1970, Dewar and Wright 1993, Allen 1995, Dewar 1995). The resultant climate was one of political unrest.

Many of the political processes that were responsible for ethnogenesis in Madagascar did not apply to the Vezo as they were already formed as a distinct group adapted to a particular range of environmental conditions prior to this period in Madagascar's history. Additionally, their canoes granted them mobility. It was this mobility and their semi-nomadic tendencies that likely (note that I say likely, for this is conjecture) conspired with this period of political instability to generate the large number of diverse karaza that are now part of the Vezo cultural group. The development of this part of their material culture, the sailing outrigger canoe, granted the Vezo the long range mobility that was not possible within the material cultures of other groups of fishers that were in place in Madagascar when the proto-Vezo arrived - the Antanosy and Sarambe who fished from

molangas (note that while the Sarambe adopted the laka of the Vezo-Mahafaly, the Antanosy continue to fish from molangas).

Thus the speed and seaworthiness of the Vezo laka promoted an extended range to the dry season migrations, which in turn increased the number of contacts with other groups along the west coast. Not only had the Vezo developed a material culture that allowed successful exploitation of a particular environment, but allowed the kind of freedom of movement that no other group in western Madagascar possessed. These two factors must have presented a very attractive package to the uninitiated.

Fiavieni Vezo

At the time of contact, during the dry season migrations of Vezo-Mahafaly (or later, other karaza such as Vezo-Kimija or Vezo-Tsijory, that are Tena-Vezo due to having already been integrated into the foko) from the south (mainly - the general trend was south to north, though there are exceptions such as Andravona's having been settled by Vezo from Ambatumilo - see map of the Fihereña Coast in Appendix D) with other karaza, was the beginning of distinctions in subsistence patterns and taboo adherence. Those members of the karaza newly contacted who adopted the Vezo subsistence, often adopted the taboos as well, the integrative mechanisms into the Vezo foko. Those who continued with the former subsistence patterns (mixed economy) became known as Vezom-potake and adhered to the former taboo(s). From this point of contact, when subsistence differences and faly adherence differences began within the newly contacted karaza, was the beginning of intra-ethnic boundaries (or perhaps better to say intra-tribal or intra-group boundaries).

Some examples of this can be found among the Marofohy of Andranopasy, the Makoa of Betania, and the Tanalana of Betania. Within the Marofohy of Andranopasy, a village north of Morombe, there are Tena-Vezo, Vezom-potake, and Vezo-loatse. The Tena-Vezo have the faly of sheep and quail, while the Vezom-potake and Vezo-loatse have the faly of *benge* (goat). These are in addition to subsistence differences. Only the Marofohy who are true mariners and have the faly of sheep and quail, are Vezo. As the Vezo say, "*Olo mitove, karaza mitove, miasa tsy mitove, faly tsy mitove"* (the people are the same, the descent group the same, but the subsistence is not the same, nor are the taboos).

Likewise in Betania, the Vezo-Makoa have the faly of sheep and quail while those Makoa who practice a mixed economy (Vezom-potake) have the faly of goat. Another group in Betania, the Vezo-Tanalana, adhere to the faly of sheep and quail, while Tanalana to the south who engage in agriculture, have the faly of *sokatra* (tortoise; sokatra is the word in the official dialect of Malagasy, that of the Merinia, as well as in a number of other Malagasy dialects; however in Vezo the word for tortoise is *tsakafe* - one of many examples of the distinctiveness of the Vezo dialect). In each case the karaza remains the same, but those members who took up seafaring also adopted the faly, and were thus integrated into the foko Vezo.

Vezoization

Ethnic identity is mutable. Ethnic boundaries are dynamic as opposed to static. Ethnic identity shifts such as Leach (1954) noted in highland Burma (Myanmar), Moerman (1965) demonstrated in Thailand, and Haaland (1969) studied among the Fur

and Baggara in southern Sudan are possible or even probable from the viewpoint of ethnicity's being culturally defined. The numerous karaza contacted by the Vezo during their seasonal migrations, in adopting the Vezo subsistence patterns and faly, developed a marine fishing section in each karaza, with these individuals merging into the larger, culturally constructed grouping that was the Vezo ethnic group. At the same time, their identity within the descent group was retained, this being immutable, having been established at birth.

Vezoization, this integration into the Vezo cultural group, is for all practical purposes over. The Vezo emergence as an ethnic group occurred long ago, and, as well, Vezoization has been over for a long time. How long, I do not know, but logically the most northern Vezo karaza are the most recent. All of my informants agreed that there are no new Vezo, and that all integration of the karaza into the Vezo foko occurred long ago. The consensus, though not a conclusive reason for this closed gate on integration into the Vezo cultural group, is that the Vezo have essentially pushed their range with northerly and southerly migrations until they have reached areas occupied by other fishers - the Sakalava-Boina in the north and the Antandroy (special case that will be discussed shortly) in the south. There are no more karaza to incorporate, and there are no "second chances" for members of those karaza contacted long ago.

When Vezo-Marofohy from Nosy Lamboara came to Betania long ago, some of the tompontany (the "first holders of the land", the original inhabitants), the Makoa, learned the Vezo subistence and subsequently adopted their faly. This was the point of Vezoization, and the point in time when subsistence labels were established (i.e.: Vezom-potake). Today, if a Makoa who was not Vezo-Makoa, wanted to learn the Vezo

subsistence, he could. He could not, however, become Vezo. That time is over. He would be Vezom-potake, self-described and recognized by others as such. Thus, though it is possible, it is not likely that there are any "new" Vezo. The distinctions were made long ago, and these are adhered to regardless of current subsistence. To be Vezo is not just the subsistence.

Temporal Context

I frequently refer to events among the Vezo as having occurred long ago. This imprecision is due to the lack of written records for much of Madagascar's history until the French texts beginning in the eighteenth century. However, there are framing events that may give me sufficient bases for speculating on the formation of the Vezo ethnic umbrella that is in place today. Oral histories agree that the proto-Vezo came with the Arabs as free men and established themselves along the Fihereña Coast. Accounts from Portuguese trading vessels in the early sixteenth century tell of communities of fishers along the Fihereña (Kent 1970). As noted earlier, the period of political consolidation and ethnogenesis in Madagascar began in the sixteenth century. The entire western part of Madagascar, roughly one third of the island, had come under Sakalava control by the mid-seventeenth century. The Sakalava maintained trade with East Africa, supplying rice, cattle, and slaves (Allen 1995). They held dominion over the entire range of the Vezo. This period of prosperity for the Sakalava ended when the newly emerged Merina state invaded in the early nineteenth century. Though this period prior to Merina invasion was regarded as one of prosperity due to control of the southwest corner of the

Indian Ocean trade, it must have been a period of uncertainty for those groups that had been absorbed by the Sakalava, particularly in light of the slave trade.

Betania, in the northern part of the Vezo range, was established well before 1800, according to the eldest member of the village. He stated that the history of Betania was tied to that of neighboring Morondava, with both having been established around the same time. DeChamps (1972) stated that Morondava was an established port in the eighteenth century. As noted, the tompontany of Betania were the Makoa. Oral histories indicate that the Vezo-Marofohy from Nosy Lamboara on the Fihereña Coast, the first Vezo to come, arrived fairly early in the history of Betania. Based on the extent of the Vezo range by this general point in time, I would be tempted to speculate that by the 1822 invasion by the Merina, the Vezo ethnic umbrella with its constituent karaza was in its present configuration. Much of the Merina rise to power was due to British influence - arming and training the Merina army. In 1817, the British signed an anti-slave treaty with Merina King Radama I. With most of Madagascar under one rule for the first time, and British anti-slaving presence in the Indian Ocean, western Madagascar must have experienced a period of lessened unrest. These factors in conjunction with the by then well-expanded range of the Vezo coastal influence, may have conspired to place some finality on further growth of the Vezo foko. Once again, this is all speculation, piecing together bits of information from informants and the literature.

Ny Tomponpaly

As noted in the section on Marikandia and his considerable contribution to the understanding of the Vezo as a cultural group, he identified the tomponpaly, the

originators of the taboos, undeniably of premier importance among the defining cultural features, as lineages from north of the Fihereña Coast - such groups as the Antenose, Kimija, and Tandavake. There is no mention of the Vezo-Mahafaly. This is in stark contrast to what informants from Anakao, south of Toliara, to Morondava told me. As among these informants were a number of Kimija, I find it appropriate to present excerpts from two interviews with Kimija in two different locations.

In Bevato, the village where Bernard Koechlin spent considerable time, I interviewed a village elder, a Kimija. As was often the case in such interviews, while the elder being interviewed held sway, answering and expounding upon the questions, there was a group of Vezo men and women, of solid to advanced middle age. These contributed to the interview. There are three karaza in Bevato: Kimija, Jabola, and Tsimanavajaza. All three came from a village to the east of Bevato, a village that no longer exists. When they first arrived at the present site of Bevato, there were no other people living there. Bevato has mangroves as well as abundant rocks providing habitat for marine invertebrates, both of which lend themselves to mihake. At first they gleaned on foot. They also engaged in agriculture and had cows. Vezo-Mahafaly from the south arrived in their lakas during one dry season. The model of integration into the Vezo foko applied. Members of these three karaza learned of the sea from the Vezo and adopted their faly. There are still cattle which graze on the eastern fringe of Bevato. These belong to Masikoro who have either relatively recently come from the east, or belong to those of the original three karaza who did not adopt the Vezo way of life.

This next interview took place in Morombe within a similar context - a respected elder Kimija was the interview focus, with somewhat younger members of his extended

family seated within the circle; this included the elder's sister, who, like most (if not all) Vezo women, was very knowledgeable about Vezo culture. Long ago, the Kimija as a group did not *tena mahay ny riake* (did not really know the ocean). They engaged in a mixed economy, both agriculture and gleaning invertebrates at low tide. Vezo from the south arrived with their lakas. The Kimija learned of the sea from those who stayed and married Kimija women. This was the point when subsistence and taboo distinctions were begun. These distinctions continued with subsequent generations.

Geographical Scope

The importance of covering the entire geographical range of a group being studied in order to clarify the ethnic picture pursued cannot be over-stressed. This may be particularly true in the case of a group of semi-nomadic marine fishers with so much mobility and consequently, such an extensive range of settlements and contacts. That some of my findings differ radically from other investigators of the Vezo can be attributed to the difference in geographical scope. It has appeared more than once in the literature that to live by the sea in Madagascar and extract one's living from the sea, is to be Vezo. It was in the tiny village of Beangolo where I was first told that there are marine fishers in Madagascar who are not Vezo. Marine fishers who do not have the mixed economy of the Vezom-potake or Vezo-loatse. Marine fishers whose livelihood depends exclusively on the ocean, whose territories are beyond that of the Vezo. This line of questioning was added to my repertoire. After multiple confirmations of this new bit of information by Vezo elders in several more villages as I sailed north, I decided that

I must visit these areas and talk with these Malagasy marine fishers who are not Vezo in order to confirm informant information.

On the southeast coast, in the area of Ft. Dauphin (Tolanaro) are the Antanosy who fish from molangas. Oral histories as well as archaeological evidence indicate that the Antanosy fishers have likely been in Madagascar for at least nine hundred years. North of the Vezo range are another group of marine fishers, the Sakalava-Boina. These I contacted in Mahajanga (Majunga). They fish from sailing outrigger canoes. The hulls of these canoes are planked, the fanare configuration different from that of the Vezo, and the sails are lateen - of Arab influence. These canoes are of much heavier construction than the Vezo canoes and consequently are not nearly as fast.

The third group of marine fishers that Vezo informants told me about present a different scenario - one that has interesting implications. The Antandroy occupy the dry, spiny desert area of southern Madagascar. This is the one area of Madagascar that the Merina could not fully subdue. The Antandroy territory is located between that of the Antanosy to the east and that of the Mahafaly to the west. Subsistence-wise, the Antandroy are very similar to the Masikoro, the Vezo inland neighbors to the north. They are agro-pastoralists and place great importance on their cattle. On the extreme southern coast of Madagascar lies the village of Lavanono. The waves are big here, the coastline rugged, and apparently sharks are plentiful. Not so long ago, in the temporally vague parlance of Malagasy, Vezo from Androka and Toliara sailed to this area to fish for sharks, using *jarife* (shark gillnets). For the following reason I am going to venture a guess as to when this was. Although sharks have been targeted for several generations in such villages as Bevohitse (as discussed earlier in the chapter on subsistence), most Vezo

who now fish with jarife have only been doing so for the past twenty plus years, coinciding with increased market pressure.

The money that can be made from shark fins in particular, but additionally from the salted meat, was not lost on the Antandroy farmers and cattle herders. Some learned from the Vezo, then adopted Vezo material culture - the jarife in addition to the Vezo laka. The Antandroy do not sail the laka (at least I never saw any indication), they paddle only, paddling out to set the jarife and then again to retrieve it. Thus a marine fishing section of the Antandroy has developed. However, there is no Vezoization occurring. These Antandroy have adopted the Vezo subsistence and material culture only, retaining the other cultural features of their own group. The Antandroy fishers have the same single faly of those who are agropastoralists - sokatra, the tortoise. There are no intra-ethnic boundaries (Antandroy are one of the eighteen officially recognized ethnic groups in Madagascar).

There are two bits of information that are interrelated pertaining to this faly, and my presenting them here does not constitute an extraneous tangent. An Antandroy in Beloha told me the oral history behind the faly. Long ago, there was to be a marriage between an Antandroy man and an Antanosy woman. As tortoise was a favored food item, the groom to be and his brothers gathered a number of tortoises from the forest and presented them to the father of the bride-to-be. The family of the near bride started hacking away at the tortoises with hatchets, following no protocol. The Antandroy were mortified, for their hazomanga (the ritual pole, in essence the church, differing for each cultural group) dictated a rigid format for butchering tortoises. From then on, tortoises have been considered faly by the Antandroy.

The radiated tortoise is considered endangered and is protected by law in Madagascar. There is illegal trade in this tortoise, with reputed drop off points along the coast just south of Toliara. However, in the extreme southern part of Madagascar, the tortoise stocks appear to be healthy. I caught a number of these while walking in the spiny desert. This was merely for my own curiosity, and the tortoises were released almost immediately. Passing Antandroy expressed no interest in the tortoises. My point is that while Antandroy territory (as well as that part of southern Madagascar occupied by Tanalana who also have the faly of sokatra) is quite inhospitable with little infrastructure, and thus not an inviting place to conduct surveys on such populations as that of the radiated tortoise, knowledge of such cultural features (as this faly) of the local groups might prove useful for plugging into resource management equations.

In returning from this tangent, I should mention that contacts within all three groups of marine fishers emphatically declared that they were not Vezo.

Another misconception that could be clarified by an extended range of fieldwork is that Masikoro do not have canoes, just as Vezo do not have fields. This has been tied to the interpretation of these groups as performative labels, that people are Vezo if they behave like Vezo and Masikoro if they behave like Masikoro. On the Fihereña Coast, in Beangolo there are Masikoro who have canoes, just as there are in villages along the Baie des Assassins, such as Tampolove; north of the Fihereña Coast there are Masikoro in Andranopasy who have canoes. In a number of Vezo villages, two or three Vezo men may go into the forest during the monsoon season, clear an area for a field and plant corn. In neither case is the situational context at odds with group identity.

The Betania Situation

During my time on the Fihereña Coast during the 2004-2005 field research, I wrote the following in my field notes before interviewing in Betania. "Since Betania has a calm, protected site - the mangrove to the east - in addition to the open ocean side to the west, I would suspect that the settlement pattern was like that for Beangolo: Vezom-potake, subsistence-wise, came first to exploit the mangrove; then Tena-Vezo from the south arrived, a few at first. Some of these latter stayed in lieu of returning south at the end of the dry season." Neither this prediction of the situation in Betania nor the one from 2003 were too terribly far off target.

I present now a summary of the Betania situation as revealed by informants in 2004. Though some of the components of this brief discussion have appeared elsewhere in this thesis, they bear repeating in light of the initial importance that I placed upon settlement history and subsistence distinctions in Betania. Betania was settled around the same time as Morondava. The tompontany were the Makoa, originally brought over as slaves from East Africa, likely the region currently known as Mozambique, as Makoa is the predominant group in present day Mozambique and the obvious position of this country across the Mozambique Channel from Madagascar. The Makoa are included as one of the eighteen officially recognized ethnic groups in Madagascar today, with their population constituting 1.1% of Madagascar's total population (Covell 1987).

The original Makoa inhabitants of Betania had a mixed economy based on agriculture and gleaning for invertebrates on foot. The first Vezo group to arrive were the Vezo-Marofohy who came from the south, the island of Nosy Lamboara. The Vezo-Marofohy came to exploit the offshore resources, thus they filled a niche not occupied by

the Makoa. There was no subsistence conflict nor ethnic conflict. At the end of the dry season, some of the Vezo-Marofohy remained in Betania in lieu of sailing back to Nosy Lamboara. Some of the Makoa learned the Vezo subisistence and adopted their taboos, thus being integrated into the Vezo cultural group. This marked the beginning of distinctions within the Makoa, for those Makoa who continued with the mixed economy became known as Vezom-potake and retained their taboo of benge (goat). Those who adopted the Vezo subsistence patterns also adopted the taboos of aondry (sheep) and kibo (quail). Subsequent generations followed these distinctions. Some Sakalava-Menabe came also to Betania and a few of these adopted the Vezo culture as well.

The Vezo groups in Betania today are:

Vezo-Marofohy

Vezo-Makoa

Vezo-Sara

Vezo-Ansanotelo

Vezo-Varanga

Vezo-Tanalana

Vezo-Sakalava-Menabe

All the Vezo groups in Betania have the faly of aondry and kibo.

In addition to the settlement history of Betania, the elders there answered many other questions, with these answers adhering to the cultural model constructed in the southern part of the Vezo range. Some of these I shall present here. My informants confirmed

that not everyone who lives by the sea and extracts their living from the sea in Madagascar is Vezo. These Betania informants cited the Antanosy, Antandroy, and Sakalava-Boina as examples of this. This is because to be Vezo is more than just the work, the performative aspects, they constitute an ethnic group. They said that I, as a vazaha, could do everything like the Vezo, and people would say that I was Vezo, but in reality, Vezo-vazaha. I could never become a true Vezo. The Makoa are the only Vezom-potake in Betania. If today one of the Makoa who practices a mixed economy (Vezom-potake) wanted to adopt the Vezo subsistence patterns, and learned open ocean fishing, he could not adopt the Vezo taboos and become enculturated into the Vezo ethnic group. This integration was established at the point of initial contact long ago, when the Vezo-Marofohy arrived from the south. Thus the door is closed on Vezoization, integration of those outside the Vezo society. During the monsoon season, there is some overlap between the seaside activities of the Vezo and Vezom-potake in Betania, but the Vezom-potake do agriculture as well.

In Betania today there is a *fangaro* (a mixture) due to intermarriage over time among the various groups. Within the groups there is no restriction on endogamy. For example, Vezo-Marofohy can and do marry other Vezo-Marofohy.

As I had heard many times on the Fihereña Coast, the Vezo in Betania said that the Vezo-Sarambe are the Vezo-vohalohany, the first Vezo, but the most influential, the group on which the Vezo society is based, are the Vezo-Mahafaly. There are so many karaza within the Vezo society due to the extensive dry season migrations over a protracted period.

Although every coastal village within the Vezo range is different in its environmental parameters, specific settlement history, and group composition, they are all very similar in broader brush strokes. I found no inherent differences between those villages located in the southern part of the Vezo range and those in the north. Betania was no exception. As in most of the other villages, introduction to the Vezo culture here was a function of the fiavieni Vezo, the seasonal migration, that geometric spread of material culture and ultimately other cultural features that have their bases within the Vezo-Mahafaly.

Other Groups within the Vezo Range

As we have seen, there are Mikea and Masikoro who glean for invertebrates at low tide or fish close to shore, yet they are not Vezo. In a similar vein, those Vezo who forage for honey and wild tubors or plant corn during the rainy season are not Mikea or Masikoro. There are distinctive cultural elements within the identities of both the Vezo and Masikoro that go far beyond what one does or where one lives. Perhaps some of the mechanisms that have been instrumental in the formation of the Vezo cultural group are applicable as well to their neighbors in the Fihereña region. Though based on relatively limited field research, the following brief discussions are nonetheless worthwhile from the standpoint of the possibility of general trends within ethnogenesis in western Madagascar.

Ny Masikoro

Just as the Vezo have been represented as coastal inhabitants of Madagascar who extract their living from the sea, the Masikoro have been defined by where they live and

what they do, that is, in the interior and subsistence based on agropastoralism. Yet, as noted, there are Masikoro who live on the coast and extract a part of their subsistence from the sea. There are other groups of agropastoralists who live in the interior of Madagascar but are not Masikoro. Thus, the performative approach to defining this group is insufficient in and of itself.

Most Antandroy are very similar in subsistence to the Masikoro, and they live in the interior. The exception to this, the shark fishers of Lavanono, we have already discussed. The Antandroy who live in the spiny forest of south central Madagascar are herders of cattle and farmers. They have the faly of sokatra. They are not Masikoro in much the same way that the Antandroy who fish with jarife at Lavanono are not Vezo. Subsistence similarity is offset by other cultural features, most notably the faly. East of the Fihereña Coast, the rough sand track that serves as the north-south connecting route between Toliara and Morondava, passes through villages and surrounding farm and grazing land where Antandroy carry out their agropastoralist subsistence. Along this same route are Masikoro villages and lands where similar subsistence is carried out, yet these are distinct groups that recognize themselves as such.

North of the turn off to Morombe, continuing on this sand and rock strewn track toward Morondava, one encounters the Masikoro town of Manja. In the midst of the very animated Saturday market, a Masikoro man explained the constitution of his cultural group. It was similar to what other Masikoro had told me elsewhere. Very similar to the Vezo cultural group, the Masikoro are an ethnic group composed of many, diverse karaza. They are united by the profession as well as other cultural features, perhaps most notably the faly of benge. Again like the Vezo, there are other groups that have the same

subsistence patterns as the Masikoro (Antandroy, Tanalana, Mahafaly), but are not Masikoro. So the Masikoro ethnonym is more than just a performative label.

In all, I interviewed nineteen Masikoro, plus I asked quite a few Vezo informants about the Masikoro. None of this was part of the original field research plan. Initially I became interested on the level of the inter-group interactions, that is the economic ties between the Vezo and Masikoro. Then as I pursued the Vezo identity and subsistence issues further, not only did I begin to understand the connections between the two groups on the karaza (descent group) level within the issue of ethnic mutability, but I began to suspect that identity might be constructed and perceived in a similar fashion, but with different defining cultural features. While this was tangential querrying, perhaps at best, thus in no way definitive, I did manage to lay groundwork for future field research. This was not a large number of Masikoro informants, though as I said these were supplemented by numerous Vezo informants, as well as informal interviews with Masikoro. The positive note is that the responses were consistent.

In Morombe I interviewed Masikoro-Tami, Masikoro-Taombe, and Masikoro-Antsimitiha from Maono, a village fifteen kilometers to the east of Morombe. They come to Morombe by oxcart two to three times a week to sell agricultural products or firewood. Initially they responded as do many Vezo, and from my experience, other Masikoro as well. They said that they were Masikoro because of the work - the performative definition, and this alone. The karaza to which they belong and the other ethnognomonic traits were left out. Further questioning elicited not only their karaza, but despite the apparent heterogeneity on this level, they all belonged to the same foko, that

of Masikoro, and they all had the same faly of benge[15].

Another Masikoro from Maono, stopped offloading the ignams from his oxcart at the Morombe market to talk. He is Masikoro-Voroneoke. This is the same karaza as Vezo-Voroneoke, but the foko is different - Vezo versus Masikoro. He both fit and confirmed the Vezom-potake subsistence model: he knows the sea well enough to mihake horita (octopus), but does not *tena mahay*, really know (the sea); he does *tena mahay mamboly* (really know agriculture). His is a mixed economy. What he does know of the sea, he learned from living in proximity to Morombe and from his father who lives in Manombo.

Ny Mikea

Fanony compared the Mikea to the Vezo, saying that the similarity existed in both groups being nomads - the Mikea nomads of the forest and the Vezo nomads of the sea (1986). The similarity goes beyond this, as both are hunter-gatherers, with the Mikea extracting their subsistence (or some part of it) from the forest and the Vezo from the marine environment (marine hunters). There is still much speculation as to both the origins of the Mikea and their identity construction. They have been presented as relic hunter-gatherers with ties to the Vazimba, these latter considered the original inhabitants of Madagascar in many oral histories and called "the people who were always here". Like the Vezo, they have been referred to as a sub-group of the Sakalava, this due to the Andrevola dynasty of the Sakalava having gained dominion over the Fihereña region

---

[15] While the faly of benge was consistently presented by my Masikoro informants, these were not suffiicient in number to conclude that this faly is adhered to universally among the Masikoro.

during the 17th century. The Andrevola territorial northern boundary was the Mangoky River. North of this was the territory of a rival Sakalava dynasty, that of the Maroseraña.

In any case, the Mikea are presented as a group whose existence and identity is closely allied to the forest, which along the Fihereña is that of the same name, the Mikea Forest. Apparently there are Mikea north of the Mangoky River, toward Morondava. The first Mikea I met was a woman selling wild honey from a bucket on the street in Morondava. When I saw her, I instinctively knew that she was Mikea, though I had only heard talk of these people from Vezo and Masikoro. There was something in her appearance that I cannot quite put a finger on, but that instantly registered. I ate some of the honey and talked informally with her. She said that she was from the interior, east/southeast of Morondava.

As noted earlier, the three main groups in the Fihereña region are most often stereotyped according to mode of existence: the Vezo as fishers, the Masikoro as agropastoralists, and the Mikea as hunter-gatherers. Yount et al. (2001) and Tucker (2002) suggested that these stereotypes were over-generalizations, as members of all three groups engaged in a variety of subsistence activities that overlapped, thus these researchers presented a picture of little economic specialization in the region. As we have seen, some Masikoro and Mikea either live on the coast and have mixed economies, or they come to the coast from villages to the east during the famonta to mihake horita: examples of the latter are the Masikoro and Mikea who come to Beangolo; the Masikoro who come to Andavadoake and Ampasilava from Befandefa and Kilimalinike. Tena Vezo, however, are specialists - marine fishers, and do not engage in a mixed economy. Their specialization is tied to the complex cognitive maps that are integral to success in

exploiting nearshore and offshore marine environments, as discussed earlier. This is consistent with limited foraging, which is a logical offshoot of obligatory knowledge of the forest for a variety of building materials and firewood. It is consistent as well with the small percentage of Vezo who plant corn during the rainy season.

That Mikea would engage in a mixed economy is certainly in keeping with information about hunter-gatherers in the broad Africa region, that of shifting in and out of modes of subsistence (Bailey et al. 1989; Bahuchet 1988). Mixed economy in this region may include agriculture, fishing, and wage labor to supplement foraging activities.

As with the Masikoro, I did not intend to study the Mikea, but unlike in the case of the Masikoro, my contact with Mikea was extremely limited. I met only three, and these were happenstance encounters. In addition to the Mikea woman selling honey in Morondava, I met a Mikea woman selling balo in the market of a predominantly Masikoro village whose name escapes me, but which is located along the north-south route, east of the Fihereña Coast. The third was a Mikea fisher in the coastal village of Andravona. This latter was referred to by the Vezo of Andravona as a Vezo-Mikea. He knows the forest and exploits this, but he also knows the sea and owns a sailing canoe. His situation is the result of the exogamy that occurs between Vezo females and males of other groups. His father is Mikea, from east of Andravona; his mother is Vezo from Andravona, where the predominant Vezo karaza is Timangaro. Upon reaching an age at which he could make the decision, he elected to go to the village of his mother's family to learn the Vezo subsistence. He retains the knowledge of the forest learned from his father's family and utilizes this in collecting medicinal plants. The hazo zanati that I carried with me and used on several occasions while in Madagascar, came from this

Mikea. According to the model, regardless of how well he knows the Vezo subsistence, he will always remain Mikea, as his father is Mikea. Likewise, his children will be Mikea, though perhaps referring to themselves as Vezo when asked, but recognizing Vezo-Mikea (or Vezom-potake) when the questioning persists.

Masikoro informants in Salary Varitra and Bevohitse told me that the Mikea belong to the same foko as the Masikoro. The difference lies in the subsistence. The information that I received about the Mikea came mainly from Masikoro and Vezo informants. The general consensus was that the Mikea are Masikoro who took to the forest to avoid the fighting and slave trade in the Fihereña region. Logically this would have been during the time of unrest in western Madagascar, prior to the 1817 anti-slave pact between the British and Merina and the rise to almost dominant power in Madagascar of the Merina state. This turn to the forest for shelter and sustenance could have occurred as early as the 17th century when the Andrevola dynasty began to control the Fihereña region.

As I have speculated on the time frame and circumstances that may well have stimulated and then closed the proverbial door on Vezoization, I am tempted to do the same for the Mikea, though from the standpoint of much less information. However, some of these same circumstances, namely the political unrest and slaving in this region may lend themselves to fair conjecture. The information from my informants, linking the Mikea culturally to the Masikoro and placing their departure for the forest existence during the time of regional unrest could be viewed as tenable for the following reasons. The Masikoro, like the Vezo, out of necessity knew (and know) the forest, collecting firewood, building materials, clearing areas for cultivation, and foraging. Some

Masikoro lineages likely leaned more heavily on forest products in their subsistence patterns. These would have been likely candidates for the all-encompassing move to the Mikea Forest during this period of political instability.

In a process that Schwartz (1975) termed "speciation of cultures and Newcomer (1972) referred to as "fission and subsequent cultural differentiation", this (or these) splinter group of Masikoro could have, and I suspect did, become over time a separate cultural entity, referred to as the Mikea. In keeping with the notion that ethnicity is culturally constructed, the Mikea, based on a shared sense of common history since the era of fission, recognize themselves as a distinct cultural group and are recognized by others as such. Their foko would be Mikea, but they would share karaza, that is lineages (which are immutable), with Masikoro, and as a result of this association, there would be certain karaza in common with the Vezo.

Despite statements by Yount et al. (2001) and Tucker (2002) that both Masikoro and Vezo escaped to the forest and became Mikea in the process, none of the Vezo informants with whom I had contact would agree to inclusion of the latter in this process. My tendency, without reservation, is to agree with my informants on this. Both of these literature references bank the Vezo's taking up residence in the forest mainly on their herds of cattle being raided, this being the impetus. Oral histories among the Vezo show that the large herds of cattle associated with Vezo villages were on the eastern fringe of these villages. They did not belong to Vezo, but Masikoro or Vezom-potake. An example would be from Salary Varitra. The grandfather of Voafidy, a middle-aged Vezom-fotake (a contact who taught me a bit about the forest), came to Salary Varitra, while still a fairly young man,

from Manombo with a large herd of cattle looking for shade, which was at a premium in Manombo. Voafidy's grandfather established himself on the eastern side of Salary Varitra. His presence posed no resource usurping threat to the Vezo, and the proximity of his herd facilitated trade. One of his sons married a Vezo-Mahafaly woman from the village. Voafidy is an offspring of this union. As oral histories have shown as well, if Vezo were attacked or threatened and felt a need to escape, they would do so in their outriggers on sea, not by turning to the forest.

Returning to the Mikea and more current issues, it is likely that for the most part their economic diversification has been a relatively recent phenomenon. As indicated earlier, despite British naval presence in the Indian Ocean and their staunch anti-slave trade position, slaving did continue under Arab influence until the latter 19th century, though at a reduced level. During the French colonial period, 1896-1960, there was reason to either escape to or remain in the forest to avoid taxation. Mikea were certainly engaging in mixed economies long ago as indicated by informants in the coastal village of Beangolo. In recent decades it is likely that the prevalence and diversity of economic pursuits have been augmented. Despite subsistence or economic pursuits that diverge from foraging, the Mikea identity is still culturally linked to the forest.

CHAPTER TEN

SOME PARTING NOTES AND FUTURE INDICATIONS

In this brief final chapter I would like to return to the Fihereña region, as this is not only the most traditional area of the Vezo range as well as the birthplace of this cultural group that was formed in situ in Madagascar a number of centuries ago, but closer understanding of the processes inherent in ethnogenesis within this region may well have farther reaching implications. Beyond this but closely allied, I shall touch upon that original research question of cultural continuity. In closing I would like to point toward further research that beacons within Al Komr.

The Fihereña Situation

There are some issues within this region that warrant further discussion. Although these issues pertain to the entire Vezo range, some of their aspects are more specifically applicable to the situation on the Fihereña Coast and to the interior just to the east of here. It is my contention that there are two, possibly three distinct ethnic groups within this region. The Vezo constitute an ethnic group. The Masikoro, stereotyped as agropastoralists, are in my opinion another distinct ethnic group. Both my Vezo and Masikoro informants agreed that the Mikea belong to the same group as the Masikoro. Are the Mikea a case of fission and subsequent cultural differention?

I have already discussed at length and left no doubt as to my belief that the Vezo are a separate and distinct ethnic group, with ethnic boundaries that separate them from their neighbors in the Fihereña Region, as well as from other coastal fishing groups in Madagascar. It would seem that at least some of the same processes that have been involved in the formation of the Vezo society in western Madagascar have been instrumental in the formation of the Masikoro group. According to Vezo and Masikoro informants, the Masikoro constitute an extensive ethnic group composed of many different karaza. As in the Vezo cultural group, these karaza are descent groups, named patrilineal groups, and as such, membership within them is immutable. Indeed, many of these Masikoro karaza are shared with the Vezo, something I need to discuss further. All of the groups within the Masikoro society are united by common orientation to the environment, and evidently other cultural features as well. I say evidently, for unlike the Vezo ethnic group, I have not yet a good handle on what the defining cultural features are for the Masikoro. I only interviewed nineteen, and this tangent into their group was in reality an aside sparked by conflicting information of the same sort that had inspired interviews concentrating on the question of Vezo ethnicity the previous year.

Not only do the Masikoro say that they are an ethnic group distinct from others in Madagascar, but their neighbors, the Vezo, recognize them as a separate and distinct group, this even when some Masikoro engage in activities that are seaside-based. Just as there are other marine fishers in Madagascar who are not Vezo, there are other groups of agropastoralists in Madagascar - the Antandroy, Tanalana, and Mahafaly. Despite similar subsistence patterns, none of these is Masikoro. Though there does tend to be regional affiliation, these are not cases of geodetermined identity.

I quite simply do not yet know enough about the Masikoro to offer more than a sketchy outline of them as a cultural group. However, I do feel that they constitute an ethnic group and that their formation as such has parallels in the Vezo ethnic group, particularly the mechanisms. Researching the issue of Vezo identity has sharpened my awareness of ethnicity and its meaning in western Madagascar, beyond that of the Vezo alone. This is analogous to the increased facility of learning the second and third Romance languages after having gotten a handle on say, French. As all of these languages have their bases in Latin, it would seem that the ethnicities in western, particularly southwestern Madagascar, have their own bases in the environmental parameters and the history of the region, particularly inspired by the extended period of political turmoil.

This latter was apparently the impetus for the beginnings of the Mikea distinctions within the Masikoro group. The answer to the question of how the Mikea self-identify as such while being engaged in a variety of disparate activities may well lie within what I have referred to as fission and subsequent cultural differentiation. The environmental parameters presented by the forest functioned effectively as geographical isolation, thus cultural speciation was possible much as similar isolation functions as a mechanism for speciation within the rest of the animal world. Within the course of the several centuries through which there were political shifts within the region, from Sakalava control, to French colonial control, to state independence in 1960, the Masikoro-Mikea splinter groups identified themselves with the forest. As with the Masikoro, I do not know enough about the Mikea to do more than conjecture, but I suspect that there were other defining features beyond forest-based subsistence that became the foundation of Mikea

identity. When the region returned to a period of relative calm from a political standpoint, those forest residents were more free to shift in and out of economic modes, engaging in farming, fishing, and wage labor. Yet their identity was already formed, and the basis of this was rooted in the forest.

I have defined the term, ethnic group, previously, but it bears repeating here. An ethnic group is a group whose members share certain beliefs, customs, and values due to their having a common background; these members distinguish themselves from other groups based on certain cultural features. Within the context of this definition of ethnic group, it would not seem a stretch to say that the Mikea constitute such a group, remembering that regardless of descent group to which one belongs, ethnic identity is culturally based, and hence, mutable.

Ethnic Mutability

So how does one explain the fact that karaza cut across ethnic boundaries within the Fihereña Region? First, we need to define the applicable descent group terms, clan, lineage, and tribe, and find their counterpart within the Malagasy language. Since the term, tribe, likely jumped out at the reader, this due to its having fallen out of favor within the anthropological community since the early 1970's, and at times ambiguous meaning, let us look at this first. Until around 1970, the three terms, ethnic group, tribe, and nation were used synonymously (Southall 1970). Tribe as a term fell out of favor, this due to the negative connotations stemming from this barely post-colonial period in the Africa region. Nation became synonymous with the term, state, meaning an

independent political unit or government. Ethnic group came more into favor as the term for designating what was previously referred to by all three of these terms.

I do not think that I am going too far out on the proverbial limb in saying that contemporary cultural anthropologists seem to tend to use the terms clan or lineage when tribe might be a better fit. If this is indeed the case, it may stem from the pejorative aura of the term, tribe, this residual from the colonial and post-colonial periods in the Africa region, and this may well apply more readily to those anthropologists who work in this region.

When related lineages and clans have a common name and identity, they become a tribe. Like lineages and clans, tribe implies a kinship-based grouping, however, it is more expansive than either lineage or clan, these being the components of a tribe. Ethnicity is a social or group identity that the individual ascribes to himself or herself and is also accepted by others. By contrast, membership to a descent group is usually ascribed at birth. This seems to be the major difference between tribe and ethnic group - the element that is kinship-based grouping, this being inherent in tribe.

For definitions of clan and tribe, I shall turn to Keesing (1975). A lineage is a descent group whose members can trace their descent from a known ancestor. A clan is a unilineal descent group whose members believe that their descent is from a common ancestor, but cannot trace their genealogy. Both lineages and clans are usually, but not always exogamous.

Consider the following terms in Malagasy:

Foko translates as *ethnie* or *groupe ethnique* in French and ethnic group in English.

Karaza translates as *groupe ethnique* or *tribu* in French and ethnic group or tribe in English, but it also means type or species, as in the greater animal world. *Antoko* or more complete, *Antoko iray firazana(na)* (this last word shows the difference between the Vezo word and that of the Merina, as well as most other groups) translates as *clan* in French and clan or lineage in English, or more literally, group with one ancestor or common ancestor.

Foko and *Karaza* are essentially synonymous in Malagasy; if there is any differentiation made, karaza is generally perceived to be on a bit smaller scale. I asked about these terms throughout the extensive geographical range of my fieldwork, talking with Vezo, Antandroy, Merina, Masikoro, and Sakalava-Menabe, all in Malagasy. I sought out French-speaking Malagasy, as well, to help out in clarification and to ensure that I was not missing something. All agreed on the terms foko and karaza. All agreed as well that karaza did not translate as clan or lineage, that this was the term, antoko iray firazana(na).

I feel that tribe would be a more apt term for what my informants called karaza, these named patrilineal descent groups for the following reasons: 1) endogamy is not prohibited, thus no restrictions on marriage within any of the karaza that I interviewed; 2) antoko iray firazana is the Malagasy and Vezo term for clan or lineage; 3) karaza is virtually synonymous with the term, foko; 4) foko, according to informants, means ethnic group. Thus, karaza should be viewed as tribes, confederations of clans or lineages, with membership ascribed at birth, and as such immutable. Foko should be viewed as ethnic group, whose membership is culturally determined, hence, mutable.

All of my Vezo informants identified themselves as belonging to the Vezo foko and one of the forty-three karaza. My Masikoro informants identified themselves as belonging to the Masikoro foko and one of a number of karaza. As noted earlier, there are a number of karaza that are linked to both of these foko. Bearing in mind the essential tenets that karaza membership is ascribed at birth while foko membership is culturally based, hence flexible, the mechanisms driving this crosscutting of foko are more readily grasped. Within the context of the Vezo seasonal migrations they established many contacts with groups from the interior, most of whom practiced a mixed economy that leaned predominantly on agriculture and supplemented by gleaning for invertebrates. Resulting from this contact, there was often the emergence of a marine fishing section within each of these karaza and subsequent integration into the Vezo foko. These maintained identification with their karaza, but merged into the larger grouping that was the Vezo ethnic group, thus being known as Vezo-Kimija, Vezo-Tanalana, or Vezo-Ohisoso, and so on.

There are Masikoro karaza that are unique to the Masikoro ethnic group. There are Masikoro karaza that are the same as Vezo karaza. In this latter, the larger ethnic grouping, the foko, is not the same, and this constitutes inter-ethnic boundaries on the foko level. If the karaza are the same or not the same, there will be inter-ethnic boundaries between Masikoro and Vezo. On the karaza level where there are subsistence as well as taboo differences within one karaza, due to longstanding association with either the Masikoro or Vezo foko, there exist intra-karaza boundaries, that is, intra-tribal boundaries. There are also cases of intra-ethnic boundaries within the constituent Vezo groups.

In a case like Bevato, where the three karaza came from the east, those who stayed in the east are considered and consider themselves, Masikoro. Those who came to the coast, adopted the Vezo subsistence and taboos, became Vezo. Those members of the same karaza who live on the coast, but practice a mixed economy of agriculture and gleaning are known as Vezom-potake. There are those who consider themselves Masikoro who are Vezom-potake. There are not those who consider themselves both Masikoro and Vezo, though some Vezom-potake will call themselves Vezo when asked initially. With further questioning it will be revealed that they have different faly and different subsistence.

Thus, people of the same karaza can belong to different foko. These are situations where individual tribes or ethnic groups can be classified into progressively broader ethnic groups. Going back to the term, karaza, which most often means tribe, thus kinship-based, recognize that it can also mean ethnic group, hence the universal informant insistence that karaza and foko are closely related terms. Three of the Vezo groups are included among the eighteen officially recognized ethnic groups in Madagascar - the Makoa, Sakalava, and Mahafaly. As noted earlier, the Makoa came to Madagascar as slaves, and there is still a stigma, according to Vezo informants, attached to marrying a Makoa. In Betania, there developed a marine fishing section of the Makoa group that merged into the broad Vezo society. Thus, if the Makoa are indeed an ethnic group, these would constitute intra-ethnic boundaries within the Makoa ethnic group. Within the Sakalava ethnic group, there are three regionally affiliated sub-ethnicities, from south to north: Sakalava-Menabe, Sakalava-Boina, and Sakalava-Varatra. Within the Sakalava-Menabe sub-ethnic group there developed a marine fishing section that

merged into the Vezo ethnic group. Thus, there are intra-ethnic boundaries within this sub-ethnic group. In writing this I recognize how it is fraught with irony, for there appears in a number of texts as well as Koechlin's writing (1984) that the Vezo are a sub-ethnic group of the Sakalava, due mainly to the previous Sakalava domination of western Madagascar.

The Vezo-Mahafaly are a different case than that of the other karaza within the Vezo foko. They are based on the proto-Vezo who came to Toli onboard the Arab dhows, and as such, are the foundation of the Vezo society. They were not formed by way of the emergence of a marine fishing section of the Mahafaly. The progenitors were male fishers from East Africa who married with Mahafaly women, learned their language, took the Mahafaly name, and proceeded to develop their own culture, material and otherwise, on the southern reaches of the Fihereña Coast.

Ethnic Continuity

As noted earlier in this thesis, my original research intent among the Vezo was to look at cultural change within a pre-industrial fishing people who had been exposed to wider markets and who had access to more modern technology. Once I established that the Vezo did indeed constitute a distinct ethnic group, the issue of ethnic continuity became not only more readily approached, but more pertinent.

Maintaining cultural integrity while accommodating change has been a re-occurring topic of interest in anthropology, particularly salient within the more recent issues concerning the movement of people, ideas, capital, and technology in the contexts of globalization and transnationalism (Nash 1994; Kearney 1995; Ong 1999; Bloch 2001).

Conventional economic wisdom would argue that changes in the economy of a group by necessity drive other changes such as social organization and cultural practices. However, I am contending that the contrary is happening to the Vezo, especially along the Fihereña Coast, that most traditionally intact part of the Vezo range. Are the Vezo a special case, an exception to materialist argument, an exception to economic change as a driver of social change?

Contact with more modern societies and the subsequent introduction to and adaptation of more modern technology as well as the emergence into larger economies, has not by necessity brought about global uniformity (Hannerz 1990). In a number of cases, this sort of contact has not rendered the predicted demise of traditional lifeways nor the subsistence systems that maintain them. In fact, the contrary has been the result for such geographically disparate groups as the Enga and Mendi of Highland New Guinea (Strathern 1999; Sahlins 1999) and the Eskimo of St. Lawrence Island and the Yukon (Jorgensen 1990). By utilizing more modern technology to improve existing subsistence systems and being exposed to a wider economic base in which to market their products, these groups have strengthened their cultural integrity in a process that Sahlins (1999: x) called "indigenization of modernity".

In the case of the Vezo, the shift from a subsistence economy (or semi-subsistence) to a market economy has encouraged them to remain in the coastal villages. This has especially been true since the expanded development of the connection with the Hong Kong market around 1980 for sea cucumbers. As discussed, diving for these has been potentially lucrative for young Vezo males, as with no other occupation in Southwest Madagascar could they earn as much. The development of this market connection as

well as the establishment of the three seafood companies in Toliara, have facilitated Vezo access to material goods such as radios, cassette players, and Western-style clothing, in addition to the more modern materials for fishing and sailing gear. Indeed, one often sees the young adults in the villages dressed in much less traditional clothing than their parents and grandparents. They listen to music from outside the area - mostly Malagasy, but some African and Caribbean music as well. When the young males go to the regional centers, especially Toliara, they are exposed to a faster paced lifestyle (still nothing a Westerner would recognize as particularly modern, with many dirt streets, open markets, and a plethora of rickshaws). So why do they remain in the villages when young adults from other ethnic groups in Madagascar, as well as in most of the developing world, leave the rural areas to seek opportunity in the cities? And in remaining in the villages, why do the young Vezo adhere to the long-established fishing organization that revolves around the patriarch of the extended family?

In answering both questions, I suggest that the economic change is the force behind this apparent stability of social organization found among the Vezo, particularly along the Fihereña Coast. It has been a matter of the proverbial right time and right place scenario. The economic situation changed for the better, so to speak, making fishing in village territorial waters more attractive during the very time period when lure of the cities was encouraging outmigration of other groups in Madagascar and elsewhere. This latter is most likely the reason that Bernard Koechlin predicted in the late 1960's or early 1970's that the Vezo would leave the villages for the regional centers. I suspect that had the seafood companies not been established in Toliara to buy Vezo seafood, outmigration would have occurred. Their establishment and the concurrent increased availability of

improved fishing gear appear to have had an inertia overcoming effect that rolled into and was swept along more swiftly by the improved Hong Kong connection for shark fins and sea cucumbers that began a decade later.

This array of circumstances and events can be viewed as a bit circuitous, for the seafood companies made inroads into the Fihereña villages to purchase seafood due to the depletion of marine resources in the Toliara area. Were the Vezo youth attracted to Toliara it would not be for fishing, because this is a much more gainful activity in the various village waters than in the regional capital of Toliara. Fishing is the basis of the Vezo subsistence system, it is a pervading element in all that they do, and as stated earlier, the Vezo do not like to work for others. Based on all of the above, the logical choice is to remain in the villages.

To best address the second question, one should recognize that the Vezo are not only oriented toward the marine environment, they are very family oriented. It is widely recognized among the Vezo that the eldest fishers are the most knowledgeable about the marine environment. Thus, adhering to extended family organization rather than splintering off to form their own nuclear units is an approach in which young males can benefit from the direction of the patriarch. As well, one of the reasons the Vezo give for remaining in the villages is their family ties.

It will not be this economic shift that effects change in Vezo social organization and cultural integrity. Rather, in the not-so-distant future, depletion of sea cucumbers in relatively shallow water and tourism could possibly be the drivers of social change among the Vezo, especially along the Fihereña Coast. As noted, the Vezo do not use diving gear, thus the depth at which they can operate in harvesting the benthic sea

cucumbers is limited to the lagoon in the southern half of the Fihereña and to the waters around the offshore islands along the northern Fihereña. There is the remote fishing ground west of Morondava, but this is shallow water as well, so the population of sea cucumbers will not likely withstand sustained fishing pressure. Harvesting of sea cucumbers, a fishing activity that is so attractive to young Vezo males, has a limited future unless Scuba gear is adopted to increase exploitation in deeper waters. The drawbacks to this approach are the initial expense of the necessary gear and the questionable sustainability of the deeper water resources.

Diving for sea cucumbers is certainly not the only marine activity in which young Vezo males engage. Netfishing, handlining, and the various other fishing methods involve far more young adults than diving. These fishing methods not only follow traditional pathways, but have as well been traditionally the activities to which Vezo turn when they reach the upper age limits of diving. This will, no doubt, continue to be the case. However, I feel that the situation will be another one of the juxtaposition of time and place, with many of the youngerVezo divers being drawn into the tourist industry. There are some Vezo who are engaged in the tourist industry in Anakao, Toliara, Ifaty, Mangily, Belo sur Mer, and Morondava. However, the time is not yet right for tourism involvement in the traditional heartland of the Vezo range. This may come as remote, ecologically oriented tourism development coincides with substantially diminished returns on diving forays.

Currently, infrastructure along the Fihereña Coast is very poorly developed, and this has not yet become a prime tourist destination, with the possible exception (if one left out the adjective, prime) of Ifaty and Mangily, on the southern extreme of the Fihereña, just

north of Toliara. However, with ecologically oriented tourism being the fastest growing sector of the tourist trade, this relatively pristine area will at some point be a target for development of this industry. I have already seen a somewhat dramatic increase in the number of four wheel drive vehicles passing through the village of Salary Varitra between 2003 and 2004. In 2003, it was fairly unusual to see an SUV pass along this rough track. In 2004, I saw as many as four a day - not quotidian, but certainly enough of a change that noticing it was unavoidable.

The picturesque fishing villages along this coast, beautiful waters, and the impressive, virtually unchanged sailing outrigger canoes of the Vezo, all lend themselves to such development. The issue of inaccessibility could be resolved by improving and extending the current sand and rock track, or by comfortable sea transport. Young Vezo might be lured away from traditional roles to serve as guides, taking tourists out in their canoes. Should some facsimile occur, and it likely will, what effect would this have on the integrity of the extended family household? For those Vezo engaged in tourism, the fishing knowledge of the elders would no longer be of such importance. However, the respect accorded the elders in Vezo society runs parallel with the veneration of the ancestors. The family oriented nature of the Vezo could well be a key in sustaining their cultural integrity, the extended family household possibly remaining intact despite yet another period of economic transition.

Significance of the Research for the Vezo

The Vezo have been presented in the literature as either a technical subgroup of the Sakalava or merely an indication of profession, so that if anyone in Madagascar lives by

the sea and fishes, as a result, they are Vezo. Thus, from the standpoint of written accounts produced by investigators of either the Vezo per se or the southwestern and mid-western regions of Madagascar, the Vezo are not regarded as a distinct cultural group with common origins and a shared sense of common history, nor are they counted among the officially recognized ethnic groups by the Malagasy government. Madgascar would appear to be more culturally diverse than is generally recognized. All of this is an indication of not only how poorly understood the meaning of ethnicity is in Madagascar, but also a clear indication of the substantial gaps in knowledge on the settlement history of this part of the broader Africa region.

The upshot of this research is that it presents a cogent argument for the recognition of the Vezo as a distinct ethnic group. At the state level, there is a tendency for the majority group to lump together minority groups, that is, people of diverse ethnicities. Naming a group establishes a boundary between it and other ethnic groups. In a polyethnic society like Madagascar, access to scarce resources is often determined by group membership. These scarce resources can include jobs, education, health oriented programs, and other government programs whose aim is to improve living conditions. In Madagascar, the majority group, the Merina, has been reasonably well studied, while other groups, especially those occupying the coastal areas, remain relatively unknown.

Implications for Other Groups

The approach of this research, while by no means radical, had a fresh air about it, in that it was not only involved, but allowed access to pieces of the ethnicity puzzle not previously exposed. The involved aspect pertains to the form of participant observation

that immediately put me in that place. The geographical scope of the research as well as its leaning heavily on the wealth of information cached within the oral traditions, facilitated connecting a few more dots, thus perhaps casting greater illumination upon the overall picture of what ethnicity means in this part of Madagascar.

In western Madagascar, particularly the Fihereña region, there are two groups besides the Vezo whose identity has been presented as being purely performative, that is tied entirely to their mode of subsistence. There are indications that at least one of these two, the Masikoro, have other features by which they define themselves as a distinct group. The third group, the Mikea, bear further investigation from the standpoint of their possibly constituting an ethnic group. My research among the Vezo may well provide a springboard from which to more fully understand the meaning of ethnicity among these other neighboring groups. The implications of such within the larger Malagasy society would be cast in the same light as that of the Vezo.

Further Research

During the course of this field research in western Madagascar, natural courses for subsequent research in different, but related realms, were revealed. Certainly there are indications that a similar approach concentrating on the Masikoro would likely render improved understanding of this group. The same could be said of the Mikea.

Vezo oral histories indicate that the design origins of their material culture centerpiece, the single outrigger canoe, run contrary to what the noted British maritime historian, James Hornell (1920) wrote about outrigger canoes in Madagascar. Their oral histories concerning the development of the sailing rig also run contrary to what I.C.

Campbell (1995) had to say about the sequence of the development of the sailing rig in the outrigger canoes of Oceania. Both of these issues are certainly of interest, with the latter having possible implications for widespread transoceanic settlement means and history, as the outriggers of both the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean likely have their origins in Southeast Asia.

The same oral traditions that figured strongly into my research on the meaning of ethnicity in this region of Madagascar, could play a decisive role in trying to understand the settlement history of this last major landmass occupied by humans. Any light shed upon this perplexing issue would reflect upon the understanding of the formation of contemporary groups in Madagascar as a whole. During the course of my collecting the oral histories dealing with the formation of the Vezo society, with its evident link to East Africa, I pursued the issue of prehistoric transoceanic migrations in sailing outrigger canoes, those that might more closely connect the west coast of Madagascar and the East African coast. It is my suspicion that vastly improved understanding of the earliest settlement of Al Komr would be produced by finding an analog between the oral histories of movement across the Mozambique Channel and evidence of prehistoric material culture in the form artifact assemblages on the southwest coast.

REFERENCES

ABRUZZI, WILLIAM S. 1982. Ecological theory and ethnic differentiation among human populations. *Current Anthropology* 23(1): 13-35.

ALLEN, PHILIP M. 1995. *Madagascar: Conflicts of authority in the great island.* Boulder: Westview Press.

ASTUTI, RITA. 1995a. *People of the sea: identity and descent among the Vezo of Madagascar.* Cambridge: University Press.

-----. 1995b. Identity, difference, and "ethnicity" among a fishing people of western Madagascar. *American Ethnologist* 22(3): 464-482.

ATKINSON, RONALD R. 1999. "The (re)construction of ethnicity in Africa: Extending the chronology, conceptualization and discourse," in *Ethnicity and nationalism in Africa*. Edited by P. Yeros, pp. 15-44. Wiltshire: Antony Rowe.

BAHUCHET, S. 1988. "Food supply uncertainty among the Aka Pygmies (Lobaye, Central African Republic)," in *Coping with uncertainty in the food supply.* Edited by I. de Garine and G.A. Harrison, pp. 118-149. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

BAILEY, R.C., G. HEAD, M. JENIKE, B. OWEN, R. RECHTMAN, and E. ZECHENTER. 1989. Hunting and gathering in tropical rain forest. Is it possible? *American Anthropologist* 91(1): 59-82.

BARENDSE, R.J.. n.d. Introduction and comments on the Conference on Malagasy cultural identity from the Asia perspective, Leiden University, 28-9 March 1994.

BARTH, FREDRIK. 1956. Ecologic relationships of ethnic groups in Swat, North Pakistan. *American Anthropologist* 58: 1079-1089.

-----. 1969. "Introduction," in *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of culture difference.* Edited by F. Barth, pp. 9-38. Oslo: Scandinavian University Books.

-----. 1989. The analysis of culture in complex societies. *Ethnos* 54: 120-142.

BLOCH, MAURICE. 1971. *Placing the dead: Tombs, ancestral villages and kinship organization in Madagascar*. London: Berkeley Square House.

-----. 2001. The ethnohistory of Madagascar. *Ethnohistory* 48: 293-299.

BROWN, MERVYN. 1979. *Madagascar rediscovered: A history from early times to independence*. Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books.

BURNEY, D.A. 1987. Late Holocene vegetational change in cental Madagascar. *Quarterly Research* 28: 130-143.

-----. 1996. "Holocene environmental change," in *Natural change and human impact in Madagacar*. Edited by S.M. Goodman and B.D. Patterson. Washington: Smithsonian Press.

-----. 1997. "Theories and facts regarding Holocene environmental change before human colonization," in *Natural change and human impact in Madagsacar*. edited by S.M. Goodman and B.D. Patterson. Washington: Smithsonian Press.

BURNHAM, PHILIP. 1996. *The politics of cultural difference in northern Cameroon.* Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.

CAMPBELL, I.C. 1995. The lateen sail in world history. *Journal of World History* 6(1): 1-23.

COHEN, RONALD. 1978. Ethnicity: Problem and focus in anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 7: 379-403.

CORDELL, JOHN C. 1973. Modernization and marginality. *Oceanus* 17: 28-33.

-----. 1989. *A sea of small boats.* Cambridge, MA: Cultural Survival.

COVELL, MAUREEN. 1987. *Madagascar: Politics, economics and society*. London: Frances Printer.

DECHAMPS, HUBERT. 1968. *Madagascar*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

-----. 1972. *Histoire de Madagascar.* Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault.

DEWAR, ROBERT E. 1995. Of nets and trees: Untangling the reticulate and dendritic in Madagascar's prehistory. *World Archaeology* 26 (3): 301-318.

-----. 1996. "Were people responsible for the extinction of Madagasar's subfossils, and how will we ever know?" in *Natural change and human impact in Madagascar.* Edited by S.M. Goodman and B.D. Patterson. Washington: Smithsonian Press.

DEWAR, ROBERT E. and HENRY T. WRIGHT. 1993. The culture history of Madagascar. *Journal of World Prehistory* 7(4): 417-466.

DE VOS, GEORGE. 1975. "Ethnic pluralism: Conflict and accommodation," *in Ethnic identity: Cultural continuities and change.* Editied by G. De Vos and L. Romanucci, pp. 5-41. Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing.

EGGERT, KARL. 1986. "Mahafaly as misnomer," in *Madagascar: Society and history.* Edited by K. Middleton, pp. 3-36. Boston: Brill.

ESOAVELOMANDROSO, MANSARE. 2001. Identity and history. *Ethnohistory* 48: 319-322.

FANONY, FULGENCE. 1986. "*A propos des Mikea,"* in *Madagascar, society and history.* Edited by C. Kottak, J. Rakotoarisoa, A. Southall, and P. Verin, pp. 133-142. Durham: Carolina Academic Press.

FAUBLEE, MARCELLE et JACQUES FAUBLEE. 1950. Pirogues et navigation chez les Vezo du sud-ouest de Madagascar. *Anthropology* 54: 432-454.

FOREMAN, SHEPARD. 1967. Cognition and the catch: The location of fishing spots in a Brazilian coastal village. *Ethnology* 6(4): 417-421.

HAALAND, GUNNAR. 1969. " Economic determinants in ethnic processes," in *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of cultural difference.* Edited by F. Barth, pp. 53-73. Oslo: Scandinavian University Books.

HANNERZ, U. 1990. "Cosmopolitans and locals in world culture," in *Global culture.* Edited by M. Featherstone, pp. 237-251. London: Sage.

HARRIES, PATRICK. 1988. The roots of ethnicity: Discourse and the politics of language construction in South-East Africa. *African Affairs, The Journal of the Royal African Society* 87: 25-52.

HAWKES, KRISTIN, KIM HILL, AND JAMES F. O'CONNELL. 1982. Why hunters gather: Optimal foraging and the Aché of Eastern Paraguay. *American Ethnologist* 43: 379-398.

HILL, KIM, HILLARD KAPLAN, KRISTIN HAWKES, AND A. MAGDELENA HURTADO. 1987. Foraging decisions among Aché hunter-gatherers: New data and implications for optimal foraging models. *Ethology and Sociobiology* 8: 1-36.

HORNELL, JAMES. 1919. The affinities of East African outrigger canoes. *Man* 55: 49-54.

-----. 1920. The common origin of the outrigger canoes of Madagascar and East Africa. *Man* 67: 134-139.

-----. 1934. Indonesian influence on East African culture. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 64: 305-332.

JENKINS, RICHARD. 2003. "Rethinking ethnicity: identity, categorization, and power," in *Race and ethnicity: Comparative and theoretical approaches.* Edited by J. Stone and R. Dennis, pp. 59-71. Cornwall: Blackwell Publishing.

JOHANNES, ROBERT E. 1977. Traditional law of the sea in Micronesia. *Micronesica* 13: 121-127.

-----. 1981. *Words of the lagoon: Fishing and marine lore in the Palau District of Micronesia.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

JOLLY, ALISON. 1980. *A world like our own: Man and nature in Madagascar.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

-----. 1988. "The Madagascar challenge: Human needs and fragile ecosystems," in *Environment and the poor: Development strategies for a common agenda.* Edited by H. Jeffrey Leonard. New Brunswick: Transaction Books.

JORGENSEN, J.G. 1990. *Oil age Eskimos.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

KAUFMANN, JEFFREY C. 1998. "The cactus was our kin: Pastoralism in the spiny dessert of southern Madagascar," in *Changing nomads in a changing world.* Edited by J. Ginat and A.K. Khazanov. Sussex: Academic Press.

KEARNEY, MICHAEL. 1995. The local and the global: The anthropology of globalization and transnationalism. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 547-565.

KEESING, ROGER M. 1975. *Kin groups and social structure.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

KENT, RAYMOND K. 1970. *Early kingdoms in Madagascar 1500-1700.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

KENT, SUSAN. 2002. "Interethnic encounters of the first kind," in *Ethnicity, hunter-gatherers, and the "other".* Edited by S. Kent, pp. 1-27. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.

KOECHLIN, BERNARD. 1984. "Une communaute de semi-nomades marins de Madagascar," in *The fishing culture of the world.* Edited by B. Gunda, pp. 745-775. Budapest: Akademiai Kiad.

KOTTAK, CONRAD PHILLIP. 1980. *The past in the present: History, ecology,*

and cultural variation in highland Madagascar. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

LAMBEK, MICHAEL. 2001. Reflections on the "ethno-" in Malagasy ethnohistory. *Ethnohistory* 48: 301-308.

LARSON, PIER M. 1996. Desperately seeking 'the Merina' (Central Madagascar): Reading ethnonyms and their semantic fields in African identity histories. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22(4): 541-560.

LEACH, EDMOND. 1954. *Political systems of highland Burma: A study of Kachin social structure.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

LEE, RICHARD B. AND IRVEN DEVORE. 1966. "Problems in the study of hunters and gatherers," in *Man the hunter.* Edited by R.B. Lee and I DeVore, pp. 3-12. Chicago: Aldine Publishing.

LEVI-STRAUSS, CLAUDE. 1963. *Totemism.* Boston: Beacon Press.

MACPHEE, R.D.E. and D.A. BURNEY. 1991. Dating of modified femora of extinct dwarf hippopotamus from southern Madagascar: Implications for constrainign human colonization and vertebrate exinction events. *Journal of Archaeological Science* 18: 695-706.

MARIKANDIA, MANSARE. 2001. The Vezo of the Fihereña Coast, Southwest Madagascar: Yesterday and today. *Ethnohistory* 48(1): 158-178.

MEEHAN, BETTY. 1977. Hunters by the seashore. *Journal of Human Evolution* 6: 363-370.

MIDDLETON, KAREN. 1999. *Ancestors, power and history in Madagascar.* Boston: Brill.

MOERMAN, MICHAEL. 1965. Ethnic identification in a complex civilization: Who are the Lue? *American Anthropologist* 67: 1215-1230.

NASH, JUNE. 1994. Global integration and subsistence insecurity. *American Anthropologist* 96(1): 7-30.

NEWCOMER, PETER J. 1972. The Nuer are Dinka: An essay on origins and environmental determinism. *Man* 7(1): 5-11.

ONG, AIHWA. 1999. *Flexible citizenship: The cultural logics of transnationality.* Durham: Duke University Press.

PAULIAN, RENAUD. 1984. "Madagascar: A micro-continent between Africa and

Asia," in *Madagascar: Key environments.* Edited by Alison Jolly. Oxford: Permagon Press.

RAKATOARISOA, J. 1995. "A cultural history of Madagascar: Evolution and interpretation of the archaeological evidence," in *Natural change and human impact in Madagascar.* Edited by S.M. Goodman and B.D. Patterson. Washington: Smithsonian Press.

SAHLINS, MARSHALL. 1966. "Notes on the original affluent society," in *Man the hunter.* Edited by R.B. Lee and I. DeVore, pp. 85-89. Chicago: Aldine Publishing.

-----. 1999. What is anthropological enlightenment? Some lessons of the Twentieth Century. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28: i-xxiii.

SCHWARTZ, THEODORE. 1975. "Cultural totemism: Ethnic identity primitive and modern," in *Ethnic identity: Cultural continuities and change.* Edited by G. DeVos and L. Rommanucci-Ross, pp. 106-131. Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing.

SHARP, LESLEY A. 2001. Youth, land and liberty in coastal Madagascar: A children's independence. *Ethnohistory* 48: 205-234.

SOUTHALL, AIDAN W. 1970. The illusion of tribe. *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 5: 28-50.

-----. 1986. "Common themes in Malagasy culture," in *Madagascar: Society and history.* Edited by C.P. Kottak, J. Rakotoarisoa, A. Southall, and P. Verin, pp. 411-426. Durham: Carolina Academic Press.

STRATHERN, A. 1999. Gender, ideology and money in Mount Hagen. *Man* 14: 530-548.

TONKIN, ELIZABETH. 1992. *Narrating our pasts: The social construction of oral history.* Cambridge: University Press.

TUCKER, BRAM. 2002. Mikea economic diversification and forager identity. Paper presented at the Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies, Chicago.

TYSON, PETER. 1996. *The eighth continent: Life, death, and discovery in the lost world Madagascar.* New York: Harper Collins.

UCHENDU, VICTOR C. 1975. "The dilemma of ethnicity and polity primacy in black Africa," in *Ethnic identity: Cultural continuities and change.* Edited by G. De Vos and L. Romanucci, pp. 265-275. Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing.

VERIN, PIERRE. 1975. "Austronesian contributions to the culture of Madagascar: Some archaeological problems," in *East Africa and the Orient.* Edited by H.N. Chttick and R.I. Rotberg. London: Africana.

-----. 1986. *The history of civillzation in North Madagascar.* Rotterdam: Balhena.

WALSH, ANDREW. 2001. When origins matter: The politics of commemoration in northern Madagascar. *Ethnohistory* 48: 237-256.

WELLS, NEIL A. and BENJAMIN R. ANDRIAMIHAJA. 1996. "Theories and facts regarding Holocene environmental change before and after human colonization," in *Natural change and human impact in Madagascar.* Edited by S.M. Goodman and B.D. Patterson. Washington: Smithsonian Press.

WHITE, LANDEG. 1984. 'Tribes' and the aftermath of the Chilembwe rising. *African Affairs, Journal of the Royal Africa Society* 83; 511-541.

WINTERHALDER, BRUCE, AND ERIC A. SMITH. 1981. *Hunter-gatherer foraging strategies.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

WRIGHT, H.T. and J. RAKATOARISOA. 1997. "Cultural transformations and the environment," in *Natural change and human impact in Madagascar.* Edited by S.M. Goodman and B.D. Patterson. Washington: Smithsonian Press.

YOUNT, JAMES W., TSIAZONERA, and BRAM T. TUCKER. 2001. Constructing Mikea identity: Past or present links to forest and foraging. *Ethnohistory* 48: 257-291.

`

APPENDIX A

ETHNIC GROUPS AND DESCENT GROUPS

Table 1. Ethnic groups officially recognized in Madagascar.

Ethnic Group	**Percent of Population in 1987**
Merina	26.1
Betsimisiraka	14.9
Betsileo	12.0
Tsimihety	7.2
Sakalava	5.8
Antandroy	5.0
Tanalana	3.8
Antaimoro	3.4
Bara	3.3
Sihanaka	2.4
Antanosy	2.3
Mahafaly	1.6
Antaifasy	1.2
Makoa	1.1
Bezanozano	0.8
Antakarana	0.6
Antambahoaka	0.4
Others	1.1

These data were taken from Covell (1987). The data are used as census categories. Note that the Vezo, Masikoro, and Mikea are lumped, along with likely a number of other groups, in the last category.

Table 2. Vezo karaza - descent groups within the Vezo ethnic group

Vezo-Tanolahy
Vezo-Sara
Vezo-Tankaroke
Vezo-Tsivoky
Vezo-Tsimanabobo
Vezo-Timoita
Vezo-Temangotriky
Vezo-Sarambe
Vezo-Tetimbola
Vezo-Panjaka
Vezo-Tsifotsy-hariva
Vezo-Tsiveta
Vezo-Tomongotroke
Vezo-Voroneoke
Vezo-Tandavoke
Vezo-Tsijory
Vezo-Mahafaly
Vezo-Timangaro
Vezo-Timarobe
Vezo-Mangigano
Vezo-Marofohy
Vezo-Marobe
Vezo-Saramasay
Vezo-Kimija
Vezo-Ohisoso
Vezo-Hohimalani
Vezo-Tsimamahoke
Vezo-Jabala
Vezo-Tsimanavazaja

Vezo-Tanalana
Vezo-Firazagna
Vezo-Tihala
Vezo-Sakoandahy
Vezo-Besakoa
Vezo-Timangotro
Vezo-Tifanotro-Fotsy
Vezo-Tifanotro-Mainty
Vezo-Kotronaomby
Vezo-Sakalava-Menabe
Vezo-Varanga
Vezo-Makoa
Vezo-Ansanotelo
Vezo-Antinosy

These karaza names were obtained from Vezo informants. Their displacement along the west coast of Madagascar is convoluted, but the general south to north trend is followed in the list, beginning in the south.

APPENDIX B

OUTRIGGER PARTS AND TARGET SPECIES

Table 1. Outrigger canoe parts and wood used

Outrigger Part		**Wood Used**	
English	**Vezo Dialect**	**Vezo Dialect**	**Latin Binomial**
main hull (vaka)	roka	farafatse	*Givotea madagascariensis*
outrigger float (ama)	fanare	farafatse	
		bui	*Jatropha curcas*
outrigger arms (aka)	varone	voaovy	not determined
port crossbrace	linga	voaovy	
athwartship braces	fihamike	voaovy	
railcap	fararafara	hazo mafinto	*Cinnamomum aromaticum*
maststep	fantia	nonoke	not determined
seats	fitoera	somo	*Didiera* sp.
ama pegs	tatike	vantango	not determined
dowels (fasteners)	tailo	hazo haranza	not determined
mast	tehe	akao	*Casuarina equisetifolia*
sprit	tehe	akao	
paddle	five	manary	not determined

The Vezo terms came from Vezo informants.

The latin binomials were taken from Faublée et Faublée (1950).

Table 2. List of marine species of economic or nutritional importance to the Vezo

FISHES: Cartilaginous and Bony

Vezo Dialect	**English Common Name**	**Latin Binomial**
Antserak	Halfbeak	*Hemirampus archipelagicus*
Antserak zava	Needlefish	*Strongylura incisa*
Ambariake	Mojarra	*Gerres acinaces*
Vahoho	Yellowfin Bream	*Rhabdosargus sarba*
Lovok	Mullet	*Valamugil seheli*
Votro	Grunt	*Haemulon* sp.
Tapaparoha	Onespot Snapper	*Lutjanus monostigma*
Fay Andema	Stingray	*Dasyatis* sp.
Fay Vandy	Spotted Eagle Ray	*Aetobatus narinari*
Gepo	Herring	*Herklotsichthys* sp.
Kashek	Hind	*Cephalophoalis* sp.
Lovo Hara	Marbled Grouper	*Epinephelus polypheakadion*
Lovo Mena	Coralgrouper	*Epinephelus* sp.
Ambishe	Russell's Snapper	*Lutjanus russelli*
Akio Foty	Requiem Shark	*Carcharhinus* sp.
Akio Viko	Hammerhead Shark	*Sphynra mokarran*
Soroboa	Guitarfish	*Rhynchobatus* sp.
Ambashoe	Red Snapper	*Lutjanus bohar*
Angelique (Fr.)	Flametail Snapper	*Lutjanus fulvus*
Aloalo	Barracuda	*Sphyraena barracuda*
Amboramasak	Squaretail Rabbitfish	*Siganus luridus*
Fia Antsifa	Bluespine Unicornfish	*Naso unicornis*
Toho	Flying Gurnard	*Dactylopterus volitans*
Bod Daloha	Parrotfish	*Scarus* sp.
Baloke	Angelfish	*Apolemichthys* sp.
Fia Nakoho	Butterflyfish	*Chaetodon* sp.

Vezo Dialect	**English Common Name**	**Latin Binomer**
Fia Ambonzo	Wrasse	*Anampses* sp.
Fia Mashiske	Sweetlips (Grunts)	*Plectorhinchus* sp.
Fia Somochi	Goatfish	*Parupeneus* sp.
Lamatsa	King Mackerel	*Scomberomorus* sp.
Kinirike	Striped Mackerel	*Rastrelliger kanagurta*
Lamerra	Moray Eel	*Gymnothorax* sp.
Dangiry	Silver Pompano	*Trachinotus blochii*
Talantala	Small-spotted Pompano	*Trachinotus bailloni*
Lointini	Goggle-eye	*Priacanthus hamrur*
Lanora	Tille Trevally	*Caranx tille*
Tsara Masherok	Half-spotted Hind	*Cephalophobis* sp.
Vashitsa	Ladyfish	*Elops saurus*
Voavoa	Indo-Pacific Tarpon	*Megalops cyprinoides*
Lamilamy	Flounder	*Samariscus* sp.

INVERTEBRATES

Angissy	Squid	*Loligo* sp.
Horita	Octopus	*Octopus* sp.
Tsitsike	Lobster	*Panulirus* sp.
Patsa	Shrimp	*Penaeus* sp.
Zanga Benono	Black Teatfish	*Holothuria nobilis*
Zanga Berosy	Prickly Redfish	*Thelenota ananas*
Zanga Rorohankena	Surf Redfish	*Actinopyga mauritiana*
Bedza Mena	Casque Rouge	*Cypraecassis rufa*
Busike	Whelk	*Fasciolaria trapezium*

MARINE TURTLES

Fano Hara	Reef Turtle	*Chelonia umbricata*

APPENDIX C

VEZO DIALECT

Table 1. Vezo verbs beginning with the letter *M*

Vezo Dialect	**English**
mila	look for
mihina	eat
misotro	drink
manoroka	kiss
milely	make love (copulate)
miasa	work
maman	urinate
mangery	defecate
mangi-mangy	rest, relax
mianetse	study
matory	sleep
mikaroke	research
mamboly	cultivate (agriculture)
mihake	glean (for marine invertebrates)
maminta	handline (fishing)
mihaza	fish with a net
maniereke	dive
manasa tana	wash the hands
manasa lamba	wash clothes
manasa tare	wash the face
mandro	bathe
mipetreke	to stay or live in a place
manoitre	to steer a boat
manoratra	to write
mazava	to understand
matahotse	to fear

midinike	to think
mikarakara	to look for
mijery	to look at
mandano (milomano)	to swim
miamby	to purchase
mipody	to return (come back)
mihira	to sing
mitiry	to grow
mive	to paddle
mihomehey	to smile

There are more *M* verbs, but this list is sufficient to give the impression that most of the Vezo life activities are covered by verbs that begin with the letter *M*. The overwhelming number of *M* verbs in Malagasy in general can, at least in part, be attributed to the conversion of many nouns to verbs by adding the prefixes *ma* or *mi*. For example, *asa* is the noun, work, while *miasa* is the verb, to work; *oroka* is the noun, kiss, while *manoroka* is the verb, to kiss; *tohotra* is the noun, fear, while *matohotra* is the verb, to fear.

Malagasy was transliterated from Arabic script to Latin script by British missionaries in the early nineteenth century. It would appear that this process of transliteration has produced some seemingly incongruous pronunciation and orthography relations. The most readily produced as an example is the pronunciation of the letter, *o* which is the equivalent of *oo* in English. For example, Vezo is pronounced Vezoo, and foko is pronounced fookoo.

The Vezo dialect is quite distinctive and markedly different from Merina, the official Malagasy dialect. As noted earlier in the text, the radiated tortoise is *sokotra* in Merina (as well as Antanosy and Tanalana), but is *tsakafe* in Vezo. *Riake, troke, fia* (ocean, wind, fish) in Vezo are *ranomasina, rivotra,* and *trondro* in Merina. Where nouns are the same or similar between Vezo and Merina, they often differ in the ending, with the Vezo dialect's tendency to shorten these. For example, *lakana, vorona, volana, volona, olona*

(outrigger canoe, bird, moon, hair, people) in Merina are *laka*, *voro, vola, volo,* and *olo* in the Vezo dialect.

APPENDIX D

MADAGASCAR MAPS


COMOROS
Moroni
MAYOTTE
(FRANCE)
Iles Glorieuses
(FRANCE)
Geyser Reef
Mozambique Channel
Juan de Nova
(FRANCE)
Nosy Chesterfield
Nosy Barren
(Barren Is.)
Antsiranana
ANTSIRANANA
Mahajanga
MAHAJANGA
Ikahavo Plateau
Bongolava
Bemaraha
ANTANANARIVO
Antananarivo
TOAMASINA
Toamasina
Antsirabe
Fianarantsoa
FIANARANTSOA
MADAGASCAR
Makay Massif
TOLIARA
Toliara
Morondava
Belo-Tsiribihina
Miandrivazo
Ambositra
Fandriana
Ankazoabo
Betioky
Amboasary
Ambovombe
Vohipeno
Manakara
Mananjary
Ifanadiana
Ambatondrazaka
Analamaitso Plateau
Andilamena
Maroantsetra
Masoala Pen.
Nosy Ste. Marie
Mananara
Vavatenina
Analalava
Befandriana
Tropic of Capricorn
INDIAN OCEAN
Tanjona Vohimena
Tanjona Vilanandro
© Copyright by HAMMOND INCORPORATED, Maplewood, N.J.

Blowup of Main Study Area:
Toliara to Morondava

APPENDIX E

BOTRY CONSTRUCTION

The botry are typically from fifteen to eighteen meters l.o.a. (length over all), double-ended, shallow draft, with straight, full keels. The construction is plank on frame, with sawn, double ribs. The ribs are hand hewn with foot adzes and made up with hardwood dowel fasteners. These in turn are fastened to the keel with galvanized through bolts. The hulls are single-planked and fastened with galvanized square shank boatnails that are predrilled, the heads recessed, but in lieu of bungs, the heads are covered with caulking and paint. For hull rigidity, there are two to three stringers that run inside the ribs, the number depending on the builder. The planks are caulked, first with cotton caulking, which in turn is covered with the same mastique that covers the nail heads, then paint. No edge bevel is planed into the planks to accept and hold the cotton caulking, rather they are left square, with caulking driven with caulking irons to take up the slight gap. This approach is contrary to wooden boatbuilding techniques in the United States and Europe. It is the same caulking approach that is used in both the Caribbean and North Africa. Paint is used above the waterline, and most commonly, goudron is used below the waterline. This latter is the petroleum product that I mentioned earlier - it has a tar-like consistency that is cut with kerosene which allows it to be applied like paint. The same product is applied to the below the waterline part of the outrigger canoes. It is vastly cheaper than anti-fouling bottom paint. The botry have an outboard rudder, hung on a three gudgeon and pintle arrangement. All of the wood for the construction comes from the forest to the east, with this being an economic interaction with the Masikoro.

These are two masted schooners that are gaff-rigged. The sails are canvas and are sewn locally. They have a bowsprit with two headsails. If the weather permits, they run two topsails to supplement the mainsails. The hull shape has a decidedly Arab influence,

particularly evidenced in the long, straight keel and shallow draft. The sailing rig is unquestionably of European influence. As the hulls are shallow draft, the only ballast is in the form of cargo, there is no iron shoe running along the bottom of the keel, and they have no lead in the keel, they are potentially very fast vessels. The impressive spread of canvas, particularly with the topsails aloft, do nothing to diminish this potential. The speed is indeed borne out, as I witnessed on numerous occasions. I suspect that it is not at all unreasonable to say that with favorable winds, on a beam or broad reach, a large botry can do fifteen knots. These vessels are close winded as well. They carry no engine nor do they use mechanical advantage in sail handling other than blocks, nor in handling the anchor rode apart from a simple hand turned windlass. An ample crew and muscle power are used to accomplish these tasks.