

## The Masikoro of Madagascar



The name Masikoro [mASikUr] was first used to indicate all the different clans subdued by a prominent dynasty, the Andrevola, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, just south of the Onilahy river to the Fiherenana river. The name later became restricted to those living between the Onilahy and the Mangoky rivers.

Some use the name Masikoro to distinguish the people of the interior from the Vezo on the coast, but the Masikoro themselves, when prompted, strongly distance themselves from the Vezo in terms of custom, language and behavior. Closer to the Masikoro than the Vezo are the Tañalaña (South) and the Bara (towards the North and East). In literature the Masikoro are often counted among the southern Sakalava with whom many similarities can be drawn. Masikoro land is a region of difficult access, often experiencing drought. The people are agro-pastoral. A diversity of agricultural activities are practiced (rice, beans, cotton, maize, manioc) and cattle raising is very important (more than two heads of cattle per inhabitant). Recently rampant cattle-rustling is causing many Masikoro to reduce their cattle herds. They are hard-working and these days have very little leisure time.

The Masikoro are a proud people, characteristically rural. Ancestral traditions are held high among them as is correct language use for specific situations, which automatically grades the speaker as one who shows respect or who does not. It is a dishonor for them to be dirty and they can be recognized by the way they dress. The influence of the big towns is resented for its corruption and schooling is not consistently a priority to them. They don't like to see their children go far away. Their strongest bond is with their tradition and although they easily show interest in the Christian faith, even professing it, only a few Masikoro are truly committed to the faith.

**Primary Religion:**

Tribal Religion

**Disciples (Matt 28.19):**

5%

**Churches:**

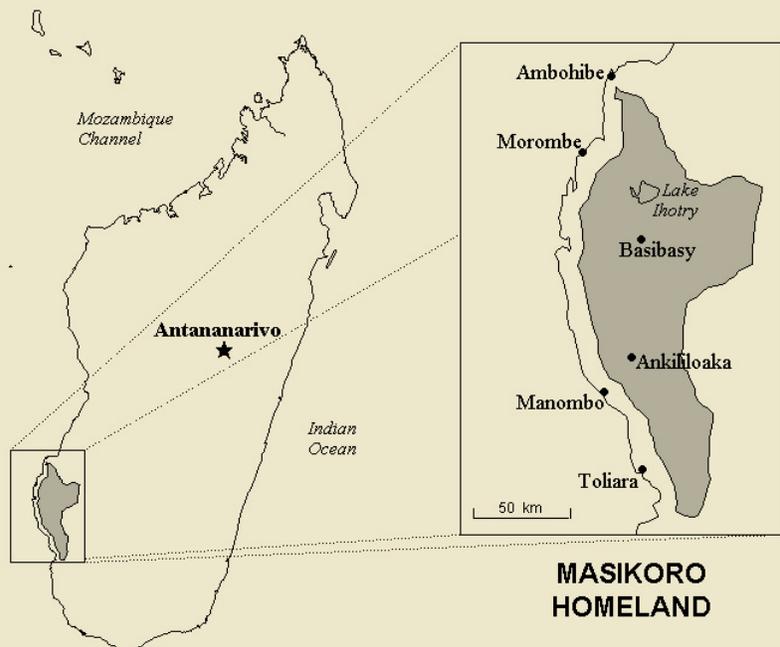
200

**Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):**

None in their language

**Population (date):**

90,000 (2001)



**MASIKORO  
HOMELAND**

## The Masikoro of Madagascar

Item Name	Item Note	
<b>Have They Heard The Gospel?</b>		<b>Profile Summary</b>
Call Themselves Christian (%)	17%	
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	5%	
Believe In The Local Traditional Religion (%)	90%	
Number Of Pastors	20	
Comment (Pastors)	1:3,500 (About 60 in the region: 20 pastors, 7 evangelists and 1 missionary from the Lutheran church; 8 priests, 5 brothers and 19 sisters from the Catholic church)	
Number Of Missionaries Working	5	
Comment (Number Of Missionaries)	based on missionary ratio of 1:20,000 and population of 90,000	
Response To The Gospel	Rapid growth, but largely nominal or syncretistic; The Masikoro are seemingly very responsive to the gospel, but are quick to return to their traditional beliefs. One example is the evangelical campaigns carried out in the 1970s, when hundreds accepted the gospel and were baptized, but after a few years only a very small percentage continued in the faith. This still seems to be the pattern today.	
Number Of Churches	200	
Comment (Churches)	About 80 Lutheran and 120 Catholic in the area.	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	No. There are some Bible stories and a hymn-book in Sakalava, a related dialect. However the Bible stories were translated very long ago, and apparently cannot even be fully understood today by younger Sakalava people. There is also a Sakalava catechism in archives in Norway, but unavailable in Madagascar.	
Translation Medium	None	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	Literacy rate; lack of understanding: the Masikoro do not understand the available Malagasy Bible, which is in the official language. Hence many believe that Christianity is the religion of those from the highlands, around the capital. In addition there are some words in the Bible which the Masikoro also have in their own language, but which have a derogatory or even offensive meaning to them.	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	None	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	Yes, much assistance can be given. Apart from Bible translation, other particular needs are solid Bible teaching, and medical, agricultural, educational and literacy aid.	
<b>Population All Countries</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
World Population For This People	90,000	
World Population (Date)	2001	
World Population (Urban Percent)	3%	
Comment (World Population)	Population is an estimate only, as census takings since the 1970s do not include ethnic groups, and even then the Masikoro were counted as part of the Sakalava.	
<b>Countries Where People Group Lives</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
Country Name	Madagascar	
<b>Geography &amp; Environment</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
Location	South-western Madagascar	
Country	Madagascar	
Longitude	44 E	
Latitude	22 S	
Comments (Geography & Environment)	The total Masikoro region consists of the Mangoky delta, the planes of Befandriana-Sud and lower Manombo, Fiherenana, and Onilahy as well as the dunes and Mikea forest.	
<b>Language &amp; Linguistics</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
Primary Language	Masikoro	
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Very receptive	
Comment (On Other Mother Tongues)	Masikoro tend to esteem their language highly and to resist its "corruption".	

# The Masikoro of Madagascar

Item Name	Item Note	
Comments (Related Languages)	All Malagasy languages are related to a degree; the closest to Masikoro are southern Sakalava, western Bara, Tañalaña.	
Comments (Neighbor Languages)	Sakalava, Bara, Mahafaly, Vezo	
Active Language Programs	Yes, but in Official Malagasy only	
<b>Literacy</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
Adult Literacy Percentage	Less than 25%	
Active Literacy Program	Yes, but in Official Malagasy only	
Publications In Vernacular	Very few - some stories, practically unknown outside of academic circles	
Comment (Literacy)	Literacy is currently only taught in the official language, which is related to but very different from Masikoro.	
<b>Economics</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
Subsistence Type	Pastoralists	
Subsistence Type	Agriculturalists	
Income Sources	Cotton, rice, cassava, beans	
Products / Crafts	None	
Trade Partners	Local Indians (commercial), Bara and Vezo (produce exchange)	
Modernization / Utilities	There was a program introducing cattle-drawn ploughs, but because the cattle have become so few, due to large-scale cattle rustling, hardly any are in use.	
Comment (Economy)	Only those who grow cotton have a good income; most grow only what they need to eat. It is possible to produce much more, but lack of knowledge and inherent corruption among local officials prevents any real progress. In addition, fewer and fewer are keeping cattle because of the cattle theft.	
<b>Community Development</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
Health Care (Quality)	Poor	
Comment (Health Care)	There are a few hospitals and dispensaries in the area, but most only go to these as a last resort, relying rather on local traditional healers. Infant mortality is high, and many mothers also die in child-birth.	
Diet (Quality)	Fair	
Comment (Diet)	Mainly starch with a little protein, e.g. chicken. Hardly any use of green leaves or other vegetables.	
Water (Quality)	Good	
Comment (Water)	Water is available, but is not being exploited.	
Shelter Description	Mud walls on a wooden frame, grass roof.	
Electricity	Less than 1% of all households	
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	Poor	
Comment (Energy)	Most use wood for cooking and kerosene lamps for lighting.	
Clothing	Men wear shorts and t-shirt with lamba-be, a large cloth, draped. Women wrap a lamba-hoany, also a type of large cloth, around themselves.	
Transportation	Ox-cart, bicycle, taxi-brousse along the main road, which is passable 8 months of the year.	
Infant Mortality Rate	10%	
Leading Cause Of Death	Malaria	
<b>Society &amp; Culture</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
Family Structures	Many clans, and generally large families, but perhaps not as cohesive as in the past, when the father and elders were responsible for the family's welfare. This responsibility now frequently shifts to the most "wealthy" in the family, often a young man or woman with a government post or similar.	
Neighbor Relations	Good relations in general, although some lack of trust.	
Authority / Rule	The mpitaha-kazomanga is the highest authority in the clan. This is a position held by a particular lineage, and transfers to the oldest living member.	

# The Masikoro of Madagascar

Item Name	Item Note
Social Habits/Groupings	Villages are generally very large, and marriages are generally kept within the group (marriage with outsiders is frowned upon, especially with those from the highlands). Fatidra, a blood-covenant between two parties, is practiced.
Cultural Change Pace	Slow
Identification With National Culture	Distinct
Self Image	Prestigious
Judicial / Punishment System	The lonake (village head) presides over judicial cases. The highest punishment is arian-donake, permanent banishment from the village.
Celebrations	Circumcision, bilo (healing rite), fandeo (marriage ceremony), soron-anake (the official acceptance ceremony of a child by the father), , funerals (the latter is apparently a fairly recent change for the Masikoro - a funeral was not formerly an occasion for celebration, although it always was an important ceremony).
Recreations	Ringa (wrestling, where one tries to throw the other over), doranga (type of boxing match, surrounded by women chanting, clapping and dancing as encouragement)
Art Forms	None, although in the past woodwork was known among them. Due to their difficult economic circumstances, leisure time is becoming increasingly rare.
Attitude To Outsiders	Very receptive
Attitude To Change	Very resistant
History Of People Group	<p>There are largely five groups of Masikoro today:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tañolahy ("those who live at the Onilahy river"), from the communes of Ambohimahavelona, Saint Augustin and Ambolofoty;</li> <li>2. Lehin'i Fihereña or lehin'i Toliara ("people from the Fiherenana river" or "from Tulear"), from the communes of Miary and Maromiandra;</li> <li>3. Lehin'i Manombo ("the people from the Manombo river"), from the communes of Ankilimalinika, Marofoty, Tsianisiha, Ankarabato, Ankililoaka and Analamisampy;</li> <li>4. Lehy avaratsy ("the people of the North"), who live in the communes of Antanimieva, Befandriana-Sud, Andrenalamivola;</li> <li>5. Lehin'i Volirano ("the people from the depths of the water /du fond de l'eau"), who live in the regions of Tanandava-Angarazy and Ambahikely. The Masikoro region of the Manombo river is the most homogeneous of all five. To the north they tend to be influenced by the Bara, and to the south by the Vezo.</li> </ol> <p>Due to its history the region is ethnically heterogeneous – many Tandroy, Tesaka and others are found here.</p> <p>One small sub-group of the Masikoro are the Mikea people, who speak the same language, but who live in a different milieu (the forest) and have adapted their lifestyle and customs to suit this reality. Contrary to the Masikoro's openness to outsiders, the Mikea are very shy, but also very resistant to change. Bara and Masikoro history intertwine at their origins, having both migrated westward from the Itomampy river in the east towards the end of the sixteenth century, according to oral histories. They have influenced each other much through the years in the South-West of Madagascar in terms of war and covenant, land disputes and cattle rearing and these days also through intermarriage.</p> <p>The Masikoro kingdom was at its height around 1690, but subsequently was divided into two parts– one in the region of Tsivory and the other by the Fiherenana. In the nineteenth century the Masikoro dynasty under the authority of the Andrevola extended between the Mangoky and Onilahy rivers. It was divided again, this time into four: Volirano (Mangoky region), Befandriana-Sud, Antanimieva, then at Tsiloakarivo (south and west of Ihotry) and between the Manombo and Onilahy rivers.</p>

## Youth

Youth Greatest Needs (teens)	There are not enough good teachers for this region. Typically an assignment to an area like this would be seen as a punishment.
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## Group Description

## Education

Language Of Instruction Early Years	Malagasy, Masikoro
Language Of Instruction Early Years	French
Language Of Textbooks Early Years	Malagasy, Masikoro
Language Of Textbooks Early Years	French
Language Of Instruction Later Years	Malagasy, Masikoro

## Group Description

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Item Name	Item Note
Language Of Instruction Later Years	French
Language Of Textbooks Later Years	French
Language Of Textbooks Later Years	Malagasy, Masikoro
Comment (Education)	<p>In reality there are no text books, unless the teacher wants and can afford his own copy, which is rare. Teachers generally use their notebooks from when they were pupils themselves.</p> <p>There are not enough good teachers for this region. Typically an assignment to an area like this would be seen as a punishment.</p>
Church Growth	Status of Christianity
Bible Schools	None in the specific area of Masikoro, although there is a Lutheran Bible school in Beroroha serving the whole region, including Masikoro, which receives at least one student per district per year.
Christian Clinics/Hospitals	5
Comment (Church Growth)	most churches, especially in larger towns and villages, are attended mainly by other groups, particularly those from the highlands who live and work in the area. Services also tend to be conducted in official Malagasy, the language of the highlands.
Religion & Response	Status of Christianity
Attitude To Christianity	Somewhat receptive
Attitude To Religious Change	Very resistant
Resistance / Receptivity	The Masikoro are seemingly very responsive to the gospel, but are quick to return to their traditional beliefs. One example is the evangelical campaigns carried out in the 1970s, when hundreds accepted the gospel and were baptized, but after a few years only a very small percentage continued in the faith. This still seems to be the pattern today.
Spiritual Climate And Openness	They are not hostile to evangelism, are apparently open, but in the end are perhaps rather indifferent.
Recommended Approaches	As with any other group in Madagascar, to reach the Masikoro requires much time and effort: to live among them, learn their language, their ways of thinking, how they perceive God, etc, and build a culturally sensitive strategy.
Current Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Scripture translation</li><li>- Church leadership training</li><li>- Assistance in agriculture, education, literacy, primary health care, infrastructure</li></ul>
Items For Prayer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Scripture in the Masikoro dialect</li><li>2. True commitment to Christ</li><li>3. An end to the organized cattle-rustling that is decimating their herds</li></ol>
History Of Christianity In Group	Status of Christianity
Year Began	1874
By Whom	Det Norske Misjonselskap (Lutheran)
Significant Events	<p>1845: some Catholic missionaries arrive in St Augustin and Tulear, but cannot stay longer than about 4 months due to local antagonism and suspicion.</p> <p>1858: some of the same Catholic missionaries return, but again have to leave about a year after signing the treaty for a French Protectorate, and having to flee as a consequence.</p> <p>1874: The Norwegian mission ship the "Elieser" arrives in Tulear with 4 Lutheran missionaries. Two stay in Tulear while the other two, one of them a doctor, move up the coast to Andranopasy. These two almost have to flee because of jealousy by local traditional healers, coming to a head when one of their patients dies. They are protected by local chiefs, and allowed to stay.</p> <p>1897: Lazarist priests establish a church in Tulear.</p>
Scripture	Status of Christianity
Translation Status	Definite
Available Scripture	None
Form Of Scripture Available	None

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Item Name	Item Note
Comment (Scripture)	There are some Bible stories and a hymn-book in Sakalava, a related dialect. However the Bible stories were translated very long ago, and apparently cannot even be fully understood today by younger Sakalava people. There is also a Sakalava catechism in archives in Norway, but unavailable in Madagascar.
Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Literature	No
Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Recordings	No
Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Film/Videos	No
Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Radio	There are two or three very localized secular radio stations broadcasting in various dialects including Masikoro, that have some Christian programs.

### Missions and Churches

### Status of Christianity

Organization Name	Lutheran
Comment (Organization)	These figures are for the total population of the area in which the Masikoro live. The Masikoro make up about 50% of the total population, and probably only about 30% of the total number of adherents.
Year Started	1874
Denominational Type Of Organization?	Yes
Number Of Adherents	4,500
Number Of Congregations	80
Number Of Expatriate Workers	1
Number Of Local Workers	27
Organization Name	Roman Catholic Church
Comment (Organization)	These figures are for the total population of the area in which the Masikoro live. The Masikoro make up about 50% of the total population, and probably only about 30% of the total number of adherents.
Year Started	1897
Denominational Type Of Organization?	Yes
Number Of Adherents	10,000
Number Of Congregations	120
Number Of Expatriate Workers	8
Number Of Local Workers	24