Madagascar's Musical Migrations: Instruments as Framework to Reimagine Early Indian Ocean Contact

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Compulsory Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Rashid Epstein Adams **Date: 17 February 2018**

To the memory of my beloved grandfather, Woolf “Will” Epstein.

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Abstract

Madagascar's enigmatic settlement is one of the unsolved puzzles of human history. For more than a century, scholars have been narrating the story of remarkable pre-colonial Indian Ocean migrations from Southeast Asia, East Africa and West Asia to the world's fourth-largest island. With a recent increase in research by scholars from various disciplines, the details surrounding Madagascar's settlement are slowly taking form. Within this context, I enquire what the study of music can contribute towards these investigations. By foregrounding musical instruments, the tangible aspects of musical culture, I present important evidence linking Madagascar to these Indian Ocean regions. My approach is two-fold. Firstly, I conduct a classification-based organological study by comparing several Malagasy instruments to examples found in Southeast Asia, East Africa and West Asia. I argue, on the basis of strikingly similar forms and names with the same roots, that these Malagasy instruments are localised versions of instruments diffused to the island. Secondly, I foreground Madagascar's national instrument, the *valiha*, by examining its visual development and incorporation of symbolic imagery. By viewing it as an object that is not limited to making beautiful sounds, I reveal how the *valiha* embodies enormous amounts of knowledge. This knowledge, often relating to heritage and identity, situates the musical instrument as a potentially vital constituent to advance the study of Malagasy origins.

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CHAPTER 1:
Introduction

I want to take you back to a time before today's monstrous ships. Imagine looking out at the vastness that is the ocean, and on the horizon, you see a tiny dot. A small Austronesian outrigger canoe, perhaps an Arab dhow of simple design, carrying but a handful of people. This is no luxury liner, but its story is nothing short of impressive. Centuries before European ships began making their expansions eastward and westward, such vessels had made the seemingly impossible journey from the furthest reaches of the Indian Ocean world to Madagascar, the large island off the Southeast African coast. Whilst the exact dates and routes taken have been debated for decades, important recent contributions by scholars of various disciplines have established with certitude that these oceanic migrations took place. As one of the most remarkable feats in pre-colonial times, piecing together this history is of imperative significance, holding the potential to revolutionise our understanding of the history of the world. In the pages that follow, I intend to contribute towards reconstructing this pre-colonial history. By framing the movements of Indian Ocean peoples to Madagascar as *musical migrations* – the diffusion of musical culture – I situate my discipline, ethnomusicology, within greater multidisciplinary research undertakings. As I contend, the study of music's tool – the instrument – is a particularly valuable approach through which to reimagine this remarkable history of Indian Ocean contacts.

1.1 Background to the Study

Madagascar's connection to the Indian Ocean world reflects in its ancient and recent history. Around 180 million years ago the island was part of the supercontinent Gondwana – a colossal landmass which integrated Africa, India, Antarctica, South America and Australasia (Sellström 2015, 50). When a major tectonic shift caused Gondwana to separate, Madagascar broke free of mainland Africa, drifting away from the continent east into the Indian Ocean (Sellström 2015, 50-51). Around 80 million years ago Madagascar's eastern side broke off and slowly moved northward to eventually become the Seychelles and India (*ibid.*). Madagascar was left behind in its present shape, size and positioning in the southwest corner of the Indian Ocean world – 400 kilometers off the coast of Mozambique to the west, 5500 kilometers from India to the northeast, and 7500 kilometers from the Indonesian archipelago to the east (Raven and Axelrod 1974, 561). The island's ancient separation from the other continental landmasses resulted in a unique array of flora and fauna developing and evolving in isolation from the rest of the world over thousands of millennia. Indeed, ninety percent of Madagascar's plants and animals are endemic – biodiversity which

reflects in hundreds of indigenous flora and fauna including palms, orchids and the iconic baobab tree, as well as unique animals including the cat-like fossa, various species of chameleon, and the lemur (Sellström 2015, 50-51).

Madagascar's natural wealth has received immense attention in comparison with political, social or cultural developments in the country (Fuhr 2013, 6-7). Importantly, this trend is illustrated by popular conceptions of the island, as well as in the emphasis of much academic scholarship. Certain features of the country's natural environment, such as the lemur, have not only become national symbols to Madagascar's people but have also become recognized in Western popular culture. DreamWorks' 2005 hit animated film *Madagascar* brought the lemur, and by extension the country, to wide public attention. A critical reading of the film's representation of the island, however, reveals that Madagascar is essentially denoted as being unpopulated by humans. Although humans feature in the animation's earlier scenes, set in New York city, once the "North American" zoo animals find their way to Madagascar they seemingly leave all humans behind, soon encountering the island's exotic wildlife. This representation of Madagascar as an unpopulated natural paradise is similarly referenced by many tourist guidebooks and "tourist discourse", which praise the island's natural environment, advising visitors to "quickly leave the capital to discover the rural countryside (which is) the real Madagascar" (*ibid.*, 8).[1]

Perhaps surprisingly, the priorities of academic scholarship have similarly emphasized Madagascar's natural wonders, with a comparatively small amount of literature focusing on the Malagasy people, their culture and society (*ibid.*, 6-7). Although many Malagasy take pride in their unique natural history, this disproportion is recognized and sometimes criticized by cultural practitioners within the nation itself (*ibid.*, 6).[2] Certain musicians, for example, use the platform of

[1]. Having conducted the majority of my fieldwork in the country's capital, Antananarivo, this notion of "the real Madagascar" is of interest to me. Whilst my research visit was brief (appropriately so, for Master's research), the month I spent visiting museums and conducting interviews in the city – described as "the country's cultural hub" – led to my experiencing Madagascar both authentically and emphatically (Fuhr 2010, 100).
It is appropriate at this stage to reveal my incorporation of footnotes in this dissertation, which I use to express reflexivity. Although outside the main text, these reflections are by no means unimportant. Both experimental and diverse, they feature the following: narrative fieldwork encounters, fieldwork notes and reflections, reflexive thoughts, and important information about the pronunciation of certain Malagasy terms. Ultimately, these notes are intended to divulge glimpses of my research journey, and are hence vital in revealing the processes from which my scholarly discussion, observations and analysis are based.
[2]. The week after I got back to South Africa after my month of fieldwork in Madagascar I met a young Malagasy woman, Olivia Randriamady, who has been living in Cape Town for several years. Having discovered that I had been in "Tana" (the colloquial name for Antananarivo) only a few days earlier, she enthusiastically enquired as to what I thought about her home city. I responded that I thought Madagascar's

the stage to intentionally create "more awareness for the Malagasy people and their culture" (*ibid.*, 5-6). These artists seek to explain, to local and foreign audiences, that the island "is not only about flora and fauna", but also about the people living on the island – their culture, language, (and) customs" (*ibid.*, 6). I hence situate my ensuing discussion as a study of the Malagasy, a people group whose multifaceted identities reveals an "entanglement of diverse cultural encounters", bearing witness to a fascinating yet often marginalized history of pre-colonial Indian Ocean contacts (Fuhr 2013, 2 and Dewar 1997, 481).

1.2 Rationale: Ongoing Debates

Whilst Madagascar's natural diversity is clearly a result of its ancient continental separation, its ethnic diversity, relating to the history of human arrival on the island, is widely debated and yet unanswered.[3] This question relating to the settlement of Madagascar has been described by scholars as "a giant puzzle", "the world's most pleasing enigma" and "one of the unsolved puzzles in human history" (Johnston and Birkeli 1920, 315). It is unknown whether there was an initial indigenous population, although certain oral traditions point to the possibility of the existence of a population group, who were known as the Vazimba or Wazimba (*ibid.*, 308). Knowledge about this mysterious group is rather "scarce and incoherent" although some believe that they dwelled in the interior of the island, where monoliths and graves known as *wato-mbazimba* and *fasa-mbazimba* (Vazimba-stones and Vazimba-graves) are found (Verin 1967, 72). Anthropologists and archaeologists have studied certain of these burial sites extensively with the latter suggesting that, although these tombs "are not ancient", the individuals they contain may belong to "an original ethnic group of which little is known" (*ibid.*). Significantly, there is no substantial evidence regarding their existence, the trace of which survives only in certain legends, folklore and claims of ancestral lines amongst certain groups (Johnston and Birkeli 1920, 308).

Until the existence of this initial indigenous population is proved through the presentation of tangible evidence, the current debates surrounding Madagascar's earliest settlers – and my focus for this dissertation – refers to the remarkable settling of groups of people who arrived from across the

capital was "beautiful" – to which she exclaimed, with a combination of surprise and suspicion, "But no one thinks Tana is beautiful!" (due to overwhelming poverty, homelessness and overcrowding, as well as the minimal natural beauty in the urban capital). Perhaps not fully aware of my research intentions, Randriamady encouraged me to visit other "more beautiful" parts of the island the next time I visited Madagascar. The pride she had in her country's natural history was clear (2017).

[3]. The diversity of the Malagasy is reflected in 18 official ethnic groups whose "boundaries" are roughly based on Madagascar's old kingdoms. The dominant ethnic groups are the Merina (27%), Betsimisaraka (15%), Betsileo (12%), Tsimihety (7%), Sakalava (6%), Antaisaka (5%) and Antandroy (5%), while a number of smaller groups make up the remainder of the population (Green 2003, 31).

Indian Ocean (Sellström, 2015, 63). Although still shrouded in mystery, these pre-colonial migrations of diverse peoples were the building blocks on which Malagasy culture was formed, with the island today existing as a "successful melting pot where all civilizations met" (Sellström, 2015, 49 and Fuhr 2013, 2 and 8). Several theories regarding these early oceanic migrations have been proposed by scholars, with various academic disciplines seeking to elucidate the mystery. I review the most significant contributions in my second chapter.

Although debates are ongoing, the general consensus today is that the African island's earliest inhabitants were Austronesian-speakers who made the long voyage from Southeast Asia, travelling in outrigger canoes, around 500AD (Rakotomalala 1998, 781). The route taken to get to the island is still unclear, and two main theories have been presented. The first suggests direct arrival from Southeast Asia, whilst the second suggests an indirect route which occurred along the Indian Ocean's littorals over several centuries - perhaps through parts of the Maldives, India, West Asia, East Africa, the Seychelles, and the Comoros islands – essentially using these areas as "stepping stones" before reaching their destination (Verin 1967, 72 and Newitt 1983, 143). Although the details of these oceanic movements are unclear, this initial migration from across the Indian Ocean is said to have been followed up with contact from the East African Bantu, as well as from Arab and Swahili mercantile traders who involved Madagascar in a network of Indian Ocean trade as early as the 9th century AD (Newitt 1983, 142-143). [4]

Whilst I detail these oceanic migrations further in my fourth chapter, it is important to clarify at this juncture that these pre-colonial contacts were substantial in nature. Historian Jane Hooper indeed clarifies this assessment with her contention that Madagascar was already "engaged in long-distance trade with groups throughout the Indian Ocean" centuries before the first European ships began frequenting Madagascar's ports from 1500 (2011, 218).[5] This remarkable history has nevertheless been relegated to footnotes and generally consigned to "prehistorical" discourse. That these early

[4]. For the purposes of this dissertation, I use the term "Arab" in the same way that Edith Bruder uses it in her references to those peoples, not originally from Africa, who "traded down the eastern coast of Africa" in the pre-colonial and early modern periods (2008, 126). More accurately, as per the framework she has laid out, my usage of the term "Arab", which I use interchangeably with "West Asian", should be considered "a convenient name covering various groups affected to a greater or lesser extent by Islam, originating in most cases in Arabia, but who could have spent several generations, in East Africa or elsewhere, *en route* to Madagascar" (*ibid.*). Similarly, I use the terms "Arabian Peninsula" and "West Asia" in an interchangeable manner - with the former extending past the Peninsula to Persian peoples north of the Gulf.

[5]. The first European ship to land on Madagascar's shores was captained by Portuguese sailor Diogo Dias, who did so in August 1500 after he was blown off course on a journey to India (a seeming attempt to follow his compatriot Vasco Da Gama who had made the journey to Calicut two years earlier) (Sellström 2015, 150).

human migrations did occur is, however, becoming increasingly evident, with anthropologist Wolfgang Marschall noting that the problem in question is not to demonstrate *that* they took place, but is rather to determine *when, why* and *who* took part of these migrations, as well as *how* these interplays of African and Asian contacts unfolded (1995, 29).

1.3 Research Focus

1.3.1 Madagascar and Southeast Asia

My intention in this dissertation is to contribute towards the re-centering of these pre-colonial cultural encounters by seeking, in particular, to aid in the reconstruction of these oceanic migrations (Fuhr 2013, 2). Whilst I do explore Madagascar's cultural migrations from East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, my primary focus in this dissertation is the presumed original cultural layer – Southeast Asian contact from the 6th century (Schmidhofer and Domenichini-Ramiaramanana 2001, 1). By researching an important aspect of Malagasy culture – music – I examine how Madagascar's people present complex multifaceted Afro-Asian identities in a nation which is often referred to as "the footprint between Africa and Asia" (Dewar 1997, 481 and Fuhr 2013, 2).

The influence from Southeast Asia is observable and apparent to the extent that "Madagascar's Indonesian contribution – of language, culture and genes – continues to dominate the nation of Madagascar even today" (Cox *et al.* 2012, 2767). Although the island is only 400 kilometres off the coast of Mozambique, as ethnomusicologist Jenny Fuhr contends, "a large part of the people living on the island… do not think themselves as African" (although they acknowledge that their nation geographically exists as part of the African continent) (2013, 8). Whilst I have not personally heard any Malagasy person saying outrightly that they are "not African", a young Malagasy musician Fy Rasolofoniaina, who became my friend and guide in Antananarivo, did tell me during an illuminating conversation that he had identified as "Afrisian" in the past – a self-determination revealing the African and Asian identities which he held (2017).[6] Whilst I initially felt uncomfortable with focusing on the sometimes problematic notion of origins, Fy's reflections on identity helped me gain clarity as to the emphasis and importance of my research endeavour. Whilst I do foreground the notion of origins, this is discussed through the framework of heritage – that is, cultural identity emphasizing the past, yet expressed in the present in in various ways.

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[6]. This is Fy's spelling, as confirmed during the interview (2017).
In his recent book, *The Indian Ocean in World History* (2014), Historian Edward Alpers similarly describes Malagasy culture as "Afrasian" (38).

Positioned as such, my study aims to not only contribute to scholarly discourse in my research area, but also to the Malagasy – my main research interlocutors, whose attentions are at the forefront of this dissertation.[7] Within scholarly discourse, whilst the debates surrounding Madagascar's pre-colonial oceanic migrations continue, important contributions have recently been made, and the unsolved puzzle of Malagasy origins is beginning to take form, piece by piece. It is within these multidisciplinary debates and questions of heritage and identity that I situate my present discussion – enquiring what my field, ethnomusicology, can contribute towards reimagining and reconstructing Madagascar's pre-colonial history.

1.3.2 Musical Instruments – Organology

Due to ethnomusicology's emphasis on fieldwork, my discussion was always going to be conducted in the ethnographic present (Dournon 1981, 7). Since my framework is pre-colonial, however, I have had to carefully consider how best to do this, from both theoretical and methodological perspectives. Music, of course, is an aspect of culture which is constantly changing, adapting and evolving because of innovation, new trends, and political influences such as globalization and cosmopolitanism. A classic ethnographic study of current Malagasy musics would therefore need to be modified considering my proposed undertaking and pre-colonial framework. Due to the lack of notation and (of course) no audio recordings one can, honestly, only hypothesize what pre-colonial Malagasy music may have sounded like millennia ago.

A conceivable way to attempt this is to use a combination of descriptive and historical information as a means to reimagine musical sound, although the limitations would be substantial. For example, I was told by ethnomusicologist Rakotomalala that the Malagasy *valiha*, a bamboo tube-zither of great significance in Madagascar (which I foreground in chapter five), was traditionally played in a slow, noble manner – revealing its position as an instrument reserved for royalty in Merina courts (2017).[8] Once European music collectors began permeating the country's music industry centuries later, a major shift in stylistic technique took place when Malagasy musicians were encouraged to perform with a fast, virtuosic playing style (*ibid.*).

[7]. I learned of the importance of the questions of origins, heritage and identity to the Malagasy themselves during an interview with Mireille Rakotomalala, Madagascar's former minister of Arts and Culture and a prominent scholar, whose work in ethnomusicology has largely sought to elucidate these questions (2017).
[8]. The Merina, Madagascar's historically dominant ethnic group, are often associated with Southeast Asia. As I also discuss in my fifth chapter, their cultural links with Indonesia are substantial and reflect in various aspects of material and musical culture.

Although of great interest – carrying potential for a study on its own – in my current conversation these distinctions of "slow/noble" and "fast/virtuosic" can only provide limited insight into clarifying the sound, or nature, of pre-colonial Malagasy music. The contribution of ethnomusicology to this project of historical reimagination surely does not end there? If music is to simply be defined as "humanly organized sound", as per the widely-accepted definition by decorated ethnomusicologist John Blacking, does the fact that we have *no access to sound* from 500AD, imply that we definitively have *no access to music*? (1974, 3).

In this dissertation, as one of my main conceptual explorations, I argue for the necessary separation of music and sound. Whilst this may, at first glance, seem like a regressive, futile, or even nonsensical process (to take sound away from music would surely leave us with nothing?!), I demonstrate how music can be creatively considered, and studied, in several ways. A similar theoretical notion is expressed by Geneviève Dournon who argues that "the function of music and its tool – the instrument – must not be limited to the mere production of sounds" (1981, 7). Dournon asserts that music and instruments have potential to "convey the deepest cultural, spiritual, and aesthetic values of civilization, transmitting knowledge in many spheres" (*ibid.*).

Considering my access to music's product – sound – is ostensibly limited, I foreground music's apparatus – the instrument – which exists as "the tangible aspect of the intangible heritage" (*ibid.*). I explore how musical instruments, as tangible objects of musical culture, embody and transmit enormous amounts of knowledge which can be analyzed, and later used within a multidisciplinary project emphasizing historical reconstruction (in this instance, the unsolved puzzle of Madagascar's oceanic migrations). As I elaborate later, the transmission of this knowledge occurs on various levels, with instruments themselves existing not merely as sound-producing objects, but as living artifacts which "often display – in some cases very clearly – their cultural origins" (Schmidhofer 2005, 18). Indeed, the separation of music and sound which I am arguing for can be simply identified as the foregrounding of musical instruments as objects that mean – or objects that convey cultural meaning (Dournon 1981, 7).

1.4 Research Objectives

As I have alluded to, my primary research aim is to contribute to the reconstruction of Madagascar's early history, through my discipline of ethnomusicology. In question form this asks, "What contribution can ethnomusicology make towards clarifying the multidisciplinary debates surrounding Madagascar's pre-colonial oceanic migrations?". Being my primary focus, this golden thread ties the various strands of my discussion together. My foregrounding of musical instruments,

therefore, is ultimately intended as a research strategy through which to answer this research question.

A secondary research aim, also of significant importance, is to add my voice to the recent disciplinary conversations seeking to reconsider organology. Whilst organology in its classic form has historically emphasized the classification of musical instruments, scholars in the field such as Eliot Bates, have recently argued for musical instruments to be "(taken) seriously" and studied in other ways (2012, 364). Bates argues that instruments are not passive objects (as they have been represented as in classic organology), but that they are in fact "protagonists of stories" and "actors who facilitate, prevent or mediate social interaction among other characters" (*ibid.*). Essentially, he argues that musical instruments possess agency and have "social lives" which should be acknowledged and deliberated by organologists (*ibid.*).

Whilst my research design is not austerely based on Bates' considerations (which are somewhat preliminary and are loose in theory), I similarly foreground the notion that musical instruments possess a function that "is not confined solely to making beautiful sounds" (Dournon 1981, 12). My objectives are to reveal that instruments are in fact important constituents of culture which express "the most profound ethical, aesthetic, cultural and spiritual values of a people" – effectively containing the "essence of society and culture" (De Vale 1990, 22 quoted in Bates 2012, 366 and Dournon 1981, 12). Therefore, by observing and evaluating the knowledge that Malagasy musical instruments emit, I situate ethnomusicology within the debates surrounding Madagascar's oceanic migrations, revealing the unique and imperative contribution a study of music can bring to such multidisciplinary deliberations seeking to reconstruct Indian Ocean history.

1.4.1 Value of the Study

Apart from the importance of my pre-colonial framework, my research focus on the Indian Ocean is also highly significant. Amongst oceanic or maritime historians, the Indian Ocean is widely acknowledged as having been the least studied of the great oceanic systems of the world (Alpers 2014, 1). Indeed, as recently as 2006, the Indian Ocean was a notable omission from the *American Historical Review's* forum entitled *Oceans of History*. Whilst the forum featured works on three different bodies of water – the Mediterranean, the Atlantic and the Pacific – the world's third largest ocean was relegated to a footnote in the introduction, with chair Kären Wigen commenting that the *American Historical Review* were "regrettably" unable to cover it – nonetheless admitting that the Indian Ocean is "equally rich (in) historiography" (2006, 718).

That Madagascar's history, or that of the pre-colonial Indian Ocean, possesses no allusion to Euro-American maritime exploration holds importance in explaining its relegation to the footnotes of historical enquiry. In general constructions of world history, that of the subaltern has often been considered unimportant or even unremarkable. Historian Lincoln Paine clarifies this in his assertion that maritime accomplishment, for example, has "almost always (been) viewed as a peculiarly European phenomenon" – with world history commonly presumed to have begun with maritime contacts in the 16th century, with the advent of Europe's "classic age of sail" (2014, 5). Attentiveness to the past five centuries of European colonial domination has, however, distorted our interpretations of maritime accomplishment in "other periods and places" (*ibid.*). A closer examination of these marginalized histories, as I do by focusing on Madagascar's early history, reveals that "maritime achievement is more broadly spread and its effects more complicated" than the classic Eurocentric narrative suggests (*ibid.*).

1.5 Chapter Outline

In this **first chapter** I introduced my topic and research focus by providing a brief background to my study. The question of Malagasy origins, highlighting pre-colonial Indian Ocean migrations, has perplexed scholars for centuries – still existing as a one of the unsolved puzzles of human history. My intention in this study is to enquire what contribution ethnomusicology can make towards advancing these enquiries. To do this, I have proposed foregrounding musical instruments as objects which emit cultural knowledge. As I will show, analysis of this knowledge, which relates to heritage and identity, contributes important evidence to research on Malagasy origins.

Following this introduction, I progress into my **second chapter** where I review literature relevant to my research area. Due to the pre-colonial framework of my discussion, I highlight data from diverse sources. Desiring to foreground the most important contributions advancing Malagasy origins, I review early ethnographic works, followed by recent studies by linguists and genetics. By critically evaluating this scholarship, I note strikingly similar suppositions – emphasizing pre-colonial influence from Southeast Asia, East Africa and West Asia. I continue my discussion by reviewing the relevant contributions scholars of music have made to clarify Madagascar's early history. By emphasizing works on musical instruments, I conclude by critically analyzing where ethnomusicology, and its sub-discipline organology, are currently situated within these multidisciplinary enquiries.

In my **third chapter** I discuss my research methodology and conceptual framework. Following from the first part of my literature review I clarify my incorporation of multidisciplinarity. As I

argue, ethnomusicology offers flexibility with regards to research design – hence making this approach both appropriate and viable. I continue by highlighting perhaps the most significant process in my research journey – fieldwork. Considering my focus on musical instruments, I discuss the importance of archival research – emphasising in particular the role the colonial archive played in my study. Before progressing into my data presentation chapters, I address the problematic paradigm of diffusionism. By briefly historicizing it, emphasising works on transoceanic diffusionism, I differentiate between it and diffusion. The latter concept, which is observable in many ethnomusicological studies, is what I employ as a conceptual framework.

In **chapter four** I use classification-based organology to reimagine Madagascar's early oceanic migrations. I compare several Malagasy instruments to examples respectively found in Southeast Asia, East Africa and West Asia. As I show, the structural similarities between these local and foreign forms is striking. Considering historical evidence documenting significant migrations of peoples from these regions, I argue that several Malagasy instruments are localised forms of Indian Ocean examples. By situating this knowledge on multidisciplinary studies, I argue that the diffusion of these instruments to Madagascar affirms and clarifies evidence advanced by scholars of other disciplines.

In **chapter five** I foreground the Malagasy *valiha* as a case study – extending past the classification-based framework of my fourth chapter. By viewing the instrument as an object not only confined to making beautiful sounds, tremendous amounts of knowledge become available. Focusing on the *valiha's* visual development and social function, from its introduction in Madagascar to present, I discuss its incorporation of significant cultural symbols. By analyzing this symbolism, which often relates to heritage and identity, I show that the musical instrument is an important constituent to advance the study of Malagasy origins.

In my **sixth chapter** I conclude my discussion by evaluating the findings I presented in my previous chapters.

CHAPTER 2:
Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Madagascar's unique history has historically fallen between the gaps amongst African and Asian scholars. Situated 400 kilometers off the coast of Mozambique to the west, and 7500 kilometers from Indonesia to the east, the country was "rarely, if ever, alluded to" in publications, until fairly recently (Campbell 2005, 1-2). Scholars from various disciplines have often considered the island as a "peculiar and enigmatic… anomaly" in the southwest Indian Ocean region (*ibid.*, 1). As a vital point of pre-colonial intersection for diverse cultural groups, several prominent authors have even considered Madagascar in historical isolation from mainland Africa – essentially as "an island museum largely unrelated to its immediate region" (*ibid.*).[9] Anglophone scholars were historically inclined to segment the coasts of Africa as being bordered by the Indian Ocean, with Madagascar existing as a "well-guarded Gallic secret", since 1896, when the island came under French colonial rule (*ibid.*). Generally, in comparison with countries in the African mainland, Madagascar has, as ethnomusicologist Jenny Fuhr contends, "not yet been intensively researched" (2010, 1).

2.2 Multidisciplinary Scholarship on Malagasy Origins

Within this context, the question of Malagasy origins has however been the focus of a fair amount of research. Scholars from various disciplines have enquired as to what evidence their field can contribute towards piecing together this yet unsolved puzzle of human history. Within my field, ethnomusicology, I have observed a dearth of studies seeking to explicate this question. As a methodological strategy, I hence review the important contributions made by other disciplines. Whether reviewing literature on a micro level (emphasizing individual works) or macro level (emphasizing general disciplinary contributions to reconstructing Madagascar's early migrations), my focus is on critically evaluating the multidisciplinary methodological processes inherent in this scholarship.

2.2.1 Early Ethnological Works

My review of literature begins with the work of prominent Francophone writers who, holding long-established colonial claims, dominated studies of Madagascar since the turn of the 20th century

[9]. General works regarding African history which have excluded Madagascar include British ethnologist Charles Seligman's *Race of Africa* (1930), and German comparative linguist Diedrich Westermann's *Völkerkunde von Afrika (Ethnology of Africa)* (1940) and *Geschichte Afrikas (History of Africa)* (1952).

(Campbell 2005, 1). Whilst to detail all this early scholarship exceeds the scope of this discussion, I will briefly highlight important early works which emphasized the relevant themes of heritage, identity and origins.

The most prominent early ethnological research examining these themes was conducted by father and son duo Alfred and Guillaume Grandidier. Their extensive *Histoire physique, naturelle et politique de Madagascar* (Physical, Natural and Political History of Madagascar) (1875) featured approximately 60 volumes of focused work on geography, meteorology, zoology and botany. The work included a four-volume section titled *Ethnographie de Madagascar* (Ethnography of Madagascar), which was published between 1908–1928, over a period of twenty years. In their examination of Malagasy customs and social life, the authors' principle intention was to elucidate the question of Malagasy origins. This had extended the older Grandidier's initial deductions from *L'origine des Malgaches* (The Origins of the Malagasy) (1901), which formally introduced the question of Malagasy origins to a wider academic audience, at the turn of the 20th century.

As classic colonial works, these studies used an ethnological framework to observe the physical, social and cultural characteristics of the Malagasy people, whom the authors sought to compare with other Indian Ocean peoples. Although somewhat problematic in theoretical approach (which often essentialised their research subjects), the father and son duo were justifiably viewed by peers as the "distinguished and eminent authorities on Madagascar" (Hunt 1900, 298). Alfred Grandidier's comparative examination of cultural traits between Malagasy and Melanesian-Indonesians was particularly important (1901). The work helped uncover important early evidence revealing substantial similarities between these two groups from far reaches of the Indian Ocean (*ibid.*).

In this early era of scholarship, I should point out that these considerations linking Madagascar to Southeast Asia were largely controversial and had "never been affirmed or even suspected" until deduced by Alfred Grandidier after research visits to the island between 1865–1870 (Guillaume Grandidier 1920, 205). Furthermore, these hypotheses were initially viewed in opposition to the previously assumed viewpoint highlighting African influence in Madagascar (Motting 1935, 8). The principal early proponent of this supposition was Gabriel Ferrand, who used a similar ethnological approach in observing cultural traits Madagascar shared with mainland Africa. Ferrand's "L'Origine africaine des Malgaches" (The African Origin of the Malagasy) (1909) argued that the ancestors of the Malagasy were Bantu peoples who had journeyed 400 kilometres across the Mozambique Channel. Whilst noting the Asian influence in the introduction to their paper, "The

Bantu in Madagascar: The Malagasy Race Affinity" (1920), authors Harry Johnston and Emil Birkeli similarly argued for the predominance of Bantu influence in the island. The scholars observed that certain Malagasy terms (including those used for certain tribes and domestic animals) "show resemblances to the modern type of southern and western Bantu dialects" (*ibid.*, 312). These apparently "satisfying" results formed the foundation for their suppositions that the earliest people to settle in Madagascar were from the continent (*ibid.*).

Gabriel Ferrand, the previously mentioned French scholar, also produced another vital contribution establishing a third significant strand cultural influence in Madagascar. Described as "an important Arabist and student of Muslim communities in Asia, Africa, and Madagascar", Ferrand's extensive work in this regard was *Les Musulmans à Madagascar et aux îles Comore* (Muslims in Madagascar and the Comoros Islands), published in three volumes between 1891-1902 (Bruder 2008, 126). The work presented initial evidence for Madagascar's oceanic migrations from the Arabian Peninsula, with Ferrand dating contact from Arab-Swahili merchants as early as the 9th century (Ferrand 1891). One of Ferrand's most important finds was an undated manuscript which referred to a Muslim caliph who reigned in Madagascar in the 13th century (Ferrand 1891 in Bruder 2008, 126). Another was a reference to Al-Mustas'im, the last Abbassid caliph who ruled Baghdad between 1242 and 1258, whom Ferrand heard mentioned in a *khotba* (a special prayer recited on a Friday) (*ibid.*). In the *khotba*, Al-Mustas'im was venerated as "Prince of the Believers" – leading Ferrand to assume that he must have been the ancestral ruler of those singing, and that the Islamized Malagasy populations had therefore descended from Sunni Muslims (*ibid.*). Ferrand's discussion linking Madagascar with West Asia was extended in 1903 with *Les tribus musulmanes du Sud-est de Madagascar* (The Muslim Tribes of South-East Madagascar). The work was vital in continuing to clarify Muslim influence in Madagascar, with Ferrand foregrounding how the Antemoro (spelled Antaimorona in his original manuscript), an Arab-Malagasy ethnic group originally from the northwest of Madagascar, had relocated terrestrially to the island's southeast (1903). Ferrand examines numerous aspects of their culture including their traditional way of dress and polygamous society – attributing these features to an apparent Arab heritage (*ibid.*, 9-10 and 12).

The important work of Ferrand and the two Grandidiers at the turn of the 19th and the early 20th centuries laid the foundations for scholars seeking to identify Malagasy origins. Despite their importance, theirs was preliminary work and, as the decades progressed, the voices of more and more scholars served to significantly clarify Madagascar's oceanic migrations and connections to Southeast Asia, East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Once Madagascar achieved full independence from France in 1960, it took a further decade or so for Anglophone scholars to "break

into" the previously Francophone-dominant field of Malagasy studies, after which increased research on Malagasy origins was conducted (Campbell 2005, 2). Whilst the details surrounding Madagascar's oceanic migrations were unclear for decades, several scholars including linguists, geneticists, historians, archaeologists, anthropologists and biologists, have recently made important contributions. I continue this chapter by reviewing the most significant contributions made by scholars from the former two disciplines – examining how research surrounding Malagasy origins has become necessarily multidisciplinary in its incorporation of scientific and cultural evidence.

2.2.2 Linguistics

The study of Madagascar's language – known, like the people, as Malagasy – has provided important insight which has been used to reconstruct the island's pre-colonial history. Several differing theories regarding the origins of the Malagasy language have been presented since the 17th century (Marschall 1995, 29-34). From "ridiculous" claims such as the supposed Sanskrit origin of Malagasy, linguistic comparisons of Malagasy and Austronesian languages have increasingly been refined and new findings have validated settlement theories of "the highest quality" (Dubois 1926, 101-102 and Marschall 1995, 30).

Otto Christian Dahl's *Malgache et maanyan: une comparison linguistique* (Malagasy and Ma'anyan: A Linguistic Comparison) (1951), was an important turning point in the study of Malagasy linguistics. The Norwegian's book revealed that Malagasy was greatly influenced by Ma'anyan spoken in the Barito River region of southern Kalimantan (the Indonesian part of Borneo) (*ibid.*, 49). Although Malagasy was known to have influences from African languages and Arabic, Dahl clarified that its overwhelming contributor is Ma'anyan, with which it shares 90% of its basic vocabulary (*ibid.*). Dahl's study was extended by his book, *Migration from Kalimantan to Madagascar* (1991), written four decades later. By foregrounding Malagasy as the only language in Africa belonging to the Austronesian (Malayo-Polynesian) family of languages, the author further highlights the prominence of Southeast Asian influence in Madagascar (*ibid.*).

Apart from its incorporation into studies by scholars of other disciplines, which I discuss shortly, Dahl's work was validated by fellow linguists including Dutch scholar Alexander Adelaar, who agreed with his peer's claims in his journal article "Asian roots of the Malagasy: A Linguistic Perspective" (1995). Adelaar and Nikolaus Himmelmann's book, *The Austronesian Languages of Asia and Madagascar* (2005), which they co-wrote ten years later, further sought to highlight the uniqueness of the Malagasy language – incorporating it in a comprehensive discussion on the Malayo-Polynesian family of languages. Whilst the extensive study explicated Madagascar's

connection to Borneo, the authors also did preliminary investigations into the impact other Austronesian languages, such as Lom and Sekak from Sumatra, may have had on Malagasy (Adelaar and Himmelmann 2005).

Although Dahl, Adelaar and Himmelman all made significant contributions towards defining the Austronesian nature of the Malagasy language – and, by extension, the Malagasy people – the authors also examined Malagasy's African influence by observing rudiments of Bantu languages in certain dialects, hence reflecting Madagascar's connection to southeast Africa.[10] Dahl's 1988 work, "Bantu Substratum in Malagasy" formed the foundation for this area of study, which was again extended by Adelaar (2009) in a focused chapter that identifies the presence of Bantu loanwords in Malagasy vocabulary.

Certain authors have used the study of language to explicate the pre-colonial influence from West Asia (Hooper 2011, 218). Following Ferrand's early colonial work, French scholar Phillipe Beaujard published *Le parle secret Arabico-Malgache du Sud-est de Madagascar: Recherches Étymologiques* (The Secret Language of the Arab-Malagasy of the South-East of Madagascar: Etymological Research) (1998). In this book, Beaujard studies the Antemoro, the previously mentioned Arab-Malagasy ethnic group who relocated to the island's southeast after originally arriving at the northwest coast near the Comoros (*ibid.*). Beaujard examines how the Antemoro, from their new home, composed the *Sora-bé* ("Great Writings" or "Sacred Books") in Arabic script, which were later adapted to Malagasy (*ibid.*). Whilst certain scholars have argued that these documents may be historically unreliable (considering several were seemingly written fairly recently as copies from older documents), Beaujard contends that the *Sora-bé* are important works reflecting the influence of Arab culture in Madagascar, with their main concerns being Arab-influenced astrology, geomancy, divination, and medicine (*ibid.*). Apart from these written references linking Madagascar to Arab culture, Beaujard similarly argues that it was mainly through the Antemoro, who claim noble descent from Mecca, that certain Arabic words were borrowed and absorbed into the Malagasy language. Malagasy's usage of Arabic is apparent in its words for the days of the week, as well as for certain other words associated with astrology, arithmetic and divination (*ibid.*).[11]

[10]. Bantu languages, as defined by *Encyclopedia Britannica*, are "a group of some 500 languages belonging to the Bantoid subgroup of the Benue-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo language family" (Bendor-Samuel 2017).

[11]. A comparative examination of the days of the week, shows this interesting absorption of Arabic in Malagasy. Each day, from Monday to Sunday, follows – with the Malagasy term preceding its Arabic derivative (which follows in brackets): *alatsinainy (al-ithnayn), talata (al-thalāthā), alarobia (al-arbaʿā),*

Scholars of language have made important contributions in linking Madagascar to three main Indian Ocean regions – Southeast Asia, Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. This important evidence – only a portion of which I have been able to review in this section – was situated on the earlier evidence brought forward by early colonial ethnologists writing around the turn of the 20th century. Furthermore, as my continued discussion shows, these linguistic discoveries have proved vital to the study of Malagasy origins, and the suppositions of linguists established a firm foundation on which scholars from other disciplines have since situated their studies.

2.2.3 Genetics

One such important discipline within this larger field is genetics. Although seemingly in congruent to linguistics, the evidence presented by geneticists relevant to Madagascar's early oceanic migrations presents striking resemblance to that advanced by the former. Of further significance, I have observed that scholars working within the field of genetics almost always highlight the suppositions brought forward by linguists – reflecting the necessary multidisciplinary framework of the research endeavor in question.

In an extensive study on Malagasy ancestry conducted by a genetics team from the United Kingdom (Cambridge, Oxford and Leicester), allusions to linguistics were apparent (Hurles *et al.* 2005, 894-901). Critiquing the work of early geneticists (including Migot *et al.* 1995 and Soodyall *et al.* 1995), the research team felt the genetic origins of the Malagasy had always been "relatively poorly understood", and that genetic evidence had "hitherto remained partial and imprecise" (Hurles *et al.* 2005, 894). In deeming it necessary to situate their discussion on linguistic evidence indicating Austronesian influence in Madagascar, the group of geneticists sampled Y-chromosomal lineages from a group of Malagasy males, comparing them with ten potential ancestral populations in island Southeast Asia and the Pacific (*ibid.*). Of great significance, the authors discovered that populations in Borneo had "the most similar" Y-chromosomal haplogroup distributions – noting that their results are in "striking agreement" with Dahl's (1991) linguistic claims linking Madagascar to Borneo (Hurles *et al.* 2005, 899-900). The authors argued that their genetic findings, coupled with linguistic evidence, could assign the different lineages of the Malagasy people to a likely geographic origin with a high degree of confidence (*ibid.*, 899). Taking a wide population sampling, the team further concluded that the Malagasy are roughly a fifty-fifty mix of Indonesian and East

alakamisy (al-khamīs), zoma (al-juma'ah), sabotsy (al-sabt) and alahady (al-ahad). I examine a similar process of absorption of foreign terms in chapter four, where I show linguistic localisation apparent in the names given for several Malagasy musical instruments.

African ancestry – hence their title "The Dual Origin of the Malagasy" (*ibid.*, 900).

Such studies in genetics were subsequently extended in 2012 by a team led by molecular bioscientist Murray Cox of Massey University in New Zealand. The team ran forty-million simulations of possible settlement events to identify the most likely settlement pattern in accordance with current genetic patterns in Madagascar (Cox *et al.* 2012, 2763). Their findings concluded that the most likely early settlers were a group of around thirty women with Indonesian heritage who settled on the island around 800AD (*ibid.*, 2766). The scholars further hypothesised that the vessel that carried the women may have been a result of a one off event like a shipwreck, and that the ship was possibly some sort of refugee vessel - which would more likely carry a group of women during that period than a merchant ship would (*ibid.*, 2767).

A year later a French-based genetic team funded by universities in Toulouse and Réunion sought to extend the contribution of genetics by, as their article title states, "Tracing Arab-Islamic inheritance in Madagascar" (Capredon *et al.* 2013). Led by Mélanie Capredon, the team studied the Antemoro – the Arab-Malagasy ethnic group from the island's southeast who were the focus of the formerly mentioned studies by Ferrand (1903) and Beaujard (1998). Whilst there are surprisingly few references to other scholars in their text proper, the team do reference evidence similar to that highlighted by Beaujard, saying that "the Antemoro claims an Arab origin in Mecca" – also referencing the *Sora-bé* manuscripts in which they say Antemoro "traditions and history" are written (Capredon *et al.* 2013, 1). The authors' primary intention was to clarify the origins of the Malagasy, which they knew were influenced by West Asia based on the evidence previously presented by scholars of other disciplines (*ibid.*, 2). Significantly, the results of the study served to highlight a "Middle Eastern biological trace" which, the authors emphasized, was consistent with the "Middle Eastern cultural tradition" of the population involved (*ibid.*, 13).

2.3 Multidisciplinary Processes

That scientific *and* cultural evidence are both highlighted by a team of geneticists is of significance, and tells us a fair degree about the nature of these research undertaking. As I have stated before, the incorporation of evidence from diverse sources is necessary due to the pre-colonial framework of the study (Blench 2014). Indeed, before Dahl's linguistic work in the mid-20th century (1951), very little tangible evidence had been presented in scholarly circles regarding the Austronesian heritage of Malagasy. Since his discovery, I have observed that much of the relevant later work, from various disciplines, include at least one significant reference to this linguistic evidence. For example, the abstract of the above-mentioned geneticists Hurles *et al.* begins with the following

statement: “linguistic and archaeological evidence about the origins of the Malagasy, the indigenous peoples of Madagascar, points to mixed African and Indonesian ancestry” (2005, 894). This is followed by references to Dahl (1951) and Adelaar (1995) in the first few lines of the article proper, where the geneticists state the “Malagasy language shares 90% of its basic vocabulary with Ma’anyan, a language spoken in the Barito River region of southern Borneo, which indicates that the predominant ancestry of the Malagasy language most likely derives from Borneo” (Hurles *et al.* 2005, 894).

It is vitally important to note, due to the dearth of data in their own discipline – which, I remind, they felt was “partial and imprecise” – and the nature of the prehistorical study, the authors based their discussion on evidence advanced by scholars of other disciplines (*ibid.*). This methodological process is not dissimilar to those used by fellow geneticists Capredon *et al.*, who similarly relate “biological traces” to “cultural tradition” (2013, 13). Furthermore, in Hurles *et al.*’s concluding statement, the authors (perhaps hesitantly) contend that their research may be “uniquely informative” (2005, 900). This, together with the contention that their findings may be “of interest to anthropologists and medical geneticists alike”, reveals a purposeful situating of genetics within the multidisciplinary study (*ibid.*). Having deemed it necessary to “take” from other disciplines (*viz.* linguistics and archaeology) due to a dearth of research in their own field, the geneticists seemingly show a desire to “give back” (*ibid.*). Their giving is not limited only to those fields from which their discussions were based. Rather, they enlarge the multidisciplinary nature of the study by inviting scholars from yet different fields – anthropology or, considering the intrinsic connections between the two, ethnomusicology – who may hold key pieces of the yet unsolved puzzle (Nettl 1983, 250).

2.4 Ethnomusicology

Whilst linguistics and genetics are fields that present tangible scientific evidence, ethnomusicology and its sub-discipline organology can be appreciated as fields that present cultural evidence. As one of my main contentions in this dissertation, I argue that this evidence is both tangible and vital to historical reconstruction considering, as per historian Tor Sellström’s recent assessment:

> Although linguistics, archaeologists and geneticists have established beyond a doubt that Madagascar was settled by people from Austronesia and Africa, a host of crucial questions concerning the various waves of migration to the island remains to be unraveled (2015, 61).

As the blurred silhouette surrounding Madagascar’s pre-colonial migrations is coming into increasing focus, what scholars must answer at the current stage of inquiry is what unravelling of

"crucial questions" their discipline can to contribute towards solving the island's pre-colonial oceanic migrations (*ibid.*).[12] Hence, situating my study as such, my starting point has necessarily been to draw on the evidence presented by other fields, such as those mentioned above. Whilst the question of Malagasy origins has been recently foregrounded in the disciplines of genetics and linguistics, the same cannot said to be the case in ethnomusicology. Indeed, I would agree with Hurles *et al.*'s assessment of relevant scholarship in genetics in 2005, that ethnomusicological work emphasizing Madagascar's migrations has up to now been largely "partial and imprecise" (894).

Whilst there has been a recent increase in scholarship from various disciplines focusing on several aspects of Madagascar (not only of the origins of the Malagasy), comparatively few ethnomusicologists have studied the island's musical traditions. Jenny Fuhr, writing in 2013, validates this assessment with her contention that "Madagascar's music has hardly been researched so far and very little has been written on the island's musical traditions" (2). That there is even some agreement that Ron Emoff's *Recollecting from the Past*, written as late as 2002, was the first full-length music-ethnography of Malagasy music goes a significant way into revealing the dearth of ethnomusicological research in Madagascar. It is difficult to assess why so few music-ethnographic scholars have made the research journey to the island, and further enquiry is necessary to reveal the possible reasons for this.[13]

Significant research has nonetheless been conducted by prominent scholars in the last century or so, which has led to a greater understanding of Malagasy musical culture. Whilst it is outside the scope of this dissertation to review all such literature, I will continue this chapter by focusing on the main works relating to Malagasy musical instruments. My intention here is to inquire when and how ethnomusicologists have related instruments to Malagasy origins, heritage and identity.

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[12]. An important reminder to the reader at this juncture, as stated in chapter one, my research question asks: "What contribution can ethnomusicology make towards clarifying the multidisciplinary debates surrounding Madagascar's pre-colonial oceanic migrations?".

[13]. During an interview at the home of ethnomusicologist Mireille Rakotomalala, I was surprised at the sincerity of the welcome I received, and her keen interest in my research project. After exchanging pleasantries about our admiration for one another's country (she told me about her daughter who currently works and resides in Johannesburg), I took out my ethics clearance forms, as per my standard interviewing practice. Speaking in French, she told me that the documents were "very important" to her, although – remarkably, to my mind – this was the first time she had ever received such documents relating to ethics (2017). That she had nevertheless availed herself to the enquiry of several interviewees in the past, reveals as much her kindness as it does the welcoming posture she puts on whenever foreign scholars express research interest in her country (*ibid.*).

2.4.1 Organology

The classic work on Malagasy instruments is Curt Sachs' *Les instruments de musique de Madagascar* (The Musical Instruments of Madagascar) (1938). Sachs' 96-page study was by no means extensive, yet it was nevertheless a very important work in bringing Malagasy instruments to the wider world of academia. As the earliest of its kind, and the only one widely circulated during the colonial era, Sachs' discussion appropriately provides an overview of Malagasy instruments, which he examined in European museums (*ibid.*). In the book, Sachs categorizes instruments according to instrument types – respectively aerophones, idiophones, membranophones and chordophones, with the author naturally basing his study on the Hornbostel-Sachs (2011) system of organological classification (Sachs 1938).[14]

Whilst Sachs' book is focused solely on Malagasy instruments, he makes certain important observations which highlight important influence from other Indian Ocean musical cultures. For example, in reference to the "hole of lateral insufflation" of the Malagasy conch, Sachs refers to similarities with the "Malayo-Polynesian" version of the instrument (1938, 10). Similarly, with reference to the apparent Arab influence of the Malagasy fiddle, Sachs discusses how Malagasy musicians hold the European violin "in a vertical position" in the same way that Arab *rebab* players hold their own instruments (*ibid.*, 69). Generally, these suggestions are nonetheless largely preliminary, and seemingly tentative and vague. Importantly, my reading of the book is that it is not decisively situated within Madagascar's history of oceanic migrations – undoubtedly due to the time of writing in 1938, decades before scientific evidence revealed without a doubt Madagascar's connection the parts of the Indian Ocean world which I have highlighted. If Sachs knew what we know today regarding the connection between Malagasy Bornean Ma'anyan, for example, his study – even if intended as an overview of instruments – would have been significantly more impactful and decisive.

Since Sachs' work, several other important organological studies have been conducted by foreign and indigenous scholars. The most significant early studies by the former set of researchers include Gilbert Rouget's "Musique à Madagascar" (Music in Madagascar) (1946) and Norma McLeod's "Musical Instruments and History in Madagascar" (1977) – two general works which provide an

[14]. Organology's most well-known classification system, commonly referred to simply as 'Hornbostel-Sachs' or 'HS', was first published by Erich von Hornbostel and Curt Sachs in the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* (Journal for Ethnology) (1914). This was followed by an English translation published in the *Galpin Society Journal* (1961), which was then updated in 2011 by the Musical Instrument Museums Online (MIMO) project. I appropriately use the most recent version throughout this dissertation. I have included all three full citations in my reference list (the latter under Online Sources).

overview of music and instruments on the island. Whilst I will not go into detail regarding these somewhat dated works, the comparatively recent work of the ever-prolific Roger Blench – who mentions Malagasy musical instruments in several of his multidisciplinary studies emphasizing historical reconstruction – should be highlighted.

Blench's earliest study to make mention of Malagasy instruments was his "Morphology and Distribution of Sub-Saharan Musical Instruments of North African, Middle Eastern and Asian Origin" (1984). Whilst the title undoubtedly reveals the intended large framework of the work, the paper was important for scholars emphasising comparative organology, and I accordingly reference it at various points in my fourth chapter. More recently, in 2009, Blench presented two papers at a conference in Tervuren, Belgium. The first, entitled "Was Madagascar Settled before the Austronesians?" (2009a), focused on the possible existence of the Vazimba (the rumoured indigenous population in Madagascar, as mentioned in my introduction). The second, "Malagasy Music and Musical Instruments: An Alternative Key to Linguistic and Cultural History" (2009b), foregrounds – appropriately for my discussion – comparative organology as an alternative framework for reconstructing Madagascar's early history. Blench frames his discussion through a proposed chronostratigraphic "culture layer", intending to trace the corresponding introduction of Malagasy instruments with the introduction of Indian Ocean peoples – including Austronesians, African Bantu and Arab-Swahilis (*ibid.*).

It is important to note that what exists of his thoughts remains only as notes presented as an e-poster; if there was a paper accompanying the slides it has not seen the light of day. Blench's subsequent studies have increasingly incorporated large frameworks and a wide variety of sources from various disciplines. Works such as "New Evidence for the Austronesian Impact on the East Africa Coast" (2010) and "Using Diverse Sources of Evidence for Reconstructing the Past History of Musical Exchanges in the Indian Ocean" (2014) fall clearly into this category. Although excellent in their intended pursuit of historical reconstruction, musical instruments – and Malagasy instruments in particular – are not the primary focus of such works.

Several indigenous scholars have conducted significant studies focusing on various aspects of Malagasy musical culture. Amongst works by Malagasy scholars, Victor Randrianary's *Madagascar: Les chants d'une île* (Madagascar: The Songs of an Island) (2001) is important. The book, together with several sound recordings on an accompanying CD, provides an important overview of musical traditions found in the island's various regions (*ibid.*). A year later, Randrianary continued his work by publishing a focused study of Mama Sana, one of Madagascar's

most famous *valiha* musicians – with the author focusing on her life and the production of her brand of "Sakalava blues" (2002). Spanning several decades, authors such as Fred Rahanivoson (1964), Silvestre Randafison (1980b) and Pierre André Ranaivoarson (1988 and 2001) focused on *hira gasy*, symbolic musical theatre of the Merina in the highlands – with the latter emphasising how Christian hymns have impacted the genre (Ranaivoarson 2000).

The formerly mentioned Silvestre Randafison was one of the first indigenous scholars to produce a substantial work on musical instruments with his work *Etude sur la fabrication des instruments de musique* (Study of the Manufacture of Musical Instruments*)* (1980a) – which was published locally at Antananarivo's Centre National de l'Artisanat Malagasy (CENAM). As the decades progressed, other authors, including Ratovoririna Ranaivovololona and Jobonina Razafindrakoto-Montoya have significantly advanced knowledge of Malagasy instruments, particularly focusing on the *valiha*. Ranaivovololona's *Valiha chromatique et ses techniques de jeu* (1993) focuses on the playing techniques of the chromatic variant – a contemporary form of Madagascar's national instrument, which incorporates guitar pegs for easy tuning. Razafindrakoto-Montoya meanwhile focuses on the *valiha's* repertoire (Razafindrakoto 1999), as well as its organological evolution (Razafindrakoto-Montoya 2006).

The most prominent indigenous ethnographer, whom I interviewed in Antananarivo, is Mireille Mialy Rakotomalala. This author and performer, who had a stint as Madagascar's Minister of Arts and Culture, has published several important works on Malagasy music (Fuhr 2014). After being asked to write Madagascar's entry in the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (1998), Rakotomalala has since made two substantial research contributions, *Madagascar: La musique dans l'histoire* (Madagascar: Music in History) (2003) and *Les instruments de musique dans la tradition Malgache* (Musical Instruments in the Malagasy Tradition) (2009).

The 202-page *Madagascar: La musique dans l'histoire*, presents Malagasy music as rich and diverse, with Rakotomalala linking the establishment of diverse musical traditions with the island's history of social interactions (1998, 11). One important methodological approach to take from her work is the emphasis on oral traditions or "unwritten sources" which she argues are able to communicate about history (*ibid.*, 67). Forming part of the oral and audible, she thus argues that musical traditions should be viewed as constituting a part of oral folklore – which contains many legends relating to origins. From an organological perspective, Rakotomalala does not frame her discussion through classification, yet she does remark that various instruments in Madagascar show similarities with those from East Africa and Southeast Asia (*ibid.*, 75). Importantly, she comments

how the dispersion of musical instruments across the Indian Ocean to Madagascar corresponds to human "migration patterns" presented by scholars of other disciplines (*ibid.*). Although musical instruments do feature in the book at various points (which includes several glossy photographs of instruments in the middle section), they are not the primary focus of the work, which emphasizes musical practice – including the complex intermingling of music, religion and the ancestors (*ibid.*, 83 and 133).

Another important scholar is the book's editor, August Schmidhofer. Apart from his contribution to Rakotomalala's study, this Vienna-based ethnomusicologist has published several works on various aspects of Malagasy music. Early works include an examination of the enculturation of liturgical music in the 19th century, as well as a study of an ancestral drum played amongst the Sakalava on Madagascar's East Coast (Schmidhofer 1993 and 1998a). Most relevant to my discussion is Schmidhofer's "Some Remarks on the Austronesian background of Malagasy music" (2005), which examines cultural influence from Southeast Asia as reflected in musical characteristics and instruments. The study, which I foreground in my data presentation chapters, is an important preliminary work situating ethnomusicology within the multidisciplinary debates surrounding Malagasy origins. Similar in this regard are three studies by the author which focus solely on instruments. The first is a six-page study on the *valiha* tube-zither (Schmidhofer 1998b), whilst the second (1995) and third (2004) are studies focusing on Afro-Malagasy xylophone traditions. Importantly, intending to highlight different strands of Indian Ocean influence, Schmidhofer uses evidence from other disciplines as "prerequisites for retracing… (musical) origins" (2005, 4).

2.5 Conclusion

In the decade since the last of Schmidhofer's studies, the multidisciplinary approach has gained ever-increasing momentum. The recent evidence clarifying the question of Malagasy origins has nonetheless developed through critical engagement with more than a century of work. Whilst I do not claim to have reviewed all such literature, my intention in this chapter has been to evaluate the claims made by the most prominent scholars, within this large context. I accordingly began the chapter with reference to the work of early colonial ethnologists who sought to elucidate the question of Malagasy origins around the turn of the 20th century. Of great importance, these early works established Malagasy culture as originating from three main strands of Indian Ocean influence – Southeast Asia, East Africa and West Asia. As the century progressed, studies became increasingly focused with linguists being the first to use these early studies as the foundation of their own works. The vital evidence presented in the field of language was, in turn, incorporated by scholars of other disciplines, such as genetics, who felt there was a dearth of relevant information in

their own fields. The research area is, hence, noticeably multidisciplinary.

Importantly, by grouping this diverse literature chronologically, in relation to the regional Indian Ocean world, we see that the study of Malagasy ancestry has emphasized these separate areas for more over a century. Those focusing on Southeast Asian influence in Malagasy culture were the early ethnologists Grandidier and Grandidier (1875, 1901, 1908–1928), followed by the linguists Dahl (1951, 1991) and Adelaar (1995), followed by recent geneticists Hurles *et al.* (2005) and Cox *et al.* (2012). Similarly, the impact from Africa was similarly examined by scholars from these various eras and disciplines, with the earliest significant contribution coming from Ferrand (1909) – evidence upon which scholars of language, such as Dahl (1988), Adelaar (2009), and scholars of genetics, such as Hurles *et al.* (2005), based their subsequent discussions. Finally, this trend can again be observed by reviewing those scholars focused on influence from West Asia such as Ferrand (1891-1902), Beaujard (1998), and Capredon *et al.* (2013).

Although ethnomusicology has, to a certain degree, been left behind with the increase of contributions from other disciplines, enough has been written by authors such as Sachs (1938), Rakotomalala (1998 and 2003), and Schmidhofer (2005) to demonstrate the undeniable potential the discipline holds. Considering very recent evidence brought forward by geneticists, these studies of music are nonetheless somewhat dated. Further research situated on this multidisciplinary historical evidence, reflecting the intentions of this present study, is vital to clarify what ethnomusicology can contribute to the unsolved puzzle of Malagasy origins.

CHAPTER 3:
Research Methodology and Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

Having introduced my research topic and reviewed relevant literature, this third chapter continues my discussion by foregrounding the methodology and conceptual framework I employ. Considering the pre-colonial nature of my study, the pursuit of an appropriate methodology has led to a stimulating conversation between two major channels of thought. The first, a multidisciplinary framework, and the second, my ethnomusicological schooling. Intending to situate the latter in dialogue with the former has led to the emergence of certain methodological and theoretical issues. In this chapter, I highlight these issues and explain how I have overcome them through my research design.

3.2 Multidisciplinary Methodology

As has been made clear by my literature review, ethnomusicology in research surrounding Malagasy origins, is at a preliminary stage of enquiry. Whilst important studies have been conducted by scholars of music, these have not been intentionally framed through the historical framework of Indian Ocean migrations. Ethnomusicology's contribution towards the multidisciplinary has therefore been minimal in my research area. In the same way that linguists situated their research on the enquiries of early ethnologists, followed by geneticists who situated their research on the works of linguists, I believe it necessary for scholars of music to use a similar multidisciplinary approach.

My decision to use the term multidisciplinary deserves some mention. Although this term is sometimes used interchangeably with 'interdisciplinary' and 'transdisciplinary', several scholars - including Young (1995), Oxhorn (2008), and Choi and Pak (2006) - have argued that these represent three distinct approaches. Choi and Pak contend that interdisciplinarity "analyses, synthesizes and harmonises links between disciplines into a coordinated and coherent whole", whilst transdisciplinarity "integrates the natural, social and health sciences in a humanities context, and transcends their traditional boundaries" (2006, 351). Although I incorporate elements of both these definitions in my study, my primary framework is nearest to multidisciplinarity, which "draws on knowledge from different disciplines but stays within their boundaries" (*ibid.*).

This definition reflects my methodological approach in two ways. Firstly, I have "drawn on

knowledge from different disciplines" by referencing a wide-range of literature (as can be seen in my literature review). Importantly, within the research area of Malagasy origins, similar multidisciplinary approaches can be observed in the methodology employed by other scholars. Molecular bioscientists Cox *et al.*, whose work I reviewed in the previous chapter, use multidisciplinarity in their references to cultural evidence which they say "paints much the same picture" as genetic evidence (2012, 2671-2672). The authors refer to the diffusion of Southeast Asian cultural traits, and objects of material culture, to Madagascar. These include outrigger canoes, iron working techniques, the cultivation of rice, bananas, yams and taro, as well as the dispersion of musical instruments (*ibid.*).

The rather appropriate reference to musical instruments does not indicate the geneticists were seeking to "analyse, synthesise (or) harmonise" this cultural evidence (as an interdisciplinary scholar would) (Choi and Pak 2006, 351). Neither were they attempting to "integrate" the sciences and humanities, or to "transcend their disciplinary boundaries" (as a transdisciplinary scholar would) (*ibid.*). Rather, taken in the larger context of the research reconstructing Madagascar's pre-colonial history, these references are intended to validate the results of their study, as well as to situate their discipline within this larger body. My contention, therefore, is that not only should my individual research project should be classified as multidisciplinary, but this should extend to the research area in general – which often "draws on" other disciplines in the pursuit of clarifying Malagasy origins (*ibid.*).

3.2.1 Situating Ethnomusicology Within Multidisciplinarity

A second way my research design reflects multidisciplinarity relates to the second part of Choi and Pak's definition. That I reference other disciplines "but stay within (my) research boundaries" is accurate (*ibid.*). Unlike other disciplines in the sciences and humanities, the "research boundaries" of ethnomusicology are somewhat ambiguous. Having been birthed with the establishment of "comparative musicology" in the late 19th century, Western historical musicologists are said to have "offered" various topics to ethnomusicologists "that their subject could not accommodate" (Myers 1993, 4 and 6-7). These "scraps from the table" – including the psychology of music, the study of non-Western folk and popular music, dance, and organology – were perceived by their recipients as a great "feast" (*ibid.*, 7). By the time the term "ethnomusicology" had gained currency amongst comparative scholars, around the mid-20th century, the discipline was distinctly recognized for its diversity (*ibid.*, 4).

Today this reflects in the array of approaches, methodologies and theoretical frameworks used. I believe it is the very nature of ethnomusicology, this diversity, which makes it the perfect fit for a multidisciplinary conversation. Its malleable research boundaries, partly a result the relative newness of the discipline, allow the incorporation of diverse sources which other stricter, perhaps more established, disciplines would not. I can therefore, for the purposes of this research, foster a multidisciplinary discussion without transcending or overstepping ethnomusicology's research boundaries.

3.2.2 Organology

In the development of my research design, I have had to enquire which of these initial "scraps from the table" is suitable (Myers 1993, 7). As I outlined in detail in my introduction, I have chosen to foreground organology, one of ethnomusicology's important sub-disciplines. As Schmidhofer notes, musical instruments are aspects of musical culture which "have been preserved until the present day" and are "the least impacted by (historical) changes" (2005, 5). These tangible objects, which "often display – in some cases very clearly – their cultural origins", may be key pieces of cultural evidence to aid the reconstruction of Madagascar's early oceanic migrations (*ibid.*, 18). Taken within my multidisciplinary framework, this foregrounding of organology is ultimately intended to situate ethnomusicology as a potentially important player within the multidisciplinary.

3.3 Ethnomusicological Methodology: Fieldwork

Although ethnomusicology offers a fair amount of freedom and flexibility with regards to research design, certain practical and theoretical methodologies are suggested. Perhaps the most notable of these is fieldwork. An inheritance from its sister discipline, anthropology, field research has been called the "hallmark" of ethnomusicology (Myers 1993, 22). Distinguished scholar Alan Merriam regarded personal fieldwork as an essential part of any ethnomusicological study, whilst numerous scholars have since advocated for the importance of conducting field research in situ (1964, 32-33).[15]

Having completed my fieldwork at the time of writing, I can say that my period in the field was greatly significant. It shaped my framework and the direction of my discussion, to a sizeable degree. My fieldwork, which was significantly shaped by the personal and serendipitous, took place during the months of July and August 2017. Considering the short duration of my fieldwork trip, I chose to spend most of my time in Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo. Described as a "the *passage obligé*

[15]. See Paul Atkinson's "Why Do Fieldwork?" (2006) for a recent discussion on the benefits and importance of sustained fieldwork.

(obligatory path) for all but a few musicians *en route* for transnational migration", I felt the city would be the best choice for my proposed research due to it being home to the University of Antananarivo, as well as several important cultural institutions and international embassies (Kiwan and Meinhof 2011, 23 and Fuhr 2013, 5). From these places, I could network with scholars and musicians, and access valuable resources.

3.3.1 Archival Research

Unlike a standard music-ethnography, which predominately seeks to analyse currently observable musical culture, I realised that my pre-colonial framework required a modified research design. Considering my emphasis on organology, I decided the most viable strategy would be to focus on archival research. It is in the archive where history presents itself – and is readable – in various forms. My day to day therefore involved visiting museums and other cultural institutions, where I collected data by documenting notes and item descriptions, interviewing curators and organologists, and photographing musical instruments (the latter when, and where, permissible). In Antananarivo, I visited the Museum of Art and Archaeology, the Museum of Ethnology and Palaeontology, Tsimbazaza, and the Rova Palace compound. Considering that the infrastructure is still developing in the poverty-stricken nation (which falls in the top 10 poorest countries in Africa for GDP per capita), several of these archives and museums possessed minimal items and a scarcity of appropriate documentation (Sellström 2015, 89).

I perhaps would not have been cognisant of this had I not visited the French-overseas territory, Réunion island, the week before. Madagascar's Indian Ocean neighbour differs from it not only in its significantly smaller size, but also in its financial abundance and wealth of infrastructure. Backed by the power of the Euro, Réunion has numerous museums and exhibitions - with work by world-renowned artists such as Picasso and Matisse on regular display. Before setting off for fieldwork, I had discovered the *Musée des musiques et instruments de l'Océan Indien* (Museum of Music and Instruments of the Indian Ocean) located in a small village in the centre of the island.[16] Set up by French curators François Menard and Robert Fonlupt, the museum houses over a thousand musical instruments, each categorized according to regional Indian Ocean areas including India, West Asia, Africa and Madagascar. After adding it to my itinerary, my week-long visit to the museum became an imperative part of my research project, for reasons that I only understood upon reflection.

[16]. The museum, formerly a family house and then an old inn, is also known as *La Maison Morange* (The Morange House). Ménard nonetheless said I should use the name *Musée des musiques et instruments de l'Océan Indien* when referring to it, hence I do so throughout (2017).

3.3.2 The Colonial Archive

During a formal interview with Ménard (2017), whom I discovered is an ardent organologist, I learnt that the museum was essentially a private collection of instruments collected by either Ménard or Fonlupt. Having assumed the instruments from Madagascar, for example, would have been collected *in situ*, I was surprised to discover that many of them were collected in Europe. During the colonial era, subjugated nations were plundered of countless cultural treasures. In Madagascar's case, musical instruments were favoured by colonists and hundreds were shipped back to France and other parts of Europe, where they were displayed as "exotic treasures" at various national and international cultural expositions (Schmidhofer 2005, 13). Many instruments were sold at high prices to elite European attendees, who kept them for decades as family heirlooms, sometimes eventually donating them to local European museums (*ibid.*). Ménard, who had been collecting instruments for four decades, thus bought most of his instruments in antique shops and flea markets during visits to large European cities such as Paris, Lyon, Brussels, and London (2017). The French curator's personal decision to relocate to Reunion meant the instruments were returned to the Indian Ocean. This had only occurred by happenstance after colonial displacement more than a century ago.

My reflections on Ménard's collection process highlighted the impact of colonialism, and the related challenges to be overcome within such research. Although a pre-colonial endeavour, it is in the colonial archive – in this case the European museum – where much important information lies. My emphasis on historical reconstruction has required me to foreground old instrument types (essentially, the older, the better, as technological adaptions are often made to instruments over time).[17] Although I had not known it initially, a visit to a European museum – where old instrument types are found – was vital for my research project. With Réunion island existing as part of France, I was grateful that my necessary visit to Europe was, as serendipity would have it, less than two hours away from Madagascar's Ivato Airport.

3.4 Diffusionism

That the *Musée des musiques et instruments de l'Océan Indien*'s focus is the Indian Ocean is significant. My intended reimagining of Madagascar's migrations is centred around comparisons with other Indian Ocean groups. Schmidhofer attests to the importance of such an approach when studying Malagasy music, which he contends should be "researched in the context of comparative

[17]. I elaborate on the distinction between old instrument-types and contemporary forms in chapter five. The *valiha* of my case study, even had a change in its organological classification due to the incorporation of new materials.

studies due to a lack of historical sources" (2005, 18). My examination of musical instruments from Southeast Asia, East Africa and West Asia, nonetheless, brings an important theoretical issue into the conversation – diffusionism. Defined as "the transfer of discrete culture traits from one society to another, through migration, trade, war, or other contact", diffusionism has been problematised for over a century. My discussion on the dissemination of musical instruments seems to resemble the controversial paradigm. By briefly historicizing diffusionism, which still exists as "a long-standing theoretical issue in anthropology", I will nevertheless show the disparities between my framework and its framework (Hahn 2008, 191).

The controversy surrounding the paradigm began with its formalisation in 19th century Europe, when classical diffusionists such Leo Frobenius (1989), Fritz Graebner (1905 and 1909) and Bernhard Ankermann (1901) incorporated the concept of diffusion (which had existed for preceding centuries) into a set of philosophical ideas (Winthrop 2008, 83 and Penny 2008, 90). Introducing *Kulturkreise* (cultural circles) and *Kulturschichten* (cultural layers), the authors argued that the identification and regional clustering of cultural traits could reveal the distribution and origins of human culture (Penny 2008, 90). The suppositions of the Austrian-German school of thought were subsequently extended by the British school when authors such as William Rivers (1914), William Perry (1923 and 1924), and Grafton Elliot Smith (1928 and 1931) presented similar studies based upon the paradigm (Winthrop 1991, 83).

These early diffusionists primarily emphasised the development of universal theories to explicate the origins of human culture (*ibid.*). Both argued that the progression of the world's cultures occurred through the spread of civilization from a single, or "very few", culture centres (*ibid.*). Their research received "severe criticism" for being framed through cultural superiority and ethnocentricity, and also for its implication that humans are inherently conservative (Rowe 1966, 334). As a result, around the mid 20th century, there was a shift in emphasis amongst diffusionist scholars who moved away from universal principles in favour of case studies (*ibid.*).

3.4.1 Transoceanic Diffusionism

Authors such as Heyerdahl (1948 and 1952) and Meggers *et al.* (1965) soon presented comprehensive studies on prehistoric transoceanic migrations, although their work was highly problematised due to flawed research design (Rowe 1966, 334). Heyerdahl, whose theories captivated the public's imagination, deserves some mention (Heyerdahl 1948). Believing that Oceania was colonized from the Americas, the Norwegian author jetted off from the Peruvian coastline in 1947, seeking to prove his theories. Voyaging 8000 kilometres across the Pacific in a

pae-pae raft constructed from balsa wood, the scholar-cum-explorer restricted himself to the materials and navigation techniques he believed prehistoric South Americans would have used. Whilst the heavily publicized *Kon-Tiki* expedition was a success, his journey led to immense criticism amongst fellow scholars who argued his unorthodox methods epitomized the "non-scholarly approach" of many transoceanic diffusion theorists (Jones and Klaar 2005, 459). Despite a follow up book in 1952 entitled *American Indians in the Pacific: The Theory Behind the Kon-Tiki Expedition*, Heyerdahl's theories were constantly refuted in archaeological circles where they were considered "hopelessly at odds with the American and Polynesian archaeological and linguistic records" (Suggs 1960 in Jones and Klaar 2005, 459).

A scrutiny of the ordering of Heyerdahl's research methods is important as it highlights one of the main critiques of diffusionism. Archaeologist John Rowe's scathing critique argues against this "prove-first, theorise-later" approach, believing many diffusionists start with a conclusion which they use to "deform the evidence" (Rowe 1966, 334). Likening the paradigm to a "hardy weed (that had) poisoned ethnological pastures", he believed the "wild, ill-supported theories" proposed by many diffusionists was "science-fiction" – overlooking imperative factors such as time, distance, and the difficulties of navigation in prehistorical times (*ibid.*). He argued against the "fantasies" and "strident claims" of diffusionists, contending that they did not conform to "reasonable standards of (archaeological) scholarship" (*ibid.*). Indeed, once such transoceanic speculation was dismissed later in the decade, the overall credibility of modern scientific archaeology was said to be reinforced (Jones and Klar 2005, 458).

3.4.2 Diffusion not Diffusionism

Although my research similarly focuses on the dispersion of tangible culture on a transoceanic level, my research design differs greatly from these early diffusionists. Firstly, unlike the classical German-Austrian and British diffusionists, my intention is not to develop a universal principle regarding the origins of mankind. My study is solely intended to explicate Malagasy origins.

Like Heyerdahl (1948), I have similarly focused on a case study, however I have not begun with a conclusion and attempted to "deform the evidence" (Rowe 1966, 334). By basing my research on multidisciplinary evidence, my study is in stark contrast with the mentioned scholar, whose work was constantly refuted in archaeological circles for being "hopelessly at odds with the American and Polynesian archaeological and linguistic records" (Suggs 1960 in Jones and Klaar 2005, 459). My thorough examination of literature from other disciplines, namely linguistics and genetics, clarifies that my deductions are neither "science-fiction" nor "fantasies" (Rowe 1966, 334). Rather

than desiring to *create* a new puzzle of origins, my intention is to *contribute* to one which has already taken a reasonable degree of form.

Although I am distancing my work from the paradigm of diffusionism, I nonetheless agree with the sentiments of Jett and Carter who say that the idea of diffusion is neither "passé" nor "logically erroneous" (Jett and Carter 1966, 867). Bernhard Streck (2001) and Hans Hahn (2008, 191) noticed what the latter calls "astonishing similarities" between recent research regarding globally circulating cultural phenomena, and the arguments of classical diffusionists. Hahn comments that diffusionists such as Frobenius (1989) had perhaps "not been so totally wrong", and that certain aspects of their studies deserve reconsideration (Hahn 2008, 191). As early as 1977, archaeologist Jonathan Haas similarly argued that "the process of diffusion can be approached from various analytical perspectives" (649). By stripping away the problematic theories of the paradigm's founders, we see that diffusionism and diffusion, as Haas agrees, "are not equal" (*ibid.*). Ultimately, I overcome this theoretical issue by differentiating between diffusionism, a controversial paradigm, and diffusion, an observable process. My study incorporates of the latter, which I choose to conceptually define as "the transfer of discrete culture traits from one society to another, through migration, trade, war, or other contact" (Winthrop 1991, 82-83).

3.4.3 Diffusion in Ethnomusicology

Whether it is packaged as "dissemination", "transmission", "syncretism" or even "acculturation", the transfer of musical culture has been examined by ethnomusicologists in various discussions.[18] Unlike its controversial standing in anthropology and archaeology, diffusion has perhaps never been effusively problematized within ethnomusicology, and indirect references to related concepts are often casual and blasé.

Considering Indian Ocean musics have yet to be widely accepted in meaningful connection with one another, I will briefly foreground Afro-diasporic musical traditions of the much-researched Atlantic world to illustrate my point. Examples of music-religious traditions such as *candomblé* (Brazil), *santeria* (Cuba) and *voudou* (Haiti) have been discussed by various ethnomusicologists as migratory musics largely rooted in West African tradition (respectively McGowan and Pessanha 1998, Manuel 1995, and Averill 1998). Musical characteristics including density, rhythmic ostinatos, harmonic ostinatos, and the incorporation of call-and-response are widely accepted to be a product of the forced migrations of African peoples to the Americas. Similarly, the emphasis on

[18]. See Hilarian (2007) and Lutz (1997), for examples.

drum and percussion instruments is considered further cultural evidence linking the two continents.

In Madagascar, several ethnomusicologists have similarly presented comparative discussions highlighting elements of Indian Ocean musical culture as forming the foundation for certain of the island's musical traditions (Schmidhofer 2005, 18). Setting musical characteristics for a moment, in favour of instruments, Rakotomalala told me that the Malagasy *sodina* is a localised version of the Indonesian *suling* (2017). Ménard, similarly, told me that the Malagasy *jejo-voatavo* had made its way to Madagascar as a result of contact from East Africa (2017). Curt Sachs and Roger Blench, meanwhile have stated that the Malagasy *kabosy* is a localized version of the Arabian *qanbūs* (1938, 69 and 1984, 171). These references, which I expand upon in my next chapter, are clear examples of diffusion in ethnomusicological discourse. None of these authors, however, mention or problematise the concept in their discussions. It is assumed and accepted in ethnomusicological circles that musical culture, in this case instruments, can and does transfer – diffuse – from one society to another. Whether this occurs through oceanic or terrestrial migrations, this diffusion is both observable and tangible, and exists as concrete evidence for scholars of music to study.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have clarified my rationale for situating ethnomusicology within multidisciplinary research on Madagascar's oceanic migrations. As I explained, the diversity of approaches that ethnomusicology allows means my multidisciplinary framework emphasising organology is an appropriate and viable research design. Whilst the significant scientific and historical evidence presented by scholars of various disciplines forms the foundation of my study, I situate ethnomusicology upon this, believing the discipline to be a potentially important contributor of cultural evidence.

My foregrounding of ethnomusicology has led to an emphasis on fieldwork, one of the methodological hallmarks of the discipline. Due to the pre-colonial nature of my study, and the emphasis on old types of musical instruments within it, I have had to adapt my research design. Whilst my qualitative study uses some standard data collection techniques for fieldwork, such as conducting interviews in situ, my focus is on archives and museums. Within these spaces, musical instruments emerge as objects which emit meaning and reflect Malagasy cultural identity. By considering this knowledge within my multidisciplinary foundation, I discuss how musical instruments are potentially vital constituents through which to reconstruct Madagascar's history.

CHAPTER 4:
Comparative Organology as Framework to Reimagine Madagascar's Oceanic Migrations

4.1 Introduction

This chapter, the first of two in which I present data, uses a classical organological framework to situate ethnomusicology within multidisciplinary research. Considering Blench's statement that "Madagascar has a wide range of […] musical instruments which can be linked to a history of peopling and contact", I enquire which instruments arrived due to Indian Ocean migrations (2009b, 2). Seeking to contribute towards clarifying Malagasy origins, I use a comparative approach to trace the diffusion of several instruments to Madagascar. Whilst I acknowledge that instruments – like ideas – can diffuse without human migrations, my focus is the diffusion of culture which takes place because of human migrations. To do this, I situate my study on the multidisciplinary historical evidence linking Madagascar to the Indian Ocean world.

The framework I use in this chapter is based on Dornoun's "historical viewpoint" of musical instruments (1981, 33-34). This seeks to trace or reconstruct "areas of distribution and/or dissemination of certain instrument types" (*ibid.*). To clarify Madagascar's "many waves of migrations over the centuries", I compare several of the island's instruments to examples from the three Indian Ocean regions which the previous studies have pointed towards (Fuhr 2013, 2).[19] Using Hornbostel-Sachs's classification-based organological model (2011), I show the significant similarities between selected Malagasy examples and those from Southeast Asia, East Africa and West Asia.

By framing this comparative analysis within the history of migrations from each area, I discuss how the study of the diffusion of musical instruments helps affirm the suppositions regarding Malagasy origins advanced by scholars of various disciplines. By contributing this cultural evidence to the greater body of multidisciplinary scholarship, I ultimately highlight the contribution ethnomusicology can make towards reconstructing Madagascar's pre-colonial migrations.

[19]. I am not arguing that no instruments were created through autonomous development in Madagascar itself – for the country has numerous traditional instruments, several of which are unique in form and structure to the island (Rakotomalala 2017). Rather, the examples I select each reveal evident similarities with instruments known to have originated in Southeast Asia, East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

4.2 The Voyage from Southeast Asia

The first oceanic migration to Madagascar tells the story of a near miraculous voyage from Southeast Asia. As reviewed in chapter two, authors from various disciplines including Grandidier and Grandidier (1875, 1901, 1908–1928), Dahl (1951, 1991), Adelaar (1995), Hurles *et al.* (2005) and Cox *et al.* (2012), have researched this connection for over a century. Although debates are ongoing, the consensus amongst most scholars is that the earliest settlers in Madagascar were Austronesian-speakers who landed on the island's shores around 500AD (Rakotomalala 1998, 781). Although their point of origin remained unclear for decades, various scholars now believe it to be Borneo – based on the significant evidence advanced by linguists and geneticists (Dahl 1991 and Hurles *et al.* 2005). One thing that has remained uncertain is the route taken to get to Madagascar, of which there are two main theories.

The first suggests direct arrival from Southeast Asia – a voyage facilitated by a favourable Indian Ocean wind and the Equatorial Current (Alpers 2014, 9). This theory has, in the past, been discredited by some scholars since Mauritius and Réunion— both seemingly "directly in the path of the supposed voyage" — were left uninhabited until the arrival of the Europeans after the 15th and 18th centuries respectively (Rakotomalala 1998, 781). The theory of direct migration has recently been revived due to new technologies including seafaring simulations, which have used ocean currents and monsoon weather patterns to assess its probability (Cox *et al.* 2012, 2767). Scholars advocating for a direct route across the Indian Ocean point to ships which were bombed near Sumatra and Java during WWII (*ibid.*). The debris of these wreckages, which included a survivor in a lifeboat, washed up on Madagascar's coast a short while later (*ibid.*). Historians Randrianja and Ellis believe direct crossing from east to west of the Indian Ocean could take as little as thirty days, a feat which is feasible "even in a small craft" (2009, 31). Similarly, geneticists Cox *et al.* believe this theory is "not beyond the realms of possibility", adding that it is "certainly consistent" with genetic evidence (Cox *et al.* 2012, 2767).

The second theory proposes the route along the Indian Ocean littoral over several centuries. Certain authors have suggested Madagascar's Austronesian-speaking settlers used parts of the Maldives, India, the Arabian Peninsula, East Africa, and the Comoros islands as "stepping stones" on their way to the island (Randrianja and Ellis 2009, 24). This potential voyage would have led to the mixing of Asian and African peoples at an early stage, and may clarify how Bantu Africans first made their way to Madagascar (Newitt 1983, 143).

From our discussions, I gathered that Mireille Rakotomalala's judgements were leaning towards

this latter supposition of an indirect route (2017). She excitedly told me about an ethnic group residing "near Ethiopia" called "Merina", who share a name and certain cultural traits (including the usage of *lamba* cloth as clothing) with Madagascar's historically dominant group (*ibid.*). In her writing, Rakotomalala similarly advocates for this theory in her references to the apparent interaction, before 1000AD, between forest dwellers of Southeast Asia and Bantu Africans on the African mainland (1998, 781). She contends that the latter seem to have borrowed "adaptive strategies" from the former, when moving into the African rain forest (*ibid.*).

After the initial 6th-century migration, evidence suggests a second wave of Austronesian speakers made the voyage to Madagascar between the 12th and 13th centuries (Sellström 2015, 63). Travelling from the Indonesian archipelago, these migrants are said to have originated from the islands of Java and Sumatra (*ibid.*). This second wave were mainly Muslim though were said to have had familiarity with "Hindu cosmology and belief systems" – perhaps a result of encounters along the Indian Ocean's littorals (*ibid.*). Once they arrived in Madagascar, many of these new migrants made their way from the east coast towards the centre (*ibid.*). During this relocation, they destroyed many forests to lay foundations for infrastructure, often based on Southeast Asian architectural styles, as well as for planting rice paddies which they had known in Southeast Asia (*ibid.*).[20]

4.2.1 Southeast Asia: Musical Instruments as Evidence

Whilst further research is needed to clarify the extent of these migrations, and the maritime routes taken, it is clear that influence from Southeast Asian has shaped Malagasy culture to a significant degree (Sellström 2015, 15). The diffusion of several instruments to the island – including the tube-

[20]. One day, after a busy morning visiting several museums in Antananarivo, Fy and I found a small local restaurant for some lunch and a moment's rest from the bustling city. Considering my fairly limited knowledge of local cuisine, I asked Fy to suggest some good Malagasy food, after which he preceded in ordering a small starter and a dish for each of us. The starter was a plate of delicious *sambals* (or *samoosas*, deep-fried triangle savoury pastries with fillings) which we, both rather hungry, ate quickly. When the main course of *ravitoto* and *zebu* arrived (respectively, a plant-based dish and Madagascan beef), as I was about to dig in Fy stopped me, asking if we could pray. I gladly consented and Fy led us in a short pray thanking God for our food, provision, and developing friendship. Ten minutes later, as our plates neared empty, I noted something and (perhaps hesitantly, not wanting to seem rude) asked Fy if there was a reason why we had only prayed when the main course came (having already finished our starters). He paused, thought for a second, and then laughed loudly – "It's the rice!". Fy explained that rice has a sacredness in Madagascar – further joking that "rice and women" are the two main things that cause Malagasy men to pray. The importance of the staple starch to Malagasy, described as "the best and most strengthening of all food" and "the principle food of all the Malagasy", was documented as early as 1927. Ralph Linton's recorded report quotes (sadly uncited) locals contending passionately "we Malagasy cannot live without rice" (Linton 1927, 654 and 659). As "rice is sacred" became an ongoing joke between Fy and I, I was made aware that the apparent Asian nature of rice is what gives it sacredness to Malagasy (Rasolofoniaina 2017).

zither, vertical flute, box-zither, transverse conch, and Y-laced drum – all exists as cultural evidence highlighting this influence (Blench 2009b, 6). By foregrounding the two former instruments, in relation to the historical evidence linking the island to Southeast Asia, I show that these Malagasy examples are localised versions of instruments that diffused across the ocean. These considerations affirm the hypotheses presented by scholars of other disciplines, hence situating ethnomusicology within this multidisciplinary research.

4.2.2 *Valiha* (Tube-Zither)

The first instrument I foreground, the *valiha*, clearly exists as a "part of the Indonesian legacy of Malagasy musical culture" (Schmidhofer 2005, 9).[21] Often referred to as "the national instrument of Madagascar", *valihas* are plucked and usually have between fifteen and twenty strings which are tuned according to selected heptatonic scales (Schmidhofer and Domenichini-Ramiaramanana 2001, 529).[22] Although box-zithers from the east coast of Madagascar sometimes go by the same name, my focus is the bamboo tube-zither predominantly played in the Central Highlands (Schmidhofer 2005, 13).

The classic explanation of the term *valiha*, proposed early on by Sachs, is that it derived from the Sanskrit *vaadya* meaning "to be sounded or played" (1938, 51). Respected linguist Alexander Adelaar has recently suggested the term may derive from the name given to the Bornean *balikan*, a string instrument found in the large Southeast Asian island (Adelaar, p.c. in Blench 2009b, 17). Considering the significant linguistic and genetic evidence linking Madagascar to Borneo, further research is imperative to clarify this supposition.

It is nevertheless highly significant that tube-zithers similar to the *valiha* are found in Borneo. These instruments, known as *talempong botuang* (Fig. 1b), are also found in parts of West Sumatra, were they are particularly played amongst the Minangkabau (Keen, 2016).[23] The construction of this Indonesian variant corresponds quite clearly to the original idiochord form of the *valiha* (Fig. 1a), in which strings are carved directly from the bamboo itself (Ménard 2017).[24] The only disparity

[21]. *Valiha* is phonetically pronounced *va-li*.
[22]. The amount of strings may vary depending on the length and width of bamboo available. The smallest *valiha* I have seen, which I collected in Antananarivo, measures around 40cm and has only eight strings. See Schmidhofer (2005, 12) for a detailed analysis of the "four or five heptatonic scales" used in *valiha* music.
[23] *Talempong* means percussion, whilst *botuang* is the name for a species of bamboo. Amongst the Minangkabau, the instrument is sometimes referred to as *talempong sambilu*, literally meaning "percussion bamboo skin" (Keen, 2016).
[24]. Idiochord is the organological term used when an instrument's string or strings are made from the same material as its resonating body.

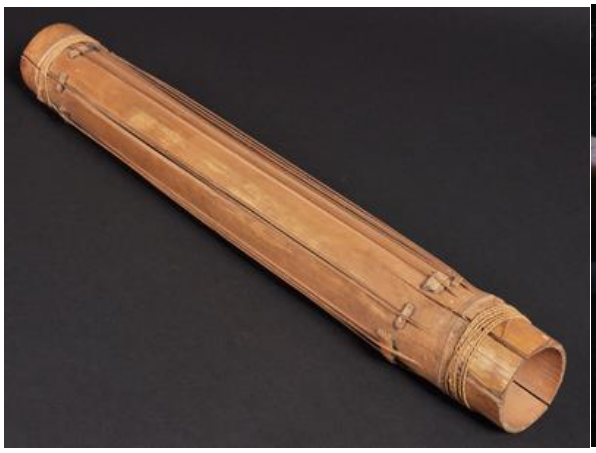
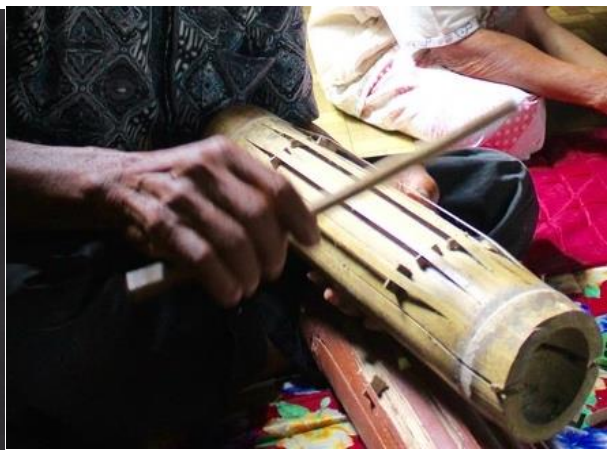

Figure 1a. *Valiha* (idiochord) plucked tube-zither, Madagascar (left). Photograph by Vincent Bijan.
Figure 1b. *Talempong botuang* (idiochord) struck tube-zither, Sumatra (right). Photograph by Palmer Keen.

between the two, as reflected in their slightly different organological classification, is that the Malagasy instrument is plucked whilst the Indonesian is struck (with two bamboo beaters).[25] Hornbostel-Sachs (2011) classifies the former as 312.11.5 (plucked idiochord tube-zither), and the latter as 312.11.4 (struck idiochord tube-zither).

Towards the end of the 19th century, the idiochord *valiha* was replaced with a heterochord version (Fig. 2a).[26] This new form, featuring separate metal strings, corresponds closely to the *sasando* (Fig. 2b) – a heterochord tube-zither found in Indonesia, specifically the islands of Sulawesi and Timor (Blench 2009b, 17). During my visit to the *Musée des musiques et instruments de l'Océan Indien*, curator François Ménard relayed the close relation between the *valiha* and the *sasando* (2017) He commented that their main points of differentiation are that the latter has more strings and incorporates "very big palm leaves", tied together in a bowl shape, as a resonator (*ibid.*). An examination of the two instruments' organological classification, reveals this distinction (although Blench has pointed out that *valiha*-players sometimes use wooden or metal boxes as resonators (2009b, 18-19). The heterochord *valiha* is classified as 312.121.5 (plucked heterochord tube-zither without extra resonator), and the *sasando* 312.122.5 (struck heterochord tube-zither with extra resonator).

Today the heterochord version of the *valiha* is mainly found in the north and central highlands of Madagascar, areas where the light-skinned Merina have historically pre-dominated (Schmidhofer

[25]. I have replaced Hornbostel-Sachs's "sounded with bare fingers" with "plucked" and "sounded by hammers or beaters" with "struck" (2011).
[26]. Heterochord is the organological term used when an instrument's string or strings are made from a separate material to its resonating body.

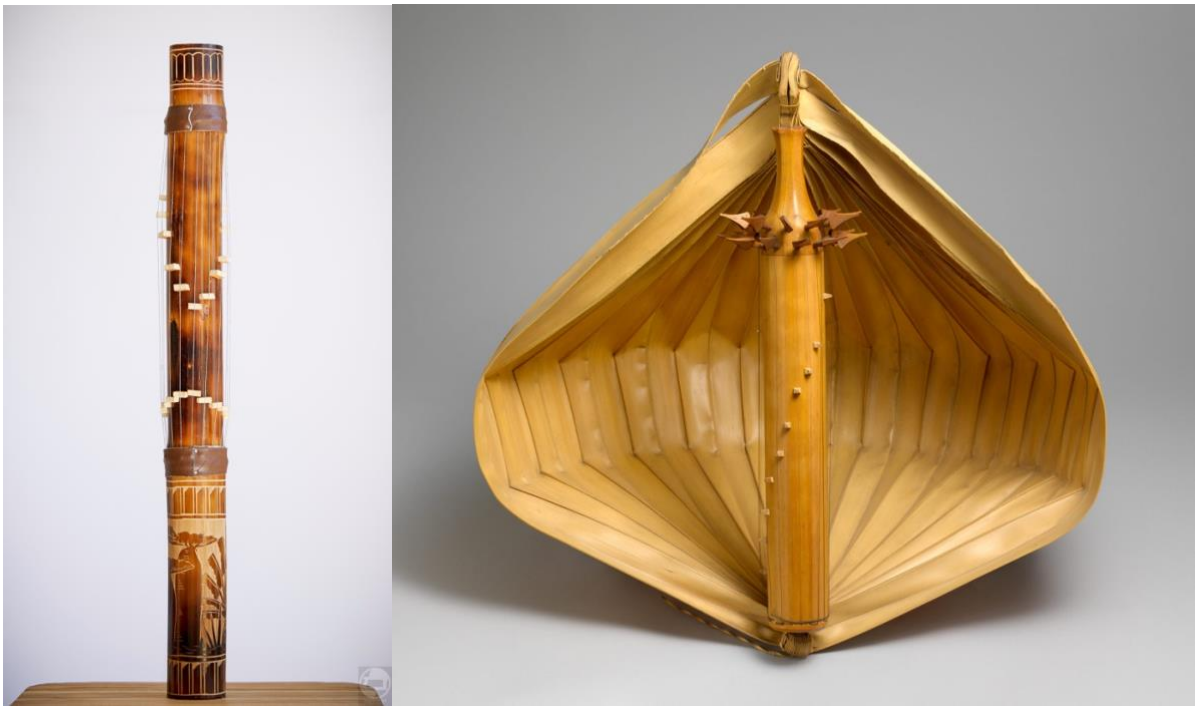

Figure 2a. *Valiha* (heterochord) plucked tube-zither, Madagascar (left). Photograph by Qamar Adams.[27]
Figure 2b. *Sasando* (heterochord) plucked tube-zither, Timor (right). Photograph by Jayson Dobney and Bradley Strauchen-Scherer.

and Domenichini-Ramiaramanana 2001, 529). As an instrument-type unique only to Madagascar and Southeast Asia, further investigation of the *valiha* as an object of national identity holds enormous potential for further research. I hence foreground it as a case study in my next chapter, which extends past the classic organological framework presented in this chapter.

4.2.3 *Sodina* (Duct Flute)

Another instrument reflecting the Southeast Asian influence in Madagascar is the *sodina* (Fig. 3a). Rakotomalala confidently told me the vertical flute is the localised version of the Indonesian *suling* (fig. 3b), which is found in various parts of the archipelago including south Sulawesi and Java (Rakotomalala 2017 and Sutton 1995, 693). A comparative examination of the instruments, both simple flutes with six holes, reveals that they are structurally indistinguishable. Both are classified, according to Hornbostel-Sachs (2011), as 421.211.12 (single open flute with external duct and finger holes).

[27]. All photographs by Qamar Adams, recognisable by white backgrounds with wood foundations, were taken in Cape Town. I collected all these instruments during my fieldwork in Madagascar and Réunion (unless otherwise stated), and had them professionally photographed for the purposes of this research.

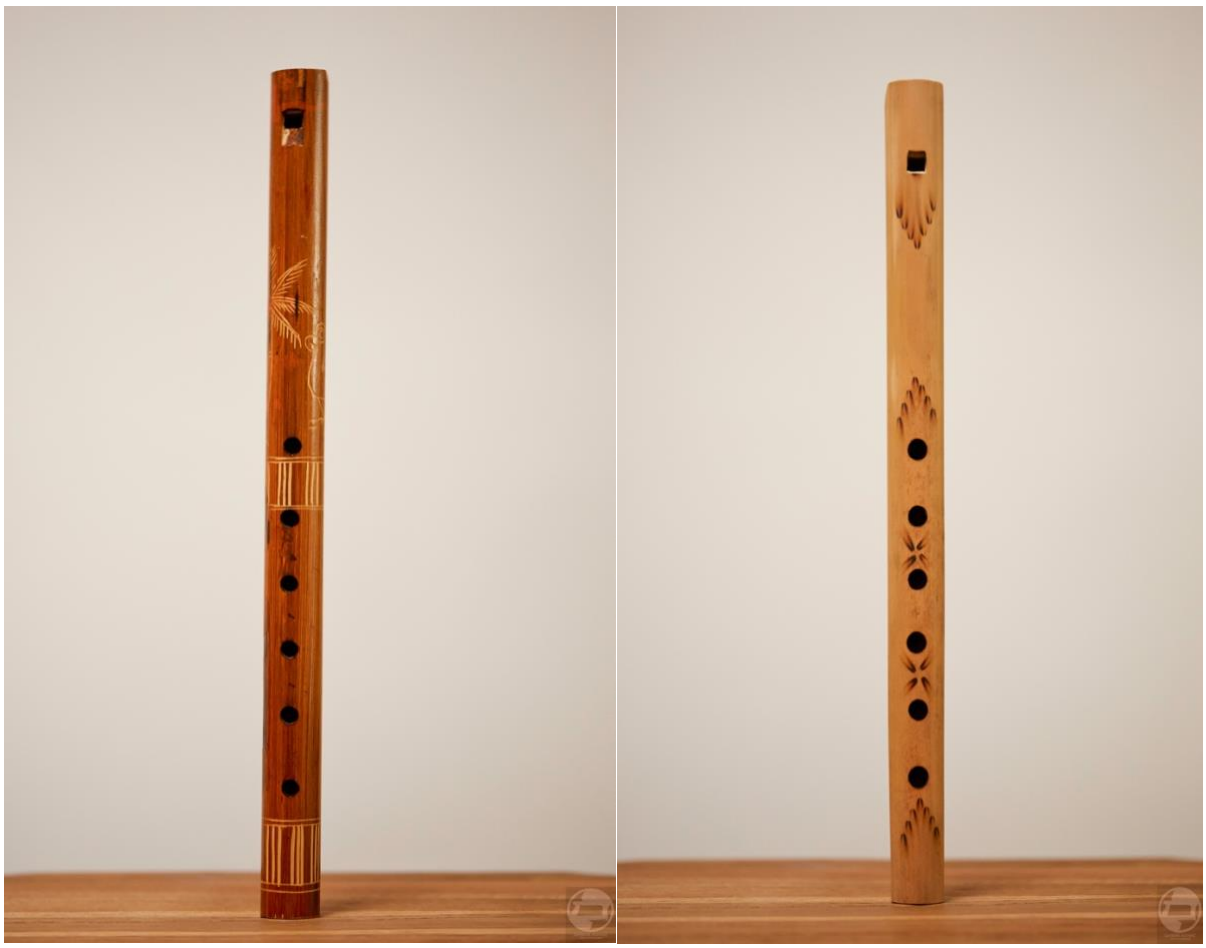

Figure 3a. *Sodina* flute, Madagascar (left). Figure 3b. *Suling* flute, Indonesia (right). Photographs by Qamar Adams.[28]

This matching classification, considered with the linguistic similarities of both terms, leads to an ostensible supposition that they are the same instrument.[29] Whilst Sachs postulates that the Malagasy *valiha* was introduced in Madagascar with the first migrations from Southeast Asia, there seems to be confusion as to the introduction of the *sodina* in Madagascar (Sachs 1938, 76). Rakotomalala (2017) suggests that this may have occurred between the 10th and 12th centuries, because of Arabian traders arriving on Madagascar's northwest coast. This may clarify evidence of Austronesian migrations along the ocean's littorals, with the instrument perhaps having journeyed from Southeast Asia via the Arabian Peninsula, although such an analysis is preliminary at best.

Apart from both existing as part of the Southeast Asian heritage of Malagasy musical culture, the

[28]. I collected this *suling* in early 2018, during a visit to Indonesia.
[29]. The Malagasy *sodina* is phonetically pronounced both as *su-din-a* or *su-din*. The inclusion of an extra syllable (often the "a" vowel) is common in many Malagasy written words, although it is often excluded in speech (another example is the formerly mentioned *valiha*, pronounced *va-li*). Taken in this context, the Malagasy *su-din* and Indonesian *su-ling* are remarkably similar, presumably reflecting localized versions of the same term.

valiha and *sodina* are connected in two ways (Schmidhofer 2005, 9). Firstly, as two musically compatible instruments, Rakotomalala told me that they were both made "famous" in early Merina royal courts, before they were taken to the rest of the island (2017). As I elaborate in my next chapter, this association is significant as the Merina often identify as holding Asian, often Indonesian, heritage (Rasolofoniaina 2017).

Similarly highlighting their Austronesian connection is the prominence of bamboo, which plays an important role in "philosophy and the arts as well as in everyday life" in Southeast Asia (Schmidhofer 2005, 8-9). That the Malagasy *valiha* and *sodina*, and the Indonesian *talempong botuang*, *sasando* and *suling* are all made of bamboo, which is "widely used (for making instruments) in Asia and Indonesia", is significant.[30] This contributes to the Austronesian identity of the *valiha* and *sodina*, a notion which is not dissimilar to the sacredness of rice of Madagascar (Dornoun 1981, 24 and Linton 1927).[31] Ultimately, based on similar organological classification, and the usage of bamboo, both instruments "bear a clear reference to (their) Asian roots" (Schmidhofer 2005, 8-9).

4.3 Africa Across the Channel

Whilst the arrival of Austronesian-speakers in Madagascar has understandably been the major cause of debate and interest amongst scholars (considering the 7500-kilometres between the island and Southeast Asia), the details surrounding the arrival of Africans similarly needs clarification. By the 5th century, around the same time the Austronesian-speakers began peopling Madagascar, the eastern Bantu expansion had reached the East African coast – soon progressing south towards today's Zimbabwe and Mozambique, the lands formerly inhabited by the Khoi and San people (Sellström 2015, 62-63).

It is yet unclear when, or how, Africans first made their way to Madagascar across the Mozambique Channel, a journey of 400 kilometres by the shortest route. The historical consideration that the Bantu were not known as a seafaring people points to the possibility of them journeying across the channel because of contact with other groups on the East African coast. As previously mentioned,

[30] Although outside the scope of this discussion to detail them, there are other bamboo instruments which are also found in Madagascar. One example is the split-bamboo clapper (Hornbostel-Sachs 112.3) (2011), which is played amongst the Tanala in the island's south-east (Blench 1984, 158). Considering its similarity with clappers of the Southeast Asia, Sachs lists it with instruments of 'Malayan' origin (1938, 65 and 75). Another instrument showing a similar connection are multiple-tube frame-rattles (Hornbostel-Sachs 111.232) (2011), which André Schaeffner associates with the Javanese *anklung* (1936, 102)

[31]. Botanist Soejatmi Dransfield notes that a certain species of Madagascan bamboo even adopted the name *valiha* from the musical instrument (1998, 387).

this may indicate that the Austronesian-speakers made the journey via littoral East Africa. Another possibility of African arrival in Madagascar is that the initial group was a combination of coastal Bantu and East African Swahili (the latter who had mastered oceanic travel due to their association with Arabian traders) (Blench 2009b, 6).

4.3.1 East Africa: Musical Instruments as Evidence

African influence in Madagascar is vast, and reflects in the culture of various of its people groups including the Betsimisaraka, Sakalava, Betsileo, and Antandroy (Randrianja and Ellis 2009, 220-224).[32] The association with mainland Africa has significantly influenced Malagasy musical culture, and is reflected in numerous musical instruments across the island. Having conducted a detailed study of many of the island's instruments in her book *Madagascar: La Musique Dans L'Histoire* (*Madagascar: Music in History*) (2002), Rakotomalala (2017) told me that, in her analysis, up to 50% of Madagascar's instruments have origins in Africa and Arabia, with 30% originating in Indonesia, and only 20% originating in Europe (the latter, after 1500AD). Whilst outside the scope of this discussion to foreground all those thought to have originated in Africa, those commonly cited are the tube rattle, gourd-rattle, earth-bow and stick-zither (Blench 2009b, 6).

4.3.2 *Jejo-Voatavo* (Stick-Zither)

The latter instrument, the stick-zither, has been associated with Africa and Indonesia. Known in Madagascar as *jejo-voatavo* or *lokanga-voatavo* (fig. 4a), the instrument's "process of transmission was complex" – revealing contacts between Madagascar, East Africa, and Southeast Asia (Blench 1984, 168).[33] The details surrounding its diffusion are disputed, and there are two suppositions as to its initial point of origins. Certain scholars have suggested it diffused from East Africa to Madagascar (Rakotomalala 2017 and Ménard 2017), whilst others suggest "the reverse was the case" (Blench 1984 and Jones 1971)

The former supposition is based on the stick-zither's wide dispersion in East and East-Central Africa. It is distributed in Mozambique, Tanzanian and Kenya on the coast, and Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, Rwanda and Burundi further inland (Blench 1984, 167). Blench contends it "has only

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[32]. Although Madagascar is commonly considered to have "eighteen distinct Malagasy 'tribes' or 'peoples'", Randrianja and Ellis have pointed out that the nation has many "nuances of ethnicity" (2009, 221). Ethnicity in Madagascar, believed to be "of considerable antiquity", is extremely complex (ibid., 220). The authors have argued that the more recent concept of 'race' is a colonial idea, taken to Madagascar through French military general Joseph Gallieni, who believed people should be identified according to "immutable identities" (ibid., 220-221).[32]

[33]. *Lokanga voatavo* means "instrument with a calabash" (Blench 1984, 168). I explain the origins of *jejo* later.

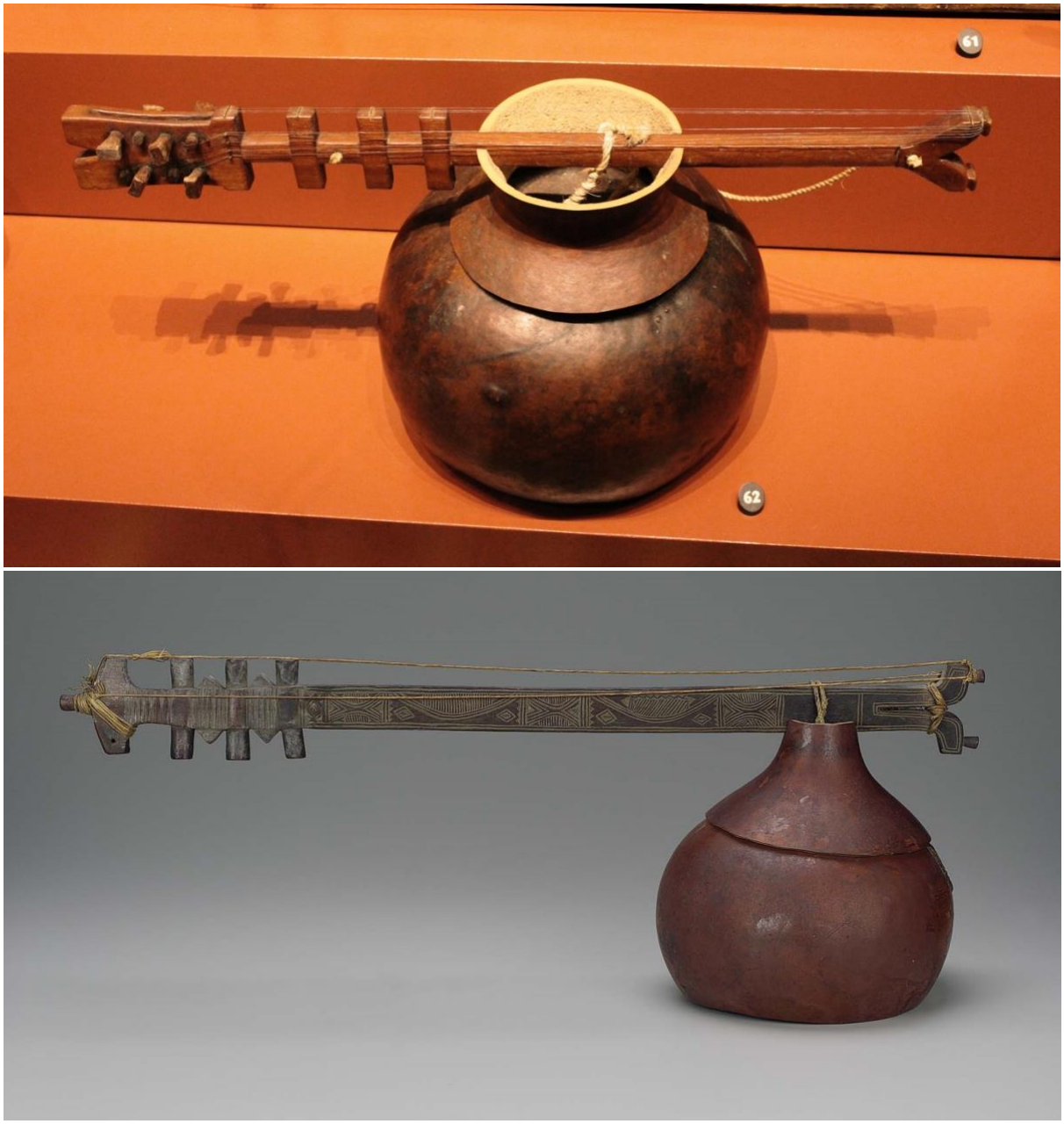

Figure 4a. *Jejo-voatavo* stick-zither, Madagascar (top). Photograph by Rashid Adams.[34]
Figure 4b. *Jeje* stick-zither, East Africa (Tanzania or Zanzibar) (bottom). Photograph courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

spread into Central Africa recently", based on its uniformity in construction and common terminology used (*ibid.*). He suggests this terrestrial diffusion occurred as a result of 19th century "Arab slaving-caravans" who ventured inland (*ibid.*).

[34]. All photographs which I captured myself were taken at Réunion's *Musée des musiques et instruments de l'Océan Indien* (unless otherwise stated), with the kind permission of François Ménard (2017).

In East Africa, the name for the stick-zither is usually a localised variant of *jeje, zeze* or *sese* (fig. 4b) (Blench 2009b, 21). Ménard, for example, told me of a variant called *dodoma zeze* - so named due to its association with Dodoma, Tanzania's national capital (2017). Although Sachs (1938) suggested *jeje* may have been loaned from the Ancient Egyptian *dede*, Blench argues that it is "safe to say" that Sachs' suppositions were incorrect – a contention arising from the lack of historical evidence linking Ancient Egypt to Swahili East Africa (Blench 2009b, 23). Blench believes the term is of Swahili origin, though further adds that it is "evidently derived from a Bantu root referring to stringed instruments in general" (1984, 167).

If the Malagasy *valiha* and *sodina* are vestiges of Southeast Asian musical culture, the *jejo-voatavo* can be identified as an African instrument (Ménard 2017). A comparison of the East African *jeje* and Malagasy *jejo-voatavo* reveals the two have great structural similarity. Depending on whether it has one or two calabashes, the instrument is classified as 311.221 (true stick-zither with rigid string carrier, with one resonator gourd) or 311.222 (true stick zither with with rigid string carrier, with several resonator gourds). When discussing a Malagasy stick-zither on display at the *Musée des musiques et instruments de l'Océan Indien*, Ménard told me assuredly that "the instrument comes from East Africa" (2017). From here, the passionate curator stated, it was "adopted in Madagascar" and other nearby islands – diffusing as far as the Seychelles (*ibid.*). Regarding the *jejo-voatavo* in Madagascar, it is important to note that the instrument is predominantly found in the south of the island, a region where cultural influence from mainland Africa is very prominent (Rakotomalala 2017).

As mentioned earlier, there is a second theory regarding the diffusion of the stick-zither, mainly advanced by Roger Blench (1984 and 2009b). Although aware of its association with Africa, the author believes the stick-zither has Indonesian origins (Blench 2009b, 21). Being widespread in Sulawesi and Sumba, Blench argues that the instrument was taken to the Madagascar from Southeast Asia during the earliest Austronesian migrations (as Sachs has suggested was the case with *valihas*) (Blench 2009b, 21 and Sachs 1938, 76). Blench situates his suppositions on the work of Sachs (1938), Kaudern (1927) and Jones (1971) who suggested the instrument originated from the stick-zithers of the Celebes (Blench 1984, 167).[35]

Blench's compelling argument, emphasising construction and classification, is founded on the basis that Malagasy stick-zithers differ from mainland variants on "two important features of detail"

[35]. Celebes is the old name for Sulawesi island which is situated in the Indonesian archipelago, east of Borneo.

(*ibid.*). Firstly, he says that Malagasy use a "second resonating gourd, halfway along the string-bearer" and secondly, that they use "tuning-pegs as string-tensioners" – neither features which are found in East African stick-zithers (*ibid.*, 167-168). Whilst the latter claim is valid, I should point out that I am yet to see a Malagasy version incorporating a second gourd in the way he describes.

The author continues by referencing Duvelle (1965) and McLeod (1977), who respectively described versions found amongst the Betsileo and Bara of Madagascar's central and south-central regions. The Betsileo stick-zither was rather complex, featuring four raised frets with nine metal strings (five drone strings and four for melodic purposes) (Blench 1984, 168). The Bara version was comparatively "simple in construction", to the extent that it could "only produce two distinct tones" (*ibid.*) Noting the melodic similarity with the Malagasy braced bow known as *jejo*, which also produces two tones, Blench suggests the Bara stick-zither seems to have "converged with its namesake" (*ibid.*).

Based on these "divergences in morphology within a restricted area", Blench concludes that the instrument has been in Madagascar longer than in East Africa (*ibid.*). He believes it belongs to "the oldest stratum" of influence, suggesting it crossed the Indian Ocean "with the migration of (Madagascar's) original (Austronesian) inhabitants" (*ibid.*). Only after this initial dissemination to Madagascar was the instrument taken to mainland Africa "through the medium of Indian Ocean trade", which occurred with Arab arrival in the 9th century (Blench 1984, 168 and Hooper 2011, 218).

4.4 Arab Dhows and Trading Towns

In the centuries preceding following Austronesian and Bantu contact in Madagascar, Muslim merchant ships from the Arabian Gulf began extending their routes from the Peninsula into deeper waters. Journeying southwards along the African horn and East African coastline, it has been suggested that Arab dhows had reached East Africa by the 1st century AD, if not earlier (Darke and Walsh 2016, 15). Trade with inhabitants on the East Coast soon resulted in a significant network of trade, which extended south to Mozambique where African peoples "entered into contact with the Indian Ocean trading system" from around 650AD (Sellström 2015, 142). The mercantile network reached Madagascar as early as the 9th century, where Arab traders, known as the Antalaotra ("People of the Sea"), set up trading posts on the island's northern and western coasts (Hooper

2011, 218). As Muslims, the Antalaotra took Islam to Madagascar, building the first mosques and naming Madagascar and the neighbouring Comoros islands, *al-Qamar* (*ibid.*).[36]

As the influence of the Antalaotra port-settlements and trading towns grew, Madagascar's northwest coast attracted dhows from different parts of the western Indian Ocean world, including Malindi and Kilwa (both Tanzania), Mombasa (Kenya), and Sofala (Mozambique) (Sellström 2015, 63). Foreign traders brought with them various African and Arabian products in exchange for Malagasy slaves and rice (Hooper 2011, 218). The Antalaotra, who spoke Swahili and Arabic, became "commercial intermediaries" between Madagascar, the Comoros, East Africa and Southern Arabia (Ellis 2007, 443). They reasserted their connections with the Indian Ocean world further north by marrying East Africans and Peninsula Arabs with whom they shared certain cultural practices (Hooper 2011, 220). This led to ever increasing migrations of peoples onto Madagascar's shores which gained momentum between the 11th and 15th centuries (*ibid.*).

4.4.1 West Asia: Musical Instruments as Evidence

Indian Ocean trading and migrations of Arabs to Madagascar led to the direct introduction of musical culture from West Asia. Unlike research regarding the diffusion of musical culture from Southeast Asia and East Africa, influence from West Asia has been less studied. This is perhaps because Arab cultural heritage is less pronounced in the larger context of the island. As shown in my literature review, scholars from various disciplines including Ferrand (1891-1902), Beaujard (1998), and Capredon *et al.* (2013) have nevertheless studied Arab-Malagasy groups, primarily in the island's northwest near the Comoros. It is significant that instruments of presumed Arab origins are found in these areas, including the viol, lute, and double reed-pipe.

4.4.2 *Anjomara* (Double Reed-Pipe with Conical Bore)

The latter instrument, which originated in West Asia, is widely dispersed in various parts of the Middle east and its nearby regions (extending as far east as India and China) (Montague 2003, 6).

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[36]. The Arabic name *Al-Qamar* means "the moon" (Sellström 2015, 141). In their intentions to master the art of seafaring, Arab traders used the moon as a navigational tool (*ibid.)* Unaware the earth was round, these sailors were afraid of sailing too far south for fear of dropping off the world's surface – with Madagascar existing as the most southern point they ventured in pre-colonial times (*ibid.*). The designation of the name *Al-Qamar* has thus either been considered a celebration of their maritime achievement, or a warning to other sailors to not venture beyond the island (*ibid.*).
Early Arab contact with the majority-Muslim Comoros islands, situated a few hours northwest of Madagascar, is well documented (*ibid.*, 135-197). Madagascar's historical connections with the islands are significant to the extent that Comorians have "always represented a sizeable portion" of Madagascar's population. After Comorion Independence in 1975, up to seventy-thousand Comorians left Madagascar's northwest, where they had resided in the Mahajunga (Majunga) region (*ibid.*, 59).

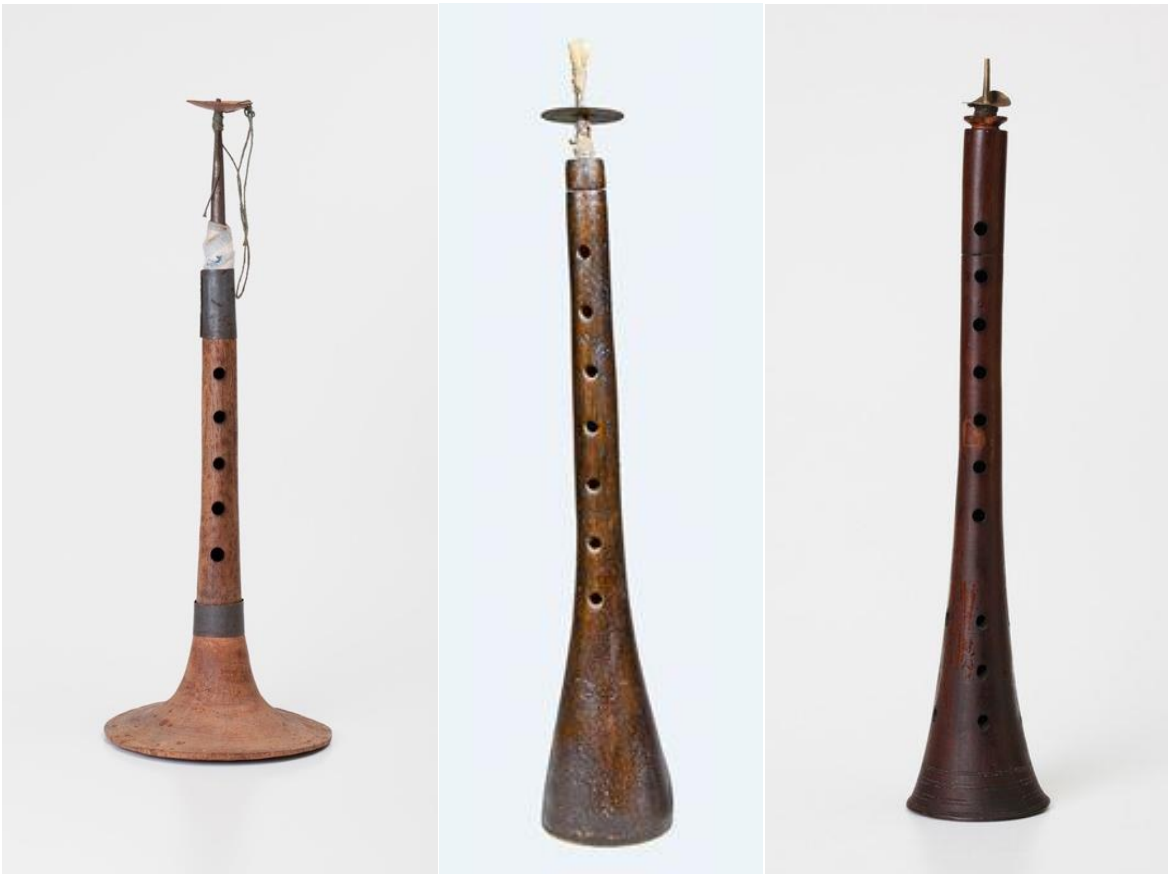


Figure 5a. *Anjomara* reed-pipe, Madagascar (left). Photograph by Sean Wilson.
Figure 5b. *Sornā* reed-pipe, Iran (center). Photograph courtesy of National Music Museum, Vermillion.
Figure 5c. *Sona* reed-pipe, North Africa (Morocco or Algeria) (right). Photograph by Sean Wilson.

In its various forms the instrument-type, known in Western circles as the oboe or shawm, is classified as 422.112.2 (reedpipe with double or quadruple reed with conical bore and fingerholes). Local West Asian and North African variants include the *sornā* (Fig. 5b) (Iran and Afghanistan), *sona* (Fig. 5c) (Morocco and Algeria), *surnāy* (Uzbekistan), and *zurna/zūrnā* (Syria, Iraq and Turkey) (Poché and Sultanova, 2005). The ancient Persian version derives its name *sornā* from the words '*sūr-*' (meaning strong) and '*-nāy*' (meaning flute) (MacKenzie 1971, 78).

The Malagasy variant of the reed-pipe, known as *anjomara* or *kabiry* (fig. 5a), is believed to have derived from the Swahili *nzomari* (Blench 1984, 180). Regarding its origins in East Africa, Blench has suggested such reedpipes may be indications of early incursions to the coast, by either Indonesians or the Chinese (*ibid.*). Much more likely is that the instrument diffused from West Asia to East Africa, and later Madagascar. The historical context of the Arab-Swahili mercantile system, which Blench may not have been fully aware of when writing in 1984, makes this supposition probable.

In the same way that the Malagasy *valiha* is considered as having Southeast Asian origins (Schmidhofer 2005, 9), and the *jejo-voatavo* East African origins (Ménard 2017), the *anjomara* is said to be an "instrument of Arab origin" (Schmidhofer and Domenichini-Ramiaramanana 2001, 529). It is significant that the instrument is "played on the northwest coast" – the region in Madagascar where the Arabian Antalaotra set up their trading towns (*ibid.*). The structural similarities (identical classification), together with historical evidence revealing significant contact strongly suggests the Malagasy *anjomara* diffused from West Asia.

4.4.3 *Kabosy* (Necked Bowl Lute)

The diffusion the short-necked lute, known in Madagascar as *kabosy* (Fig. 6a), similarly clarifies the oceanic migrations from West Asia. Local variants in the Middle East and East African coast include the *qanbūs* (Fig. 6b) (Yemen), *gabbus* (Oman), *qabūs* (Saudi Arabia), *gabbūs* (Zanzibar) and *gabusi* or *gambusi* (the Comoros) (Poché and Sultanova, 2005).[37] The instrument type is classified as 321.321 (necked bowl lute) or 321.32 (necked lute). Sachs comments that the Malagasy name "represents the same word" (1938, 69), whilst Blench believes the *kabosy's* pegbox and fretted fingerboard reveals it is clearly an "imitation" of the "ordinary short-lute of the Middle East" (1984, 171). Similar to the *anjomara*, the *kabosy* is historically cited as having been found in the Muslim-dominated Majunga region of northwest Madagascar (although it has since spread to various parts of the island) (Sachs 1938, 69).

I should point out that short lute is also found in Southeast Asia, in parts of Indonesia and Malaysia including Borneo and Sulawesi. Commonly known as *gambus,* Sachs comments that variants from Sulawesi hold "remarkable resemblance" to Malagasy *kabosys* (*ibid.*). Whilst its appearance in Southeast Asia and Madagascar may lead one to assume direct dissemination, historical evidence suggests otherwise. As Larry Francis Hilarian recently has shown, the instrument only arrived in Southeast Asia at a late stage after Muslim migrations to the archipelago (2007, 4-6). Its location in Southeast Asia and Madagascar is therefore a result of separate accounts of oceanic transmission from West Asia (*ibid.*)

[37]. As with the *valiha* and *sodina*, the final syllable in *kabosy* is dropped. Phonetic pronunciation is thus *ka-bos* – which is very similar to the other terms mentioned.

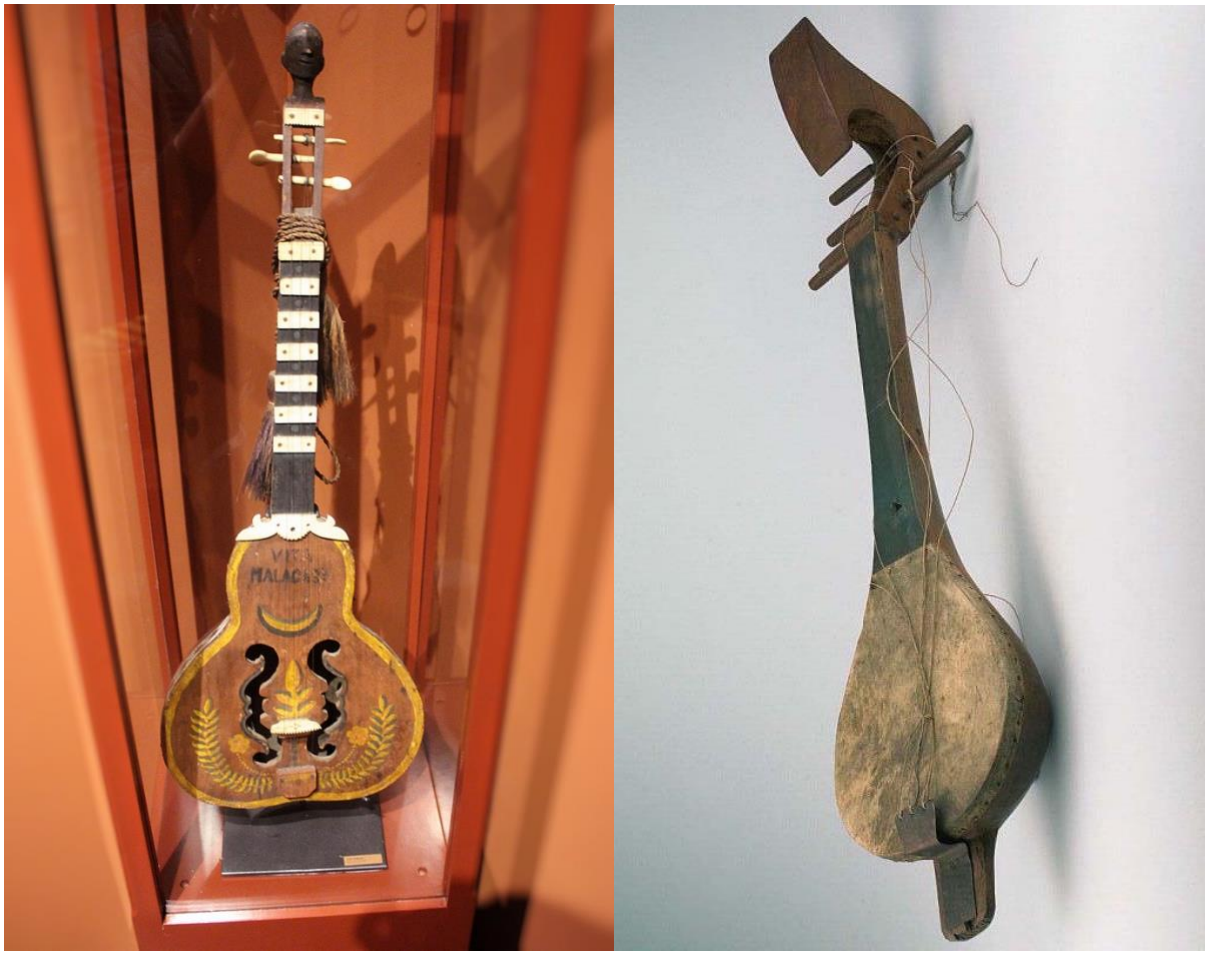


Figure 6a. *Kabosy* lute, Madagascar (left). Photograph by Rashid Adams.
Figure 6b. *Qanbūs* lute, Yemen (right). Photograph courtesy of Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have identified certain Malagasy instruments which display apparent links with the main strands of Indian Ocean influence in Madagascar. By selecting examples from Southeast Asia, East Africa and West Asia, I fostered a classification-based comparative discussion of the respective instruments by situating them within the historical framework advanced by other disciplines.

The *valiha* and *sodina* are localised forms of instruments diffused from Southeast Asia. Whilst it is difficult to say exactly when these instruments were introduced in Madagascar, it has been suggested this occurred with the first migration movement from Southeast Asia. Based on linguistic and genetic evidence, it is increasingly likely that these migrants came from Borneo – where instrument-types similar to the *valiha* exist (Sachs 1938, 76). The diffusion of the *jejo-voatavo* stick-zither, found in Madagascar, East Africa and Southeast Asia is more challenging to trace. Whilst Blench has presented a compelling argument suggesting its Indonesian origins, the

instrument's wide dispersion in East and Central Africa begs certain questions. Why, for example, did the *valiha* and *sodina* not spread from Madagascar to these regions? What was it about the stick-zither which led to such wide diffusion in Africa?

Whether the instrument diffused from Madagascar to East Africa or East Africa to Madagascar, it is evident that an increase of Indian Ocean trade was important. When Arab sailors journeyed to Madagascar in the 9th century, instruments such as the *anjomara* and *kabosy* were diffused directly from West Asia. Whilst further research is necessary to clarify all these instances of diffusion, my discussion has nevertheless presented important evidence linking Madagascar to these Indian Ocean regions.

CHAPTER 5:
The *Valiha* as a Visual Symbol of Heritage and Identity

5.1 Introduction

In July 2017 the Central Bank of Madagascar commenced the process of replacing the country's bank notes on a national level. As imperative constructs of a nation state, choice of imagery on bank notes often reveals what is held dearest to a country's people at large. In Madagascar's case the theme "Madagascar and its Riches" remained, although much imagery changed – with the eight new notes signifying a new era in Madagascar's domestic and international interactions (Rasolofoniaina 2017). As this introduction coincided with my fieldwork, I was interested to see if any musical instruments made their way onto the new set. If so, this could reveal which instrument or instruments are most revered or treasured on a national level. After getting my hands on several new notes – extending from the smallest aggregate, the 100 Ariary, to the newly introduced 20 000 Ariary – I eagerly searched for instruments among the usual images of lemurs, wildlife and industrial scenes. One instrument did make it – on the 10 000 Ariary (second highest) note nonetheless! The instrument, of course, was the *valiha*.

5.2 New Approaches to Organology

As the only musical instrument to feature on a national bank note in the last fifteen years (there were none on the previous set), the *valiha's* recent emblematic induction into Madagascar's economy has reinforced its historically "acquired status" as "the national instrument of Madagascar" (Schmidhofer 2005, 9). Its importance as an object of national and cultural identity made it the best choice for a case study. Whilst I did a comparative analysis of the instrument in my previous chapter, based on Hornbostel-Sachs's classification system (2011), I extend these parameters in this current chapter. By viewing the *valiha* as an object that emits meaning I aim to contribute towards recent organological scholarship seeking to redefine the field. One such author, Eliot Bates, begins a recent critique as follows:

> Mention organology to an ethnomusicology student, and what probably first comes to mind are museums, (and) the Hornbostel-Sachs classification system […]. Instrument museums are mausoleums, places for the display of the musically dead, with the organologists acting as morticians, preparing dead instrument bodies for preservation and display (2012, 365).

Bates goes on to advocate for "a different sort of organology" in which the instrument is seen as an object carrying "power, mystique, and allure" (*ibid.*, 364-365). Rather than being a "passive artifact from which sound emanates" it gains "an extra dimension" that is determined by "the functional and symbolic role it plays in society" (Bates 2012, 364 and Dornoun 1981, 12). The instrument becomes a vital constituent of culture which draws upon the "very depths of memory and needs of a community", thus expressing the most "profound ethical, aesthetic, cultural and spiritual values of a people" (Dornoun, 6, 12). By foregrounding the knowledge embodied by the *valiha*, I show how a organological study of the instrument, extending past classification, significantly advances our understanding of Malagasy society.

5.2.1 Aesthetic and Symbolic Viewpoint

Whilst there are several viable strategies I could analyse this knowledge from, I have chosen to base my approach on Dornoun's aesthetic and symbolic viewpoint (*ibid.*, 33). This approach examines "the representation of men or creatures (or cultural objects) through the form of certain instruments or in their painted, carved or incised design" (*ibid.*). It can "assist our understanding of the concepts that underlie a society's representation of the world, of cosmogony and of kinship" (*ibid.*). My enquiry, therefore, is centered around the visual aspects of the *valiha* – an instrument that has been adorned with decorative symbols and inscribed with imagery for at least a few centuries.

To organise the tremendous amount of knowledge the *valiha* emits, I highlight only that which relates to Malagasy origins, heritage and identity, according to the broader intentions of this dissertation. As part of the Austronesian heritage of Malagasy musical culture, I show how the instrument embodies a Southeast Asian identity (Schmidhofer 2005, 9). As I argue, this extends past the *valiha's* near identical organological classification with the Indonesian *talempong botuang* and *sasando* to its "social life" – the "myriad of situations" and "webs of complex relationships" it is entangled in (Bates 2012, 364). To do this, I have arranged my discussion according to the *valiha's* various stages of development, highlighting the visual distinctions apparent in its older and newer forms.

5.3 Early Forms of Valihas

Sachs's dates the *valiha* as having arrived in Madagascar with the earliest Austronesian-speaking settlers around 500AD (1938, 76). Rakotomalala's assessment that Malagasy instruments "did not change that much through the ages" (2017), together with Randrianja and Ellis's statement that innovation in Madagascar always takes place "via the ideological prism of tradition" (2009, 80), suggests the original idiochord *valiha* existed in Madagascar for a long period of time. Further

research needs to be conducted to clarify this. What we do know, thanks to an increase of documentation, is that the *valiha's* first major adaption took place in the 19th century (Schmidhofer 2005, 11). As mentioned previously, the addition of separate strings, often made from dissembled bicycle brake cables, led to a change in its organological classification (*ibid.*).[38] The strings of the new heterochord *valiha* were primarily purposed to increase the instrument's volume, reflecting a new musical understanding influenced by the chants of Christian church music (*ibid.*).

Whilst this adaption noticeably changed the instrument's tone and timbre, it led to a further significant change. Considering the *valiha's* bamboo body was no longer required to produce strings as the idiochord version did, instrument makers soon began to use this "extra space" for visual adornments (Rakotomalala 2017). Around the late 19th century, *valihas* began to incorporate decorative cloth, wood-crafted pegs, rope, and patterns and images carved from animal bone (*ibid.*). Whilst much of this was purposed solely for decorative purposes, certain important cultural symbols were also added.

5.3.1 Social Function of the *Valiha*

Before I examine these symbols, the social function of the early *valiha* must be highlighted. In mentioned in my previous chapter, the instrument has traditionally been associated with the Merina. As Madagascar largest ethnic group, forming up to 26% of the population, the light-skinned Merina have been "most impacted by Indonesian culture" (Schmidhofer 2005, 12). The Merina achieved political domination over Madagascar's other groups by ruling the island under the Kingdom of Imerina (c. 1540 – 1897). Malagasy scholar Toavina Ralambomahay has stated that "many deny their African belonging" (2011, 22), whilst French Jesuit writer Sylvain Urfer contends that Merina royalty have gone as far as to "forcefully vindicate their difference from Africa" (2011, 21). Understanding the historical association between the Merina and the *valiha* is therefore vital to clarify the Austronesian nature of the instrument.

With the ascent of Merina sovereignty, the *valiha* rose to prominence. As the favoured instrument of the *andriana*, the Merina aristocracy, the instrument became associated with power and authority (Schmidhofer 2005, 13). From its position in their royal courts, its status as an instrument of the elite was advanced when the Merina monarchy banned slaves of African heritage from playing the

[38]. Schmidhofer contends that the idiochord *valiha* is "today only played by groups that focus on preserving autochthonic Malagasy music" (2005, 13).

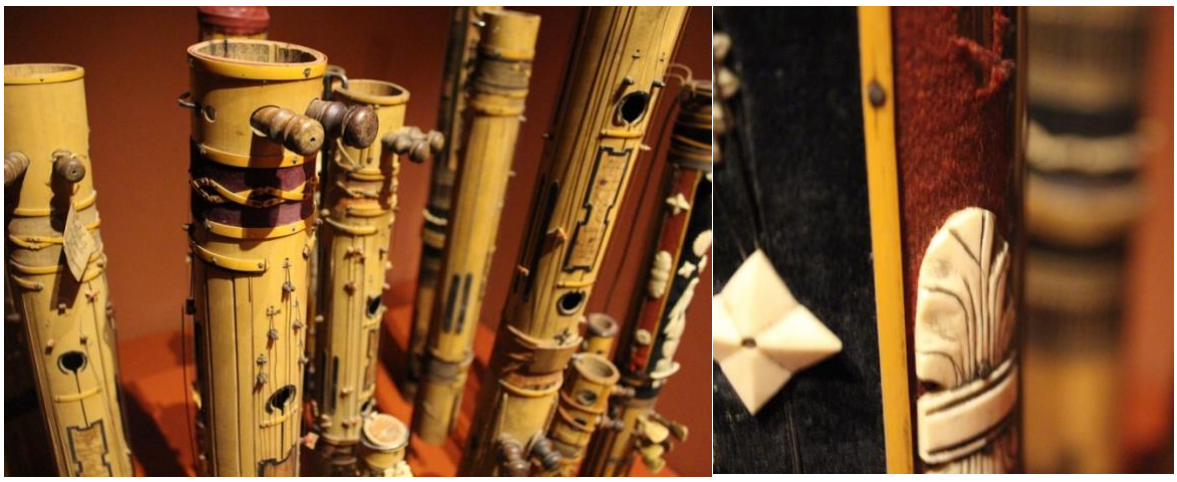


Figure 7a. Several late 19th century heterochord *valihas*, with visual adornments (left).
Figure 7b. Detail of late 19th century *valiha*, decorated with animal bone and symbolic red cloth (right).
Photographs by Rashid Adams.

instrument (*ibid.*). It was not until the second half of the 19th century – the period correlating with the fall of the Merina Kingdom – that these reservations were lifted (*ibid.*).

5.3.2 Merina Symbols and Austronesian Heritage

This vital information regarding the social function of the *valiha* is readable on the bodies of older *valihas* (Fig. 7a), with certain of the previously mentioned adornments symbolising the instrument's royal heritage. Perhaps most significant of these is the incorporation of the red cloth (Fig. 7b). The colour symbolises royalty amongst the Merina, who consider it sacred due to its presumed connection with Southeast Asia (Rakotomlalala 2017). Like the *valiha*, it is significant that the colour was also traditionally "reserved for kings or their close relatives" (Randrianja and Ellis 2009, 88).

Further reflecting the colour's significance, Madagascar's has called the "Red Island" due to its "laterite soils and the royal red colour of the Imerina Kingdom" (Sellström 2015, 49). Whilst these reasons – geography and culture – may seem detached, I discovered a significant connection between the two. Fy, my Merina friend, told me that Madagascar used to be called the "Green Island" due to its lush central forests (Rasolofoniaina, 2017). Once people groups began moving into the island's vast terrestrial areas they used slash-and-burn agriculture, which they had known in Southeast Asia, to destroy much of Madagascar's greenery (Sellström 2015, 63).[39] At the hands of

[39]. Tourist discourse often warns those travelling to Indonesia against wearing the colour green. In several parts of the archipelago green is prohibited as it is believed to symbolize – in reference to dense jungles – death (Mahdzan 2003).

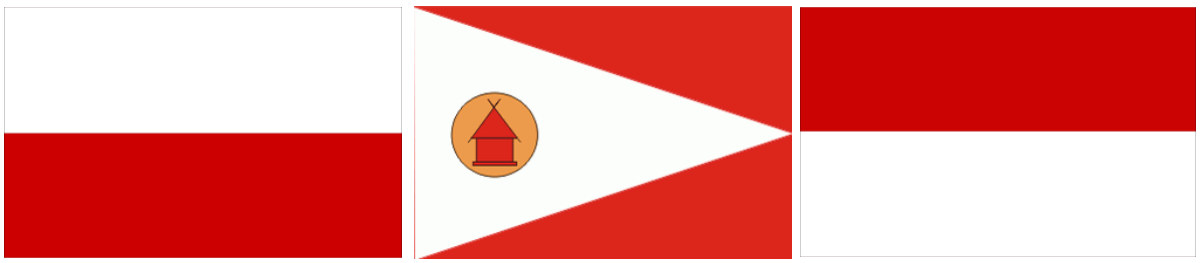


Figure 8a. Flag of Imerina, 1787 to 1885 (left). Image by Jarig Bakker (Flags of the World).
Figure 8b. Flag of Imerina, 1997 to present (center). Image by Jaume Ollé (Flags of the World).
Figure 8c. Flag of Indonesia, 1945 to present (right). Image by Željko Heimer (Flags of the World).

these Austronesian migrants, many of whom were ancestors of the modern Merina, the island's terrain changed "from green to red" (Rasolofoniaina, 2017). As the Merina Kingdom began to rise, "royalty became associated with the clearing of the forest" (Randrianja and Ellis 2009, 69). Soon, this new red terrain would symbolically map out the territory of the royal Merina Kingdom.

Apart from using it to adorn *valihas,* the Merina have used the colour red, together with white (symbolizing rice), in several important cultural symbols (Rasolofoniaina 2017). The Merina flag of 1787 - 1885 (Fig. 8a), features parallel bands of the two colours (red is below the white). A comparison with the current Indonesian flag (Fig. 8c) reveals striking similarity (the two would be identical but for the positioning of the colours). The current Merina flag (Fig. 8b) similarly incorporates a red dominated background on which the image of a traditional Merina house sits. The colour, and the house (which I foreground later in this chapter) – both reserved for royalty, and both featuring on *valihas* – symbolise Merina culture, and their prevalent Southeast Asian identity.

5.3.3 Colonial-Era *Valihas*

When France took occupation of Madagascar in 1896, the *valiha* became desired by colonists who viewed it as an "exotic treasure" (Ménard 2017). This increased when the instrument was first presented to an international audience in 1900 at the World Exposition in Paris (Schmidhofer 2005, 13). Schmidhofer contends that this led to the *valiha* becoming Madagascar's "national instrument", after which it was "always played when Malagasy music was to be presented to an international audience" (*ibid.*). In the subsequent years, various *valihas* were exported to Europe and beyond – where they were presented at French expositions and cultural fairs (Ménard 2017).

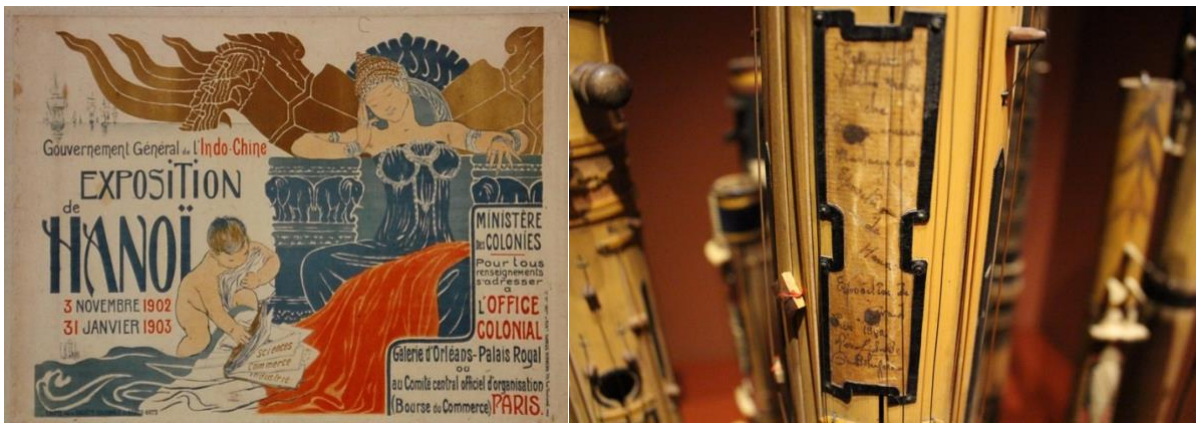


Figure 9a. French advertisement for the Hanoi Exhibition (left). Image courtesy of Ministère des colonies. Figure 9b. Detail of colonial-era *valiha* showing parchment notes. As can be read, the instrument was part of a set which won the Grand Prize at the Hanoi Exhibition (right). Photograph by Rashid Adams.

One such exposition, the *Exposition de Hanoi* (Hanoi Exhibition) took place in French Indochina's capital in 1902 (Fig 9a).[40] Here a collection of *valihas* won the *Grand Prix* (Grand Prize), and were subsequently bought and sold to diplomats and collectors. Conveniently, many of the *valihas* from this era have paper labels, now browned, which state important details such as their construction date, the exhibitions they formed part of and, more rarely, the names of instrument makers (Fig.9b) (*ibid.*). Having examined these labels, I discovered several of the Hanoi *Grand Prix valihas* at Réunion's Musée des musiques et instruments de l'Océan Indien as well as at University of Cape Town's Percival Kirby Collection of Instruments. I have seen others in the online catalogues of colonial-influenced archives such as the British Museum.

5.3.4 Continued Incorporation of Merina (and Malagasy) Symbols

These colonial-era examples are important as they are often the oldest which survive today. Considering this, the lines between 19th century Malagasy *valihas* and late 19th colonial *valihas* are difficult to distinguish. When I have been able to categorise them, I have observed many colonial-era *valihas* continue to incorporate symbols relating Merina and Malagasy culture.

One such *valiha*, which has a fascinating "social life", is housed in the instrument museum I visited in Réunion (Bates 2012). This instrument, the largest and grandest-looking *valiha* in the collection (which has over twenty) is exhibited proudly in a private display cabinet. The *valiha* was collected by François Ménard's colleague Robert Fonlupt, in an antique shop in Lyon (Ménard 2017).

[40]. Madagascar's inclusion in the exhibition was significant, as most of the objects on display were from Southeast Asia and East Asia. This emphasis reflects in the event's full title, *Indo China Exposition Française et Internationale* (Indo China French and International Exhibition). Today Hanoi is the capital of Vietnam.

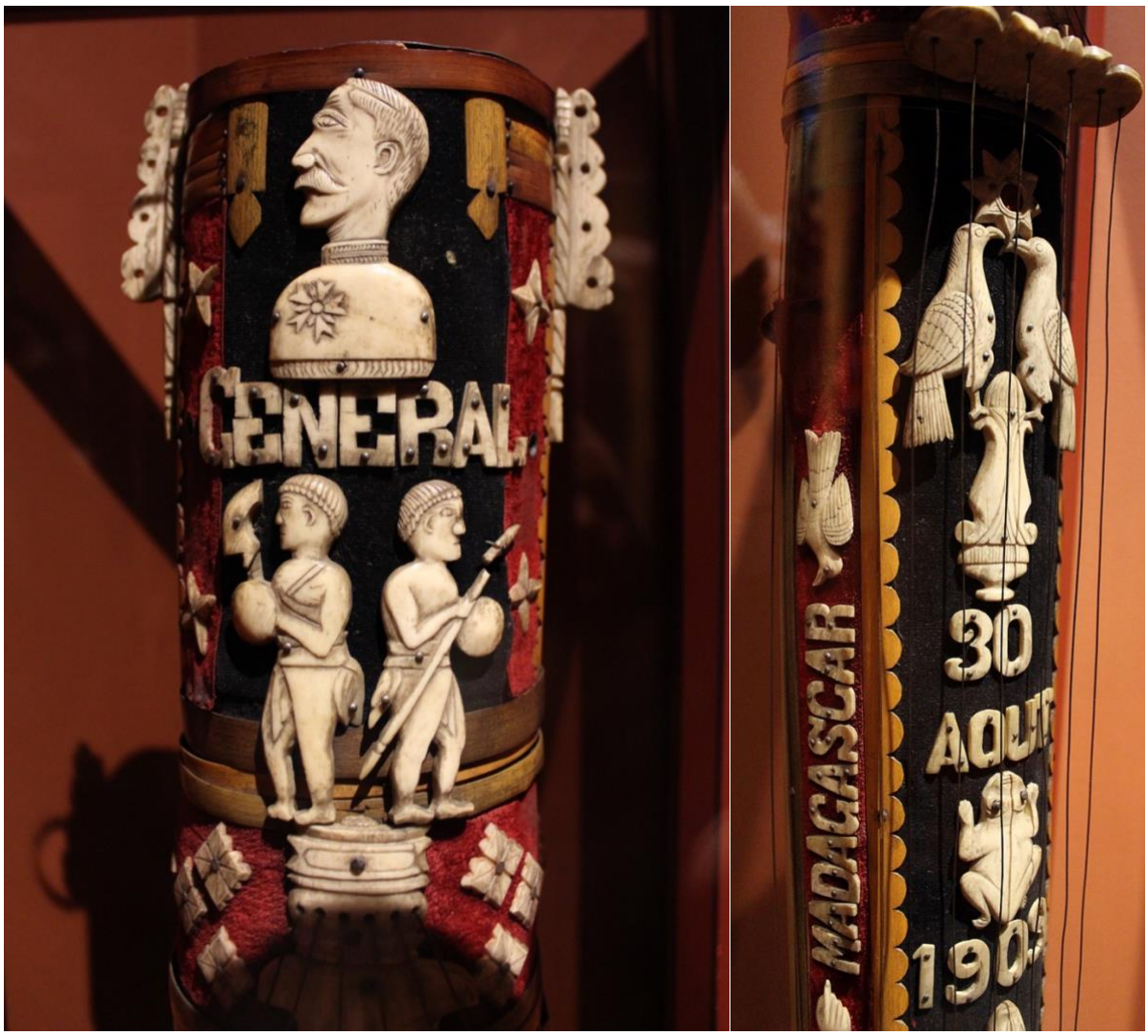


Figure 10a. Detail of colonial-era *valiha* depicting French general Joseph Galliéni towering over two Malagasy warriors. Note the continued incorporation of red cloth, a Merina symbol of royalty (left).
Figure 10b. Detail of the same *valiha*, showing the date "30 *Aout* (August) 1903". This instrument is presumed to have been a gift to Galliéni during his reign as Governor-General of Madagascar between 1896 and 1905 (right). Photographs by Rashid Adams.

Fonlupt was told by the shop owner that the instrument had been gifted to French military personnel Joseph Galliéni, during his reign as Governor-General of Madagascar. Although there is no evidence documenting a handover, except for the *valiha* itself, the date shown boldly on the body of the instrument – 3 *Aout* (August) 1903 – does correspond with Galliéni's time in Madagascar between 1896 and 1905 (Fig. 10b).

Apart from this date, which is carefully carved in animal bone and nailed to the *valiha's* bamboo body, several other images are portrayed. The principle image is a large carving of Galliéni's bust (Fig. 10a), which is boldly displayed at the top of the instrument. Galliéni's *Legion d'honneur* (Grand Cross), awarded for outstanding service to the French state, is proudly placed on his left

breast over his heart. The dominating image is one of prestige and power, with the large figure of Galliéni towering over two comparatively diminutive Antandroy warriors.[41] Whilst this imagery is typically colonial, seeking to subjugate through visual culture, it is of interest that the *valiha* continues to incorporate Merina cultural symbols.

Most obvious is the continued usage of red cloth, which is attached from top to bottom on the left and right sides. This colour seems to symbolise a new a "royal ruler", with Galliéni's rise in Madagascar signaling the fall of the centuries-old Merina Kingdom.[42] Merina oral tradition, recorded as part of the *Tanatara ny Andriana*, describes handover processes common in the late 18th century Central Highlands (Schmidhofer 2005, 13). [43] During battles with neighbouring groups, victorious Merina kings are said to have forced conquered principalities to present a *valiha* "as a symbol of their subjugation" (*ibid.*). Rakotomalala has a different assessment of this. She told me that, in the past, "gifts were given to make peace between tribes", with the *valiha* being a favourite because it "symbolises peace" (2017). Whichever be the case, Galliéni's *valiha* was likely gifted with similar motivations.

5.4 New Forms of the *Valiha*

Whilst Rakotomalala (2017) was familiar with such models of older *valihas*, this is due to her expertise in ethnomusicology and previous work on traditional Malagasy instruments. Her book, *Madagascar: La musique dan l'histoire* (2002), indeed has several images of 19th century examples (96-97). Although I had been unaware of this before my fieldwork, such old forms – incorporating the adornments mentioned above – are scarcely found in Madagascar today. They are so rare that they are in fact unrecognizable to many Malagasy musicians, particularly younger ones. When I showed photographs of these older *valihas* to Fy, a musician in his mid-twenties, I was surprised that he did not recognise them. Although intrigued, thinking the instruments were beautiful, he said the *valihas* I showed him did not look like any he had ever seen growing up in Antananarivo (Rasolofoniaina 2017).

[41]. The Antandroy are an ethnic group of African-descent predominantly found in the south of Madagascar.
[42]. Towards the end of a rewarding interview with Rakotomalala, the author enquired what information I had so far uncovered during my fieldwork. I took out several photographs of the Galliéni *valiha*, sharing its backstory. On viewing the instrument, Rakotomalala laughed in amusement at how "diplomatic Malagasy people are" (2017). Seeing my confused look, she explained that Galliéni is much disdained in Madagascar. He is infamously remembered as the French general who exiled Queen Ranavalona III to Réunion in 1897, consequently bringing an end to Madagascar's 350-year-long monarchy (*ibid.*).
[43]. The *Tantaran ny Andriana* are a set of oral histories of highland kings collected in the mid-nineteenth century and published in four extensive volumes (Randrianja and Ellis 2009, 96).

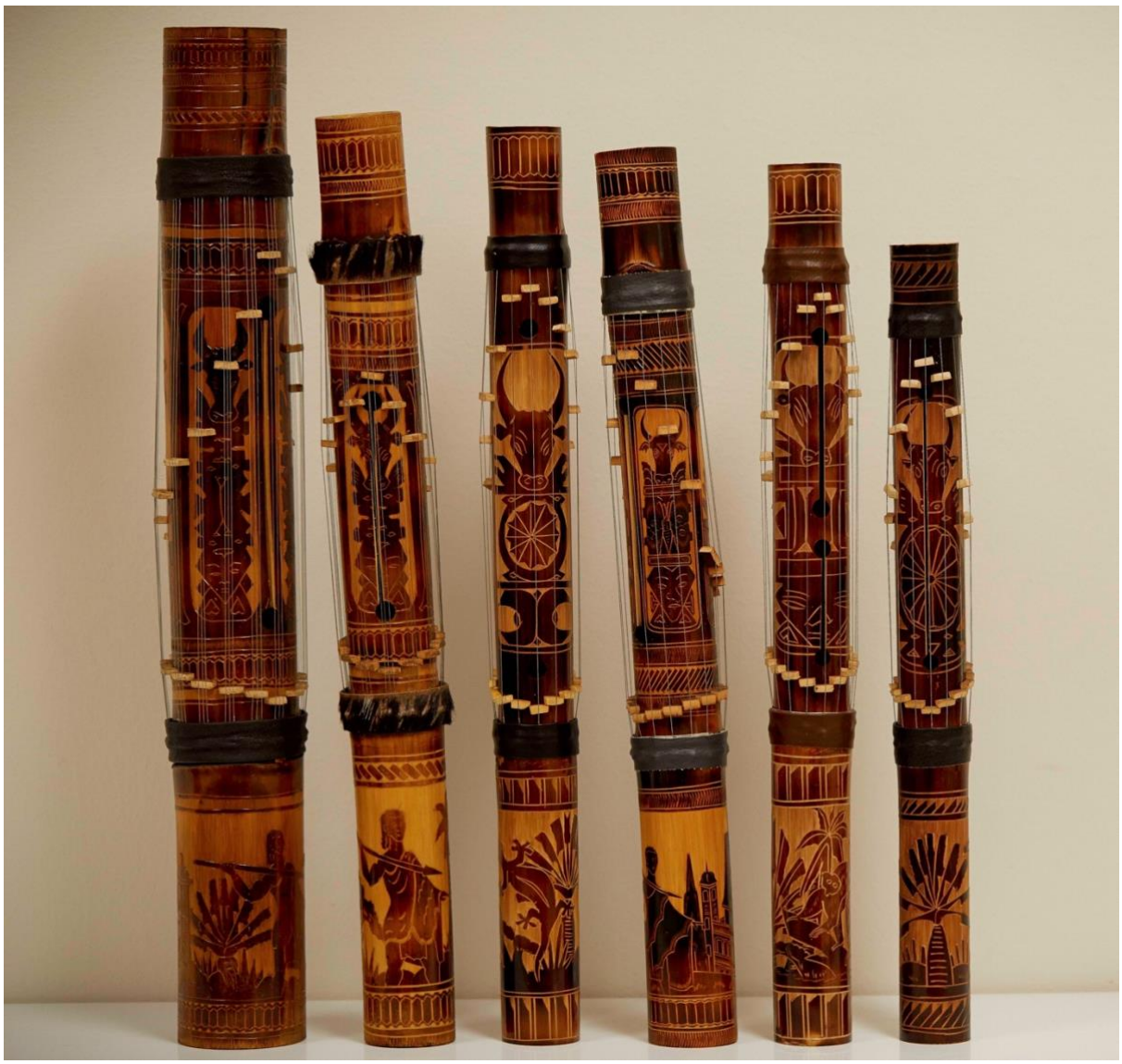


Figure 11. A group of 21st century heterochord *valihas*. These examples show the pyrographic technique currently used to decorate tube-zithers in Madagascar. All of the images inscribed symbolize aspects of regional (Merina) and/or national (Malagasy) culture. Photograph by Qamar Adams.

The *valihas* Fy did know, often sold in the streets of 'Tana', are noticeably different. Whilst these heterochord *valihas* are identical in organological form to those preceding them, significant visual adaptions have been made – leading to my assessment that the instrument is in a new stage of its development. Probably around the early 20th century, instrument-makers began using a pyrographic-like technique to decorate *valihas*.[44] The technique uses a low relief-style to inscribe images onto the bamboo body of the instruments (Fig. 11). In contrast to the former decorating

[44]. I have yet to discover mention of this new decorating process in scholarship, hence it is difficult to date. Pyrography, also known as pokerwork, is a decorating technique which uses a heated metallic point to burn marks on wood, bamboo or other materials (Ménard 2017).

process, with which instrument makers needed to source animal bone, cloth, or other materials, this new technique allows instrument makers to inscribe several images with relative ease.

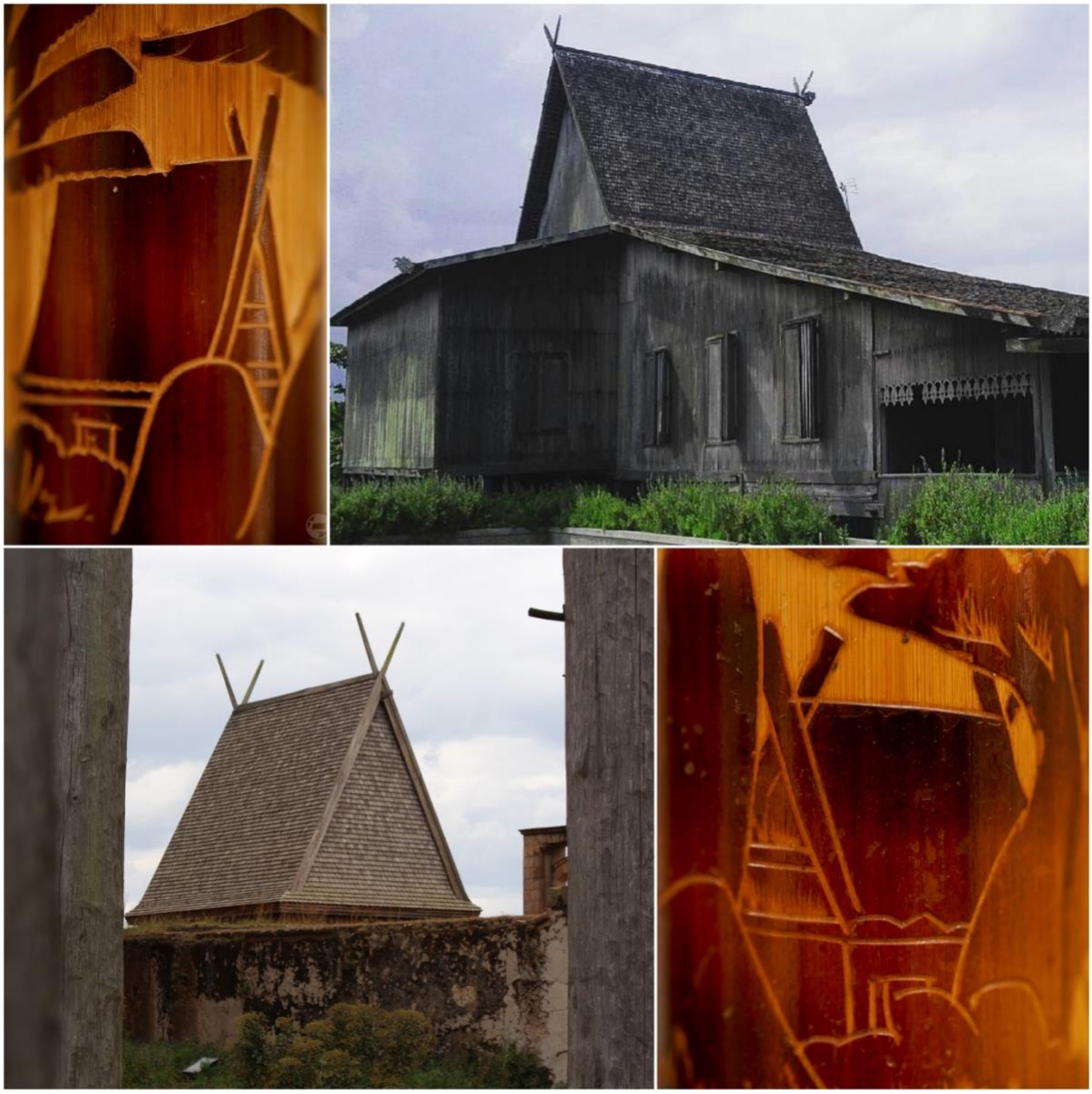
Whilst each of these pyrography-decorated *valihas* is unique – based on the nature of adornment process, as well as the size of bamboo – many feature duplications of images, or even duplications of sets of images. Perhaps comparable to a tattoo, these images are layered with meaning, expressing cultural identity through symbolism. Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive study, I select several images for analysis which are prominent in the large sample of *valihas* I examined and collected.

5.4.1 Merina Symbols and Austronesian Heritage

As with the 19th century and colonial-era *valihas*, much of this imagery continues to highlight the instrument's association with Merina, and thus Southeast Asian, culture. This new set of symbols advances the notion that the *valiha* is a royal instrument by referencing the period during which the Kingdom of Imerina was at its highest.

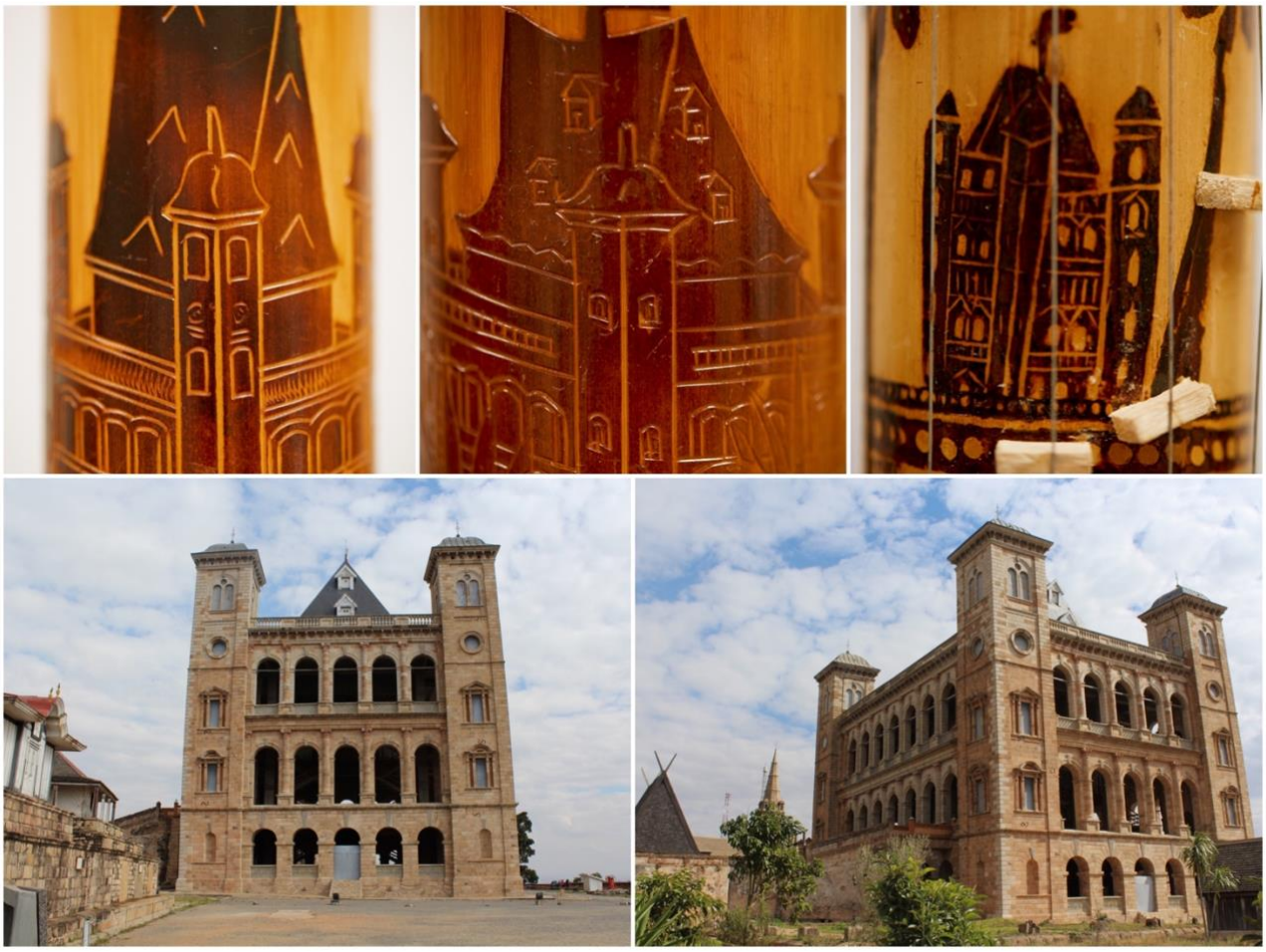
One such image, found on numerous 21st century *valihas* is the traditional house mentioned early, which features on current Merina flag. The architectural style is recognisable by its steep roof and extending *tandro-trano* or 'roof horns' (Figs. 12a and 12b). Considering multidisciplinary research linking Madagascar to Borneo, it is greatly significant that these elements are strikingly similarly to *Rumah Bubungan Tinggi* (Fig. 12c), an iconic type of house found in the south of the Indonesian island (the same area where Malagasy's ancestral language Ma'anyan is found). Like the *valiha* and the colour red, these houses in Madagascar were historically reserved for Merina nobles – with the *tandro-trano's* length designating the social position of the house's royal inhabitant.

Perhaps the most famous house built with this architectural style is *besakana* ('Great Breadth') (Fig, 12d). The tall house, situated on one of Antananarivo's highest peaks, forms part of the *Rova* royal palace compound. *Besakana* was the residence of Andrianjaka, a Merina King who ruled Madagascar between 1612 – 1630 (Rakotosaona 2017). These homes are always built starting at the northeast corner, where the King would sleep on an elevated bed (*ibid.*). This corner is still considered sacred to Merina as it points to Southeast Asia, the direction from where their ancestors are believed to have arrived (*ibid.*).



Figures 12a and 12b. Detail of 21st century *valihas,* showing depictions of *tandro-trano* (roof horns) (top left and bottom right). Photographs by Rashid Adams.
Figure 12c. *Rumah Bubungan Tinggi*, an iconic Bornean house (top right). Photograph by Abdul Kadir.
Figure 12d. *Besakana*, the former residence of Merina king Andrianjaka, who ruled Madagascar between 1612 – 1630. Such buildings, with steep roofs and *tandro-trano*, are heavily influenced by Southeast Asian architecture (bottom left). Photograph by Rashid Adams.

Towering above *besakana* is *manjakamidana* (Figs. 13d and 13e), the central and largest building of the *Rova* compound. An important symbol of Merina royalty, the building known as the "Queen's Palace" is inscribed on many new *valihas* (Figs. 13a and 13b) – including one I collected in Réunion (Fig 13c). The great construction, which dominates Antananarivo's skyline, was first built on the orders of Queen Ranavalona I, Madagascar's sovereign between 1828 – 1861.



Figures 13a, 13b and 13c. Detail of 21st century *valihas,* depicting *manjakamidana*, the "Queen's Palace" which dominates Antananarivo's skyline (top left, center and right). Photographs by Qamar Adams.[45]
Figures 13d and 13e. *Manjakamidana*, the central building of the Rova Palace compound. Note the comparatively small *besakana* next to it (bottom left and right). Photographs by Rashid Adams.

Although images of Andrianjaka and Ranavalona I are not shown on any *valihas*, I have studied, the figure of Andrianampoinimerina (Figs. 14a, 14b, 14c and 14d), who ruled the island from 1787 - 1810, is common (Sellström 2015, 67).[46] This much-loved figure, described as "the most famous of Madagascar's kings" holds almost mythic status among the Merina (*ibid.*). Celebrated as great military and political leader, Andrianampoinimerina reunified the Merina Kingdom after seventy-seven years of civil war, famously desiring to have "the ocean as the border of his rice paddies" (*ibid.*).

[45]. The *valiha* portrayed in figure 13c. was collected in Réunion where a different pyrographic technique is sometimes used. The instrument's location in Madagascar's neighbouring island is the result of recent dissemination (Ménard 2017).
[46]. Andrianampoinimerina means "The king at the heart of Imerina". This title, as long as it may seem, is the shortened version of Andrianampoinimerinandriantsimitoviaminandriampanjaka meaning "The king at the heart of Imerina who surpasses the reigning prince" (Sellström 2015, 67).

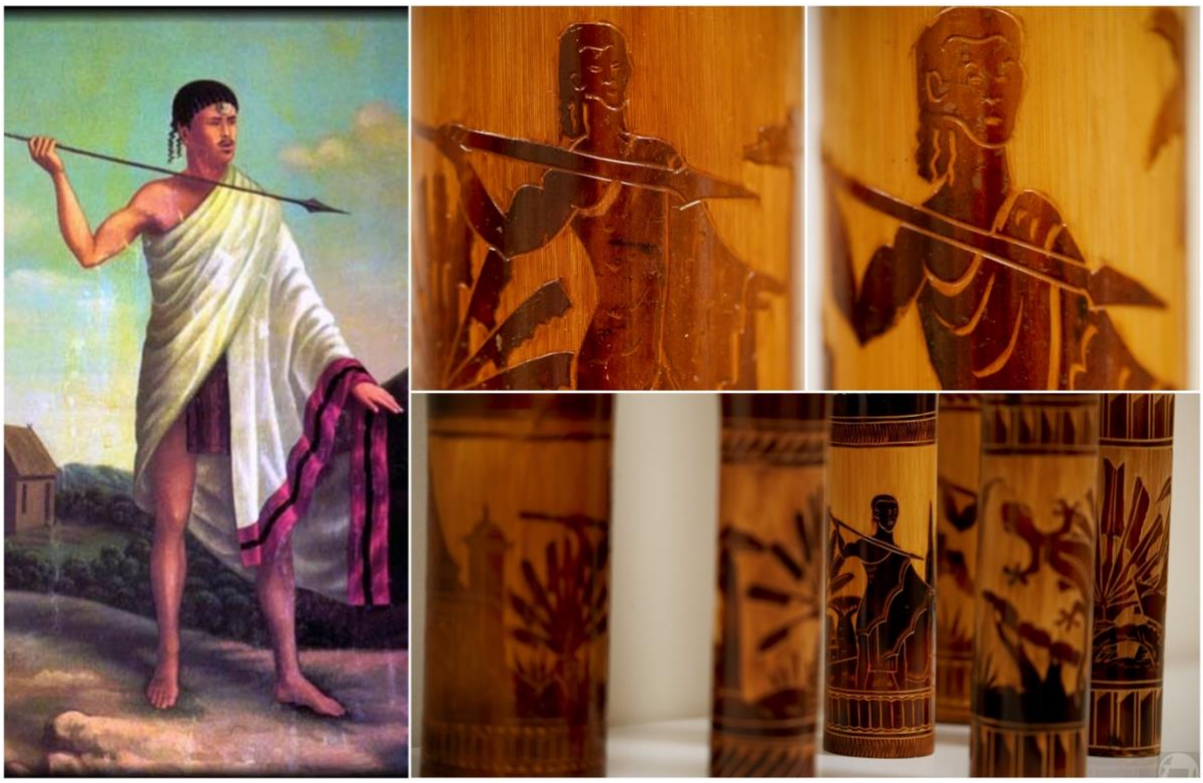


Figure 14a. Idealised portrait of Andrianampoinimerina with spear in hand, wearing a traditional white *lamba* with red trimmings. A traditional Merina house with *tandro-trano* can be seen in the background. The colour red and type of house were traditionally reserved for royalty, hence both symbolically divulge the revered King's status (left). Image by Ramanankirahina.
Figures 14b, 14c and 14d. The same image of Andrianampoinimerina as depicted on 21st century *valihas*. Photographs by Qamar Adams.

5.4.2 East African and West Asian Symbols

Considering "Madagascar's Indonesian contribution – of language, culture and genes – continues to dominate the nation of Madagascar even today", the frequency of Merina imagery on *valihas* is not surprising (Cox *et al.* 2012, 2767). Since the instrument has achieved "national" status, instrument makers have however sought to include other sets of images. Accordingly, national symbols relating to Madagascar's natural history were added. Portrayals of lemurs, baobabs, and the *ravenala* (*ravenala madagascariensis*, popularly "travellers palm") can be seen on almost every pyrography-decorated *valiha*. Analysis of these images, which cannot be associated with a specific wave of Malagasy migrations, is however outside the scope of this dissertation.

There is one important image I should highlight. As the only symbol to feature on every 21st century *valiha* I have seen, the *zebu* cattle (*bos indicus*) is arguably the most prominent and important symbol in Malagasy culture (Sellström 2015, 62-63). Recognisable by its long, curved horns and

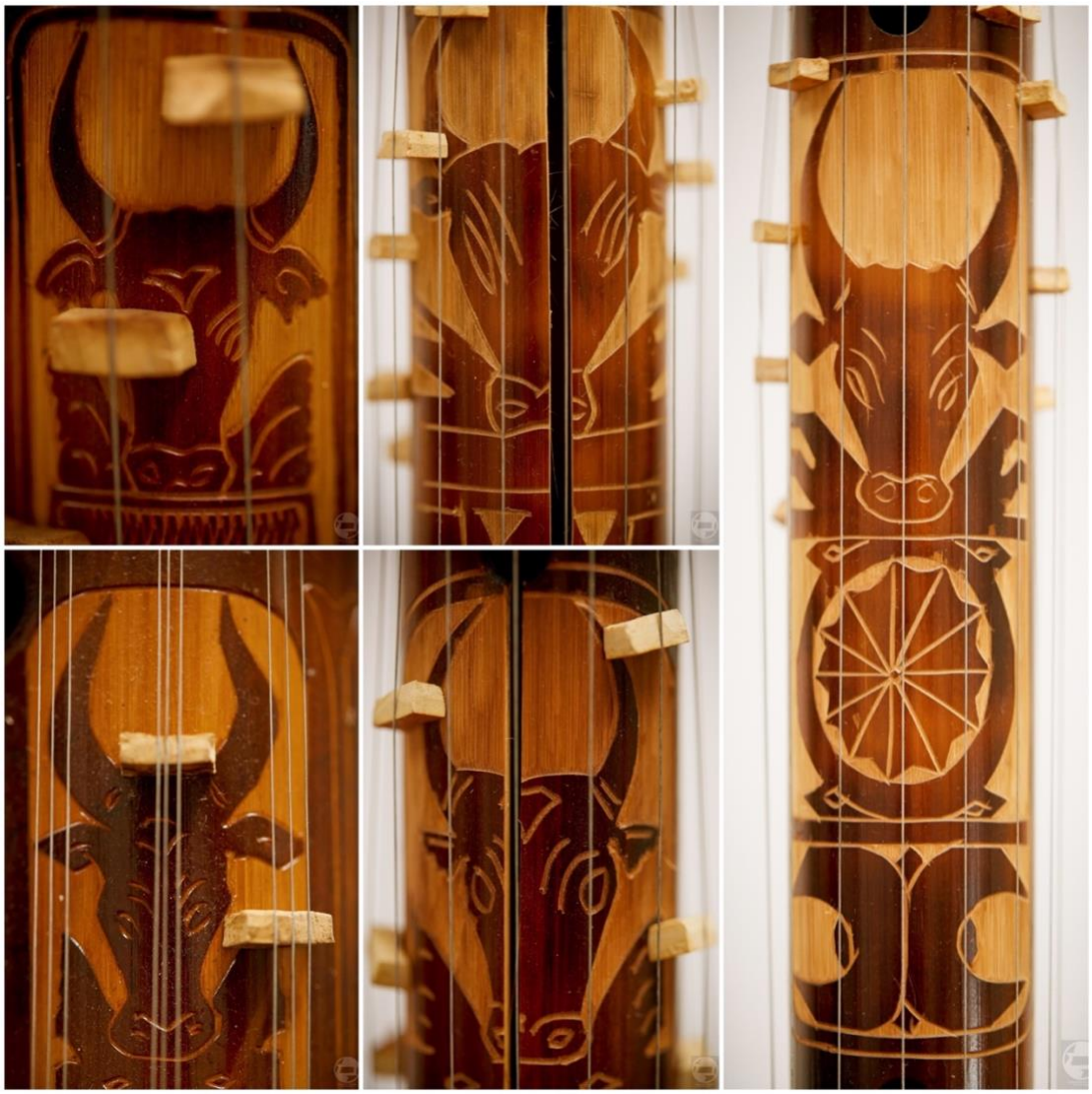


Figure 15. *Zebu* heads, depicted on several 21st century *valihas*. The *zebu* is a one of Madagascar's most important national symbols. Photographs by Qamar Adams.

distinctive shoulder hump, the *zebu* symbolises strength, power and wealth (Fig. 15). (Rakotomalala 2017). The image is incorporated in several important national emblems, including the national seal and Madagascar's bank notes – the latter have, for nearly two decades, all featured a watermark of the *zebu's* head and horns.

Its positioning on *valihas* reveals the reverence with which the animal is held. The *zebu* head is always inscribed on the upper to middle section of the bamboo (the area over which the strings lie), where it is always the uppermost image. In Madagascar, there is a significant "relationship between elevation and power" with "high places (being reserved) for people of elevated standing" (Randrianja and Ellis 2009, 69). Like the image of General Galliéni which was positioned at the top of the colonial-era *valiha*, the placement of the *zebu* contributes to its symbolic power.

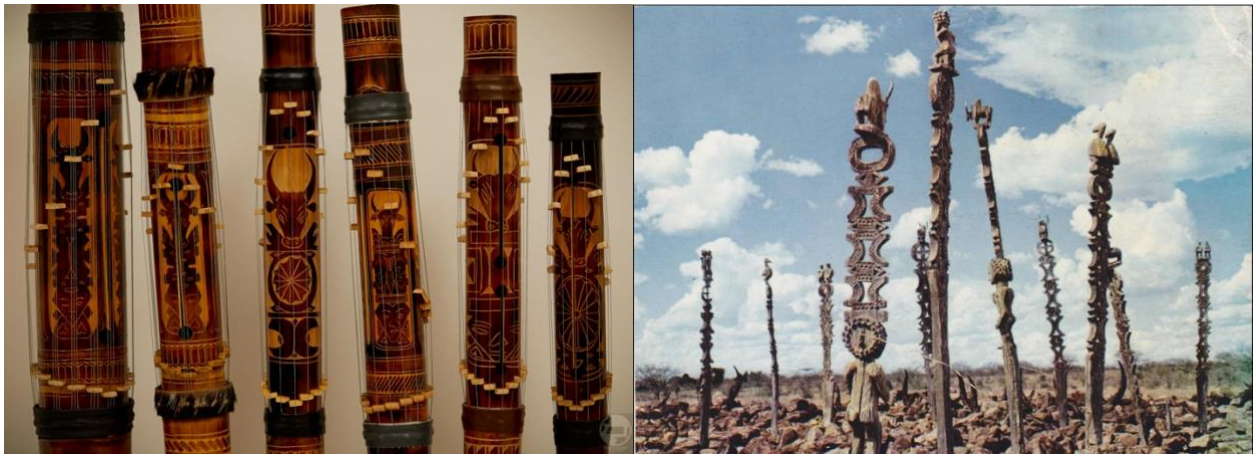


Figure 16a. Several *valiha's* depicting Malagasy *aloalos*. On these instruments, *zebu* heads are always placed at the zenith (left). Photograph by Qamar Adams.
Figure 16b. Several Mahafaly *aloalos* (right). Photograph by Hoa Qui.

Unlike the earlier mentioned lemurs and baobabs, *zebus* are not indigenous to Madagascar. Although there has been debate as to their arrival in Madagascar, Randrianja and Ellis state they are "of African origin" and were "introduced from Africa by early settlers" (*ibid.*, 32-33).[47] The historians go on to note that "almost all the words used for domestic animals in Malagasy are of African origin (*ibid.*). Sellström has further clarified this with his assessment that early African settlers of Bantu origin "brought the humped back *zebu*" to Madagascar, when migrating from the mainland (2015, 62-63). The *valiha's* incorporation of the image of the *zebu*, now arguably its most important symbol (considering its frequency and positioning), shows the instrument seems to be embracing its "national" identity.

Further revealing its association with Madagascar's other Indian Ocean heritages, in the context of *valiha* inscriptions, the *zebu* always forms the zenith of a funerary structure known as *aloalo* (Fig. 16a and 16b). *Aloalos* are tall wooden posts used by the Mahafaly, an ethnic group from the south of Madagascar, to decorate the tombs of deceased family members (Rasolofoniaina 2017). On actual *aloalos*, the upper-most imagery usually depicts a *zebu* carved from wood (often its full body), as well as significant scenes from a person's life. A family man, for example, may be shown as having dinner with his wife and children, whilst a bus driver may be shown driving (Rasoarifetra 2017). Each tomb, which may have as many as thirty *aloalos*, is scattered with the skulls of *zebus* that are sacrificed during the funerary rituals (*ibid.*).

[47]. Further research is nevertheless vital, as biologists Chen *et al.* suggest that *zebus* may have first been domesticated in South Asia during the Neolithic period (see Chen *et al.* 2010).

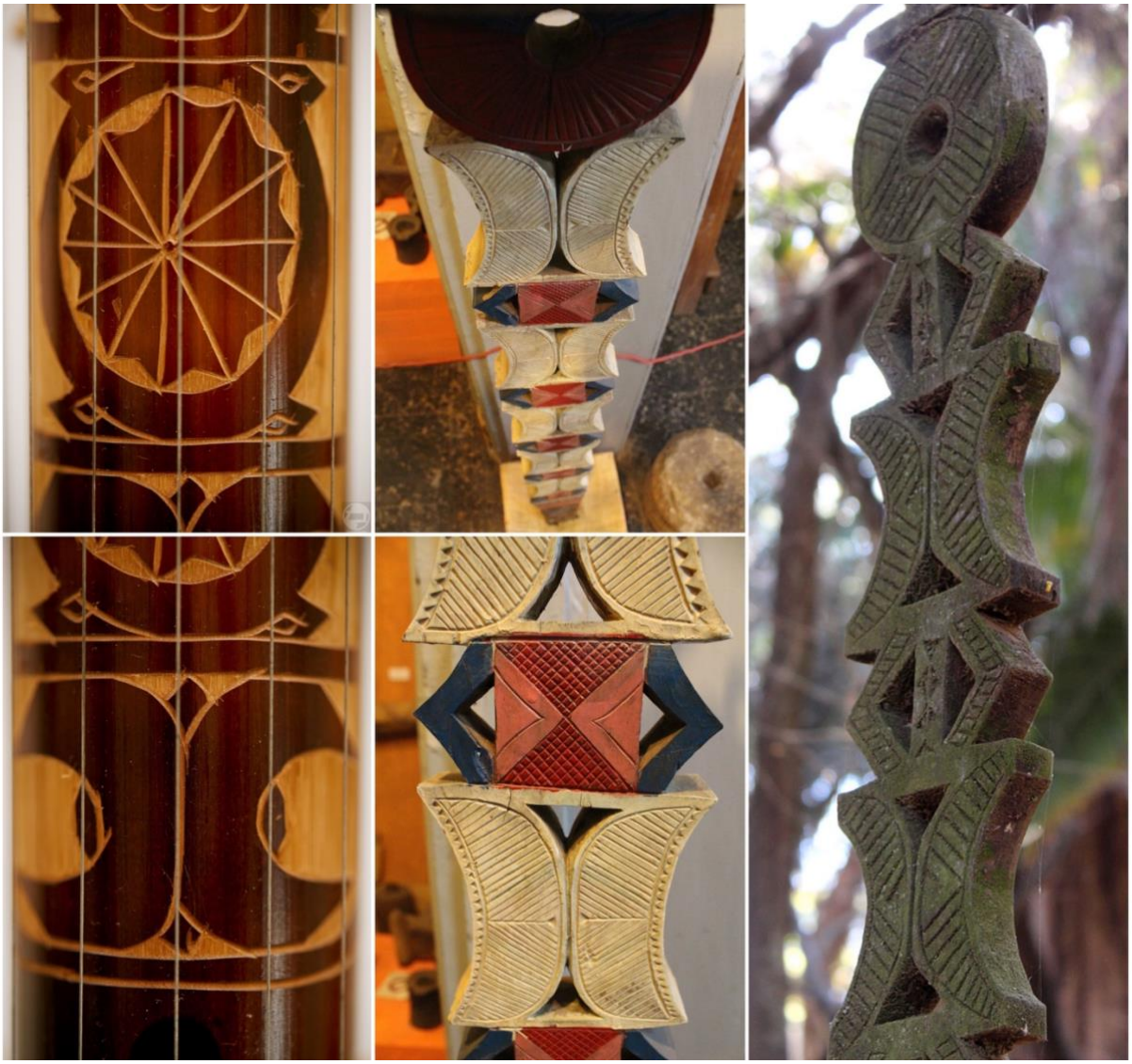


Figure 17a. Details of *valiha's* depicting Mahafaly *aloalos*. The images symbolize suns and back to back crescent moons, revealing influence from Islamic astrology (left column). Photographs by Qamar Adams.
Figures 16b and 16c. Details of Mahafaly *aloalos* (centre and left columns). Photographs by Rashid Adams.[48]

Aloalos use cosmic symbols to represent the continuity of life – a cycle which the Malagasy believe proceeds into another phase upon one's death (*ibid.*). Madagascar's complex system of divination and astrology, known as *sikidy*, is said to be "one of the oldest components of Malagasy culture" which is found in "in every part of the island" (Randrianja and Ellis 2009, 87-88). Randrianja and Ellis claim that "there is little doubt" that this traditional knowledge system was "complemented by

[48]. Figures 16b were taken at Antananarivo's Museum of Art and Archaeology. Figure 16c was taken at Tsimbazaza, also in Antananarivo.

Islamic learning" as well as "Islamic techniques of astrology" (*ibid.*). The *valiha's* incorporation of various related symbols, including back-to-back crescent moons, stars, and suns, highlights this important cultural influence from West Asia.

5.5 Conclusion

Following from the classification-based framework of my previous chapter, here I have enquired what further information organology can contribute towards clarifying cultural influences from the Indian Ocean world. By foregrounding the visual development of the *valiha*, I gained access to vital knowledge relating to Malagasy heritage and identity.

Much of this knowledge relates to the instrument's social function. Since its inclusion in traditional Merina courts the instrument has been associated with royalty. Visually, this reflected first in its symbolic incorporation of the colour red and, later, with frequent depictions of Merina palaces and monarchs. Considering the Merina's association with Austronesian culture, I showed how each of these symbols constitutes material evidence linking Madagascar with Southeast Asia.

Although Merina imagery has historically been most frequently employed, in recent times instrument makers have included significant symbols revealing African and Arab influence. As the *valiha* currently seems to be embracing its status as Madagascar's "national instrument", the knowledge it has emitted in the process has been substantial. By foregrounding its connections with Southeast Asia, East Africa and West Asia, I have positioned the musical instrument as an important constituent through which to research Malagasy origins.

CHAPTER 6:
Conclusion

1.1 Introduction

In this final chapter I conclude my study by evaluating my findings. I refer to what I have written, and point forward to what future research might potentially look like. I begin with a summary of my main findings, before assessing the relationship between my study and previous research.[49] From here I assess the contribution my study has made towards the research area of Malagasy origins – highlighting the importance of fieldwork in such organological studies. I then clarify the limitations of my study, highlighting my focus on musical instruments, before concluding with recommendations for future research.

1.2 Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study has been to enquire what contribution ethnomusicology can make towards clarify multidisciplinary research on Malagasy origins. My pre-colonial framework, together with the diversity of approaches which ethnomusicology allows, led me to foreground musical instruments as "the tangible aspect of the intangible heritage" of musical culture (Dournon 1981, 7).

Desiring to "link" Madagascar's instruments to "a history of peopling and contact", I began by reviewing research relating to Madagascar's early migrations (Blench 2009b, 2). Due to a dearth of research in my own field, I had to extend my enquiry to include various disciplines. This process was vital for three reasons. Firstly, I was made aware of the necessity to lean on diverse sources. Secondly, I explored the research area of Malagasy origins, which has become multidisciplinary due to its pre-colonial nature. Thirdly, and perhaps of most importance, I was led to focus on three regional Indian Ocean areas – Southeast Asia, East Africa and West Asia.

Based on multidisciplinary historical evidence pointing to influence from these areas, I had a regional framework through which to examine the diffusion of musical instruments to Madagascar. Before progressing to my data presentation chapters, I nevertheless had to address certain conceptual issues. Most prominent was the notion of diffusionism. By briefly historicising this paradigm I could differentiate between my approach and that of earlier transoceanic diffusionists. I clarified that diffusionism (a problematic paradigm) and diffusion (an observable process) are

[49]. Considering the different analytical approaches used in my data presentation chapters, I reference chapters four and five distinctly.

distinct – highlighting that I use the latter concept, which is frequently incorporated in ethnomusicological works.

With this methodological and theoretical foundation, I progressed into the first of my data presentation chapters, where I used a classification-based organological framework to compare Malagasy instruments to Indian Ocean examples. Based on near-identical classification, similar forms, and names with the same root words, I observed that the Malagasy instruments I studied are localised versions of instruments brought from Southeast Asia, East Africa and West Asia. Considering Madagascar's pre-colonial links with these regions, I made preliminary deductions dating the diffusion of these instruments to correspond with the significant human migrations that took place.

I took my study further by foregrounding the *valiha*, which is clearly a vestige of Southeast Asian culture. By examining its visual development, I extended past classification-based organology, to view the instrument as an object which emits knowledge and meaning. Through the examination of cultural symbols incorporated in the *valiha's* bamboo body, I gained insight into the instrument's social function as a royal Merina instrument. Considering the group's association with Southeast Asia, I observed that much incorporated imagery was influenced by Austronesian culture. With new decorative techniques emerging in the 20th century *valiha*, I observed that the instrument has begun to incorporate more diverse sets of imageries. As the instrument seems set on embracing its new social function as Madagascar's "national instrument", certain new symbolism is relatable to Madagascar's other people groups – in the process revealing cultural heritages from East Africa and West Asia.

1.3 Relationship to Previous Research

My findings, highlighting influence from Southeast Asia, East Africa and West Asia, are consistent with previous research advancing the study of Malagasy origins. This is particularly apparent with the Southeast Asia, the region, whence Madagascar's earliest oceanic migrations took place. Following from the work of linguists and geneticists, it is greatly significant that my research similarly points to Borneo. From the organological evidence presented in my fourth chapter, the Bornean *talempong botuang* emerges as strikingly similar to the earliest idiochord *valiha*. Although the former is struck and the latter plucked, this difference in playing style likely came about over the centuries since its diffusion. The heterochord *sasando*, found on Borneo's neighbouring island Sulawesi, reveals similar evidence linking Madagascar to this area of Indonesia.

Like the dispersion of the *suling,* which is widespread in Indonesia, the other examples – the *jeje* (East Africa), *sornā* and *qanbūs* (West Asia) – reveal less localised evidence. Fewer studies have been done on migrations from these areas, making it quite difficult to associate Madagascar with specific locales in these regions. Furthermore, the process of diffusion of instruments in Africa and Arabia has been different to that of Southeast Asia. Unlike the latter – principally an archipelago which relies on oceanic diffusion between islands – diffusion in the former two predominantly took place terrestrially. Further research is vital to clarify the distinctions between oceanic and terrestrial diffusion. In Madagascar's case, diffusion to the island had to take place oceanically. We can therefore associate this diffusion with previous research revealing the migrations of peoples from these regions.

1.3.1 Contribution to Knowledge

This evidence for the diffusion of instruments, primarily sourced from chapter four, is largely based on the work of ethnomusicologists and organologists writing before me. Although my specific Indian Ocean framework (Southeast Asia, East Africa and West Asia) is unique – arising from my literature review which pointed me to these areas – similar discussions incorporating the diffusion of musical instruments to Madagascar have been presented by scholars in the past. This reflects in my references to various of these authors in chapter four.

It is in my fifth chapter where I believe my contribution to scholarship has been most significant. Although classification-based studies on the *valiha* have been conducted by several scholars, I have yet to ascertain work focusing on its incorporation of symbolism and visual adornments. Similarly, in no sources have I seen any mention of the new pyrography-based decorative technique (I should emphasize that I have searched widely – through academic literature and online sources – as I had hoped to find a source dating this technique). My discussion on the *valiha* expressing heritage and identity through visual symbols, is therefore distinct from previous ethnomusicological and organological works on Malagasy instruments.

1.3.2 Importance of Fieldwork

Probably the main contributing factor to this was fieldwork. Many previous works on Malagasy instruments, those which I relied upon heavily in my fourth chapter, were based solely on examples found in European museums. This includes Sachs' *Les instruments de Madagascar* (1938), which is still today considered the quintessential work on Malagasy instruments. Whilst I on several occasions emphasised the importance of the colonial archive (where most of the oldest instruments survive today) only working from "the armchair" has limitations. It was in Madagascar, during

interviews with scholars, oral historians and musicians where I gained imperative insight which otherwise would not have been at my disposal. As stated earlier in my dissertation, my fieldwork, brief as it was, proved vital in shaping the direction and efficaciousness of my research.

1.4 Issues and Limitations

In my discussion regard the diffusion of musical culture, I should stress that I have primarily been concerned with musical instruments. I am not, however, suggesting other aspects of musical culture do not diffuse. Elements including musical characteristics and general proclivities around music making do diffuse, as has been observed by various ethnomusicologists. It is significant in Madagascar's context that musical sound is said to "hardly bear any more reference to (Indian Ocean) cultures" (Schmidhofer 2005, 5). On this basis, I felt the most viable strategy would be to foreground musical instruments which, of all the elements of musical culture, have been "least impacted by changes" (*ibid.*). Although Madagascar's oceanic migrations took place centuries ago, cultural influence from Southeast Asia, East Africa and West Asia "is still obvious in musical instruments" (*ibid.*).

1.5 Recommendations for Future Research

To advance the study of Malagasy origins, I believe multidisciplinary approaches should increasingly be intentional. Up to now research in the area has been referential, rather than collaborative. The pre-colonial nature of the research area, and a general dearth of information, makes collaborative multidisciplinary studies vital. There seems at present to be an increase in such research emphasising historical reconstruction. Although focused broadly on the pre-colonial Indian Ocean world, the Re-Centring Afro-Asia cohort of which I am a member, is one example of a large-scale, multidisciplinary project. Further collaborative enquiry into Madagascar's enigmatic settlement process may be key to unlocking other Indian Ocean histories which remain overlooked.

In the field of ethnomusicology, I believe further research on various aspects of Malagasy musical culture is important. Musical sound may yet hold important information regarding Malagasy origins. I nevertheless recommended further impetus be put on musical instruments. As scholars of various disciplines advance evidence pointing to more specific Indian Ocean locales, the continued incorporation of comparative organology may be central to clarifying and affirming these studies.

I nevertheless believe it vital for scholars to incorporate and develop approaches which extend past classification. Unfortunately, theoretical or methodological foundations for this "different sort of organology" yet to be formally established (Bates 2012, 365). In my study in chapter five, I had to

tailor my approach to the instrument in question. After observing sets of significant symbols on several old and new *valihas*, I chose to examine the instrument's visual development. Although I believe my study was successful, I am not advocating for organologists to incorporate this aesthetic approach at large. This is simply because not all instruments incorporate symbolic imagery. For now, other frameworks and methodologies should be experimented with and incorporated at the organologist's discretion.

In conclusion, I believe it imperative for musical instruments to be considered as objects which embody meaning and knowledge. By foregrounding them as such, extensive amounts of cultural information become available. In this present research, I have highlighted certain aspects of this knowledge, showing that instruments are potentially vital constituents to advance the study of Malagasy origins.

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