



Large portions of the Earth were inhabited during extensive migrations. Overpopulation, economic need, religious persecution or simply the desire to expand further prompted many people to set out in search of a new habitat. The migrants encountered settlers that had been residing there before, intermixed with them, subdued, expelled or even wiped them out completely; in some cases they reached, however, previously uninhabited land. Representatives of the German and Austrian Culture-Historical or Diffusionist School (Frobenius, Graebner, Schmidt) extensively investigated such migrations and the dissemination of resulting cultural phenomena. They believed that by studying cultural parallels between peoples of geographically distant areas, even centuries or millennia later interrelations that historical sources do not give testimony about could still be replicated. Comparative Musicology has engaged in numerous, often controversial discussions, thus supplying further material.

One of the geographically most extensive migrations initiated most likely more than 5000 years ago in southeast China, first extending across the Indonesian islands, it continued towards the east, where the islands of the Pacific Ocean were settled step by step, followed by the settlement of Madagascar towards the west. Some peoples in Southeast Asia were skilled sailors and able to undertake long trips on the sea. They used the stars, the sea birds, certain types of fish that are associated with reefs and lagoons, as well as the ocean waves and clouds to navigate their way to the islands.

Figure 1. Expansion of Austronesian peoples (See Page 4)

The common origin of the settlers within this huge region can be traced back most clearly by the languages they speak that are referred to as “Austronesian languages”. Aside from the language, common cultural characteristics have only marginally survived. Influences of other cultures - to varying degrees in different areas - have overlaid the old heritage. Indonesia is a good example for this phenomenon, Madagascar another one. Therefore, the term “Austronesian”<sup>1</sup> is generally used in a linguistic context. Considering our current level of knowledge, “Austronesian music” does only merit validity to a certain extent. In order to recognize commonalities - such as widely practiced within linguistics - data from all areas of this enormous region, extending from Madagascar to the Easter Island and from Taiwan to New Zealand have to be gathered and integrated; work that still remains to be done.

Madagascar, the fourth largest island of the world, located near the coast of Africa, is the western base of the Austronesian language family. The reconstruction of early settlement history is difficult, as there are no written, pictorial or archaeological sources from that time. Settlers from Southeast Asia arrived at the island approximately 1500-2000 years ago. It is unknown whether the island had been uninhabited before that. Oral traditions indicate that a native population, the Vazimba, characteristically of strikingly short stature, may have existed. Were these native inhabitants - given that they really existed - of African or Asian origin? We are not certain where the sailors came from and we do not know along which way they navigated their ships. Wind conditions appear to have facilitated the 6400 km long direct route across the Indian Ocean. This theory was proven in the

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Austronesian” was introduced in 1899 by Wilhelm Schmidt, the founder of the Vienna Culture - Historical School.

context of the Sarimanok expedition in 1985, where a boat crafted according to Indonesians standards of ancient times was used to sail from Indonesia to Madagascar. The hypothesis of direct crossing of the Ocean is countered by the fact that the islands Mauritius and Reunion, located along the route, were uninhabited when the Europeans arrived.

According to another thesis that most researchers adhere to, the Indonesians sailed along the coasts to Southeast Africa and to Madagascar. Indonesia dominated trade in the Indian Ocean of the 1st millennium of our common era. Archaeological findings give testimony to Indonesian settlements along the East African coast and also the inland of the continent. Indonesian colonization of parts of Africa came with the introduction of yams, breadfruit, taro and banana. In this context it shall be pointed out that several musicologists have postulated that various African musical instruments, particularly xylophones, may be of Indonesian origin; furthermore, they have found parallels in the tonal systems. The Indonesian population was most likely displaced by the Bantu, who expanded towards East and South Africa, and by the Arabic expansion towards the east coast of Africa during the second half of the 1st millennium, and consequently retreated to Madagascar (Brown 1995: 17), where Indonesian settlers had arrived previously. Probably there was already an African racial element in this second wave of migration to Madagascar. Madagascar was inhabited by Indonesians and Indonesian-Africans in several stages; and according to Deschamps the settlement took at least until the 13th century AD to complete (Deschamps <sup>2</sup>1976: 29).

Figure 2. Possible migration routes from Indonesia to Madagascar: a) along the coastline, b) over open sea (See Page [4])

Even though Madagascar was populated relatively late, it did not remain isolated. Arabic sailors, who had sailed along the East African coast as far as to Sofala in Mozambique, had already known the island before; they had established trade posts there ever since the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. One of their traded goods were humans. This is how numerous black slaves were brought from Africa to Madagascar, in order to serve indigenous potentates. Slave trade continued to flourish in European hands, and humans were not only imported but also exported from Madagascar to Mauritius, Reunion, Indonesia, China and America. There is evidence that aside from slave trade many Africans voluntarily opted to migrate to Madagascar. This explains the wealth of anthropological and cultural variety of the negroid population of Madagascar, as well as its large percentage. It is estimated that the Malagasy population is to two thirds of Africa origin and only to one third of Asian origin.<sup>2</sup>

Europeans discovered Madagascar in 1500. As the island was located along one of the sea routes to India, many ships anchored here to procure for food items. An intensive cultural exchange was, however, only established during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of intensified missionary attempts carried out by the British. Unfortunately many old traditions were permanently lost in the process, particularly those characteristic to people of Asian origin residing in the highlands, such as the

<sup>2</sup> However, despite this fact there is still a general tendency for Malagasy national pride to underestimate the African legacy as part of the overall Malagasy culture, and to unilaterally classify it as Asian-based. This may be attributed to the fact that the majority of the educated elite of the country pertains to the Asian population.



Merina. Christianization efforts were mostly effective with this people. There were a large number of European missionaries and the population was more than willing to sacrifice its own culture in favor of an allegedly superior European civilization. The Christianization of the Merina queen Ranavalona II. in 1869 and the subsequent destruction of the talismans known as sampy are some of the most important events in this context. Following these events a large percentage of the population of the highlands converted to Christianity. In 1880, general compulsory education was introduced, and as a result almost the entire youth population of the highlands was sent to missionary schools, as no other schools had yet been established on the island at that time.

Music played a pivotal role for missionary activities. European chants appeared to attract a lot of people. Music lessons were often held with European instruments at the missions. Military bands based on European models were founded as early as the 1820s. They played pieces of European military music that were popular at that time. Particularly favored were mechanical musical instruments that originated from Europe, such as music boxes and mechanical pianos. It was customary to dance European dances to their sounds. Only European music was taught at a music academy that had been founded by King Radama II. around 1860 (Schmidhofer 1993: 455). “Il s'ont une grande facilité pour apprendre la musique européenne...” praised Tiersot, who was able to witness the merits of musical education based on European ideals in 1900 at the World Exposition in Paris. The success of European music appears to have halted indigenous musical production nearly altogether, he stated further.

This statement, however, only held true for the Asian population of the island. The negroid African and mixed population in many coastal areas had rejected European attempts to settle from the very beginning; these regions were further plagued by malaria. As a result only few Christian missionaries settled there. Traditions that reach far back in history have been preserved particularly in the music of these peoples till the present day.

In this context it is paradoxical that the African population of Madagascar failed to preserve their languages, as opposed to the Asian population. Even up until the 19th century Bantu languages could be heard in western parts of the island, however, they have disappeared altogether in the meantime. This can be attributed to the political predominance of the Merina for the past 200 years. Furthermore, Asians in Madagascar have always only spoken one language, while Africans had continued to speak several, depending on their ethnic origins. The Asian population was comprised of a relatively homogenous group compared to that of the African population; which facilitated the formation of the powerful kingdom of the Merina. We might conclude that - considering the large ethnic and linguistic variety of the Indonesian archipelago - Asian migrants in Madagascar may have originated from only one region in Southeast Asia - versus pertaining to various tribes and languages. According to Otto Christian Dahl the Malagasy language is closely related to Maanjan, which is spoken in Southeast Borneo, and he concludes that the ancestors of the Malagasy population may have originated from this region (Dahl 1991). Today the language is the most important link between the various peoples of Madagascar and the most important identification symbol for a common Malagasy culture.

## The Austronesian heritage reflected in the music of Madagascar

Based on the aforementioned facts one may conclude that the prerequisites for retracing the origins of Austronesian music in Madagascar are not particularly favorable. The Indonesian migration occurred a long time ago. No documents - written, iconographic or material sources -, no oral traditions reach back to those times. Foreign influences have largely impacted Indonesian-Malagasy culture ever since. The willingness to adopt foreign cultural traits was enormous. However, not everything was disclosed. European influences mainly impacted the tonal system and polyphony. Or is Malagasy polyphony in parallel 3rds not a product of acculturation after all? Adaptation to European styles may have been facilitated by partial musical similarities. At this point further reading of Arthur M. Jones' famous publication *Africa and Indonesia* could shed light onto the subject. He dedicates an entire chapter to singing in 3rds (<sup>2</sup>1971: 171-174) and also bears mention to Madagascar in this context. According to his account, both the African polyphony in parallel 3rds that corresponds with the dissemination area of the xylophone (which according to him originated from Indonesia too) as well as the Malagasy variant have Indonesian roots. Polyphony in parallel 3rds has mostly disappeared from the Indonesian archipelago and was superseded by Hindu and Islamic monodic singing. However, 3rds appear to have survived in some peripheral regions, such as in the Philippines, the Caroline Islands, in Flores, Sumatra and eastward in Melanesia and Polynesia. Considering the predominant presence of European missionaries early on, as well as that of European entertainment and military music in most aforementioned regions, Jones' conclusions may be somewhat far-fetched. The lack of reliable sources allows only for nebulous assumptions.

The European influence in Madagascar has also brought several dances in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: the quadrille, the polonaise, the waltz and the polka. Together with these dances European ball culture was introduced to Madagascar. The influence on native dance culture was, however, rather insignificant. European dances remained reserved for the aristocrats and the haute bourgeoisie. African influences of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have impacted the dance spectrum more profoundly. However, cultural policies in Madagascar following its independence have counteracted the impending loss by introducing specific preservation measures. One of the major desiderata is to research Malagasy dances, particularly in a cross cultural comparison. "Bird dances" that seem to imitate the wing movements of certain birds appear to be of Asian origin and are characterized by virtuoso hand and finger motions. Such dances are unknown on the African continent, but very popular across Indonesia.

Another interesting research topic in this context is human voice. European missionaries and music teachers have aimed at shaping the voices of Malagasy singers according to their aesthetical ideals. Nonetheless, some vocal genres succeeded in preserving an "Asian timbre", such as the shape of the pressed head-voice.

While the music itself does hardly bear any more reference to Austronesian<sup>3</sup> culture, the Austronesian influence is still obvious in musical instruments. These were least impacted by changes. This can be seen in available sources as well. Historical sources - the oldest dates back to 1598 - are particularly



informative in terms of musical instruments versus the music that is often characterized in general and evaluative statements. The sources indicate that new instruments appeared, often adopting functions of indigenous instruments, such as the accordion that has replaced the tube zither in possession ceremonies. The tube zither, however, survived in different social contexts. Flutes were replaced by clarinets and trumpets in burial ceremonies. However, in more remote rural areas the flute still remained the instrument of choice. Foreign instruments could often not be purchased due to the low purchasing power. We can almost witness a revival of old instruments as a result of impoverization that gradually took place for the last 30 to 40 years. Some musical instruments have always had - inasmuch we can verify such phenomena based on historical sources - a special meaning as symbols of identity, and were consequently especially well protected. Such mechanisms play a pivotal role in the Diaspora. This includes mostly artifacts of material culture, reminding the individual of his/her heritage. They are part of his/her identity. They can include everything from the building style of the houses up to musical instruments. Certain artifacts may become symbols of identity on a large scale, such as the valiha, the Malagasy tube zither. It has become the most prominent symbol of Malagasy music, reminiscent of its larger Austronesian context. Another instrument, which merits further mention at this point, is the conch shell.

### **The conch shell**

The conch shell can worldwide be found in coastal regions. The instrument can be traced back to iconographies of Ancient Greece, where it is depicted as an attribute for Triton, a male figure with the body of a fish. It can be heard across large distances and is used for different purposes, including war and folkloric events. The conch shell is made of large sea shells such as Triton, Cassis etc. The blowing hole can be located at the pointy end, occasionally equipped with a mouthpiece. In the Pacific region, Indonesia and Madagascar it is blown laterally, which means its blowing hole is located on the side. The conch shell is one of the most popular instruments within Austronesian culture. It can be found on most Pacific islands and has become a symbol of this region, an almost irreplaceable part of South Sea clichés. However, also in other parts of the Austronesian cultural region the conch shell is known, such as in parts of Indonesia and Taiwan. Its dissemination on the East African coast, where it is used for navigation and for various rituals, can most likely be traced back to Indonesian influences (Allen 1982: 24).

The conch shell was popular in all parts of Madagascar, even in the highlands. Here, it was one of the insignia of the Merina kings and queens. Its name, *antsiva*, bears reference to the large *siwa*,

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<sup>3</sup> It makes sense to not limit the comparison to Indonesia, as it is often done, but to extend it to all regions of the Austronesian cultural area, particularly to those that succeeded in preserving the Austronesian legacy in a purer form, as a result of increased isolation. Representatives of the Culture - Historical School believe, furthermore, that cultural phenomena persist for longer in peripheral regions of a dissemination area versus its center, for the center tends to be much more dynamic; the center makes way for new inventions that replace old ones. Once the contact ceases, such inventions are not transmitted to the periphery. If one wants to trace old cultural phenomena it makes sense to particularly pay attention to happenings in peripheral regions.

horns of the kings on the East African coast, that were used for representation purposes. Slaves, and only men, were the ones who used to play the conch shells. The reports of European travelers and missionaries, who used to frequent the royal court in Antananarivo, often bear mention of the instrument. Whenever the conch shells of the royal palace, the rova, were heard, they announced a special event, which could be the arrival of an important visitor, a speech held by the queen or a religious ceremony. For special occasions, such as the death of the queen or the king, the conch shells were played incessantly all day. It is documented that they have also been used as signaling instruments in battle. In 1823, European bugles replaced it in this function. Subsequently it was primarily used in the context of traditional, particularly religious festivities. In this era that was characterized by Madagascar's opening towards the outside and rapidly occurring changes under king Radama I. (1810-1828) the conch shell became together with the kings' drums a symbol for the religious conservative counter-stream that emerged in response to the impending loss of the ancestors' culture. The *antsiva* tradition was revived under queen Ranaivalona I. (1828-1861), who rejected European influences. When the Merina kingdom ceased to exist in 1896 as a result of the French invasion, the instrument lost its significance. The conch shell at the royal court of the Sakalava was used for the same purpose as in Imerina.

Today, the conch shell is still played mainly in the southern and western parts of the island. Schomerus-Gernböck (1981: 46) describes various signals and their significance for the Mahafaly in South Western Madagascar. A musical usage is not known. Therefore, the conch shell is to be referred to as a pre-musical sonic device. The *antsiva*, in some regions also referred to as *bankora*, is primarily used for rituals, such as circumcision rituals and possession rituals. The tabooed and religious connotation of the instrument has been preserved. Consequently, the conch shell continues to be associated with old traditions from the past.

Figure 3. Conch shell (from Sachs 1938:P1.VI) (See Page 4)

Figure 4. Music in a bilo possession ceremony. Near Ankazoabo, Southern Madagascar, 1989, with conch shell. Foto: August Schmidhofer (See Page 4)

### Cone drums

The *hazolahy*, two-skinned cone drums, are always played as a pair of varying size and pitch. The skins of each drum are tuned in 5ths. Together both drums generate 4 different pitches. The larger skin is beaten with a stick, while the smaller one is only played by hand. The skin is generally tautened by cords forming the shape of a Y. All these characteristics - the cone shape, the Y-shaped tautened strings and the way it is played with a stick and the bare hand - appear to designate the *hazolahy* as pertaining to Malayan-Indonesian culture (Sachs 1938:76).

The *hazolahy* is a tabooed sacred instrument that is primarily used in circumcision and burial ceremonies. In former times it was often found at the royal court, where it played an important role as a ceremonial instrument. In various historical narratives, King Andrianamponga is cited as the



first monarch of Imerina. The fact that Andrianamponga, the “prince of the drums” is placed at the beginning of genealogy indicates the importance of the kings’ drums as symbolic instruments. The *hazolahy*, the royal drums, were believed to have special powers that the monarchs needed to exercise rule. If a king lost his drum, it also meant he lost his power. Consequently, conquered monarchs had to relinquish their drums and conch shells after combat. The cone drums represented the royal ancestors that impacted all relevant activities of the ruling king. As sacred instruments they were only played for special occasions that were often connected to the royal dynasty. “On battit les tambours des ancêtres”, which is how the little prince Rakoto (the later King Radama II.) was introduced to the people in 1829. Sources only bear little mention to the drums of the ancestors. This indicates their infrequent use. Ranaivalona I., who strictly adhered to old traditions, ordered new drums to be made, which was such a special event that even the names of the drum makers, Rabedasy and Rakoto, were mentioned in later sources (Schmidhofer 1998: 329).

Figure 5. Hazolahy (from Sachs 1938, P1.X) (See Page 4)

### Bamboo culture

Bamboo occupies an important role in Southeast Asia and Oceania - in philosophy and the arts as well as in every day life. It is one of the raw materials that are used to manufacture musical instruments. In Madagascar musical instruments made of bamboo are primarily found in climates where bamboo grows, which are located in the eastern and northern parts of the country, as well as the highlands. Many instruments bear a clear reference to Asian roots, as they are not known on the African continent at all. First of all, the tube zither *valiha* shall be presented here, which has acquired the status of a national instrument in Madagascar.

### Valiha

Figure 6. Valiha player (1901) (See Page 4)

The *valiha* is part of the Indonesian legacy of Malagasy musical culture. In Southeast Asia two types of tube zithers are prevalent: an idiochord instrument with two to five strings that are struck with sticks, and an idiochord or heterochord instrument with several strings that are grouped around the tube and played by finger picks. The latter is primarily common in Malaysia, Timor, the Philippines and Vietnam, and also in some parts of Oceania. In Madagascar only the picked version is prevalent.

Figure 7. Tube zither from Thailand (from Collaer 1979:65) (See Page 4)

Figure 8. Tube zither from West-Timor (from Collaer 1979:127) (See Page 4)

Curt Sachs (1938: 76) dates the introduction of the tube zither to Madagascar with the first migration

movement from Indonesia in our era. However, sources do not allow for tracing back the history of the instrument in its details to times before the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### *Morphology*

The tube zither *valiha* is made of a bamboo segment with a length of 35 to 180 cm and a diameter of 5 to 10 cm. Two nodes divide the bamboo into three segments: a longer internode in the middle and two appendages of differing lengths at the ends (transnodes). This classic shape can be found primarily in the central highlands, where the *valiha* is most common. Tube zithers of other regions of Madagascar hardly ever measure more than one meter and the transnodes are often missing. The tube of the *valiha* is mostly closed around the nodes; the nodes are only pierced in certain cases. A longitudinal opening in the internode serves as the sound hole, which faces the player when the instrument is played. Some instruments are adorned around the sound hole with various ornaments.

When the idiochord *valiha* is manufactured, 14-20 thin strips are extracted along the internode from the epidermis, which serve as the strings that are raised from the bamboo tube on two bridges. The bridges are made of calabash pieces or hard wood. The strings are connected at the ends with the bamboo; cord or ribbon made of plant material that is wrapped around the tube protects them from ripping.

The heterochord *valiha* is strung with strings that are generally made of disassembled bicycle brake cords. They are attached with nails around the nodes. In order to prevent ripping of the nails and breaking of the bamboo tube, a piece of wire, a metal strip, a cord or a strip of animal skin is wrapped around the bamboo at the tip of the strings. The strings are tuned by moving the bridges and also by using bridges of varying heights. The string can also be stretched by introducing a third bridge around the tip of the string. In some museums also tube zithers with pegs can be found, mostly dating back to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The idiochord *valiha* was slowly replaced by its heterochord counterpart towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in order to increase the sound volume. Some museums exhibit hybrid variants with a larger number of bamboo strings and some additional bass steel strings. These instruments reflect a new musical understanding, induced by chants of Christian churches that allowed for a solid bass foundation.

Figure 9. Idiochord and hybrid (idiochord/heterochord) *valiha* (See Page 4)

The *valiha* can be played held upright in a seated position, in which the lower end is placed between the legs or knees. Alternatively, it may be played while walking, which requires the lower end to be placed against the abdomen. The longer one of the two transnodes is on the bottom side whenever the instrument is played. If the instrument is played in a horizontal position it is slightly tilted and its tip touches the ground. The player uses all fingers to pick the strings and can either play with the finger nails or the finger tips.





In the southern and western parts of the island, where bamboo is rarely found, the tube zither is generally made of two semi cylindrical parts of the wood species *hazo malagny* (*Hernandia voyroni*); the Tsimihety in the north use the leaf stalks of the raphia palm to construct their instruments. The two halves are tied together with palm barks or metal strips. The strings of the raphia valiha (*valiha tsimihety*) are made from the outer layer of the cane, while the wooden valiha comes with steel strings. In the south tin cans are often used as resonators, in which the zither is placed on the can while it is being played. In the Central Highlands the valiha is mostly manufactured by specialists, whereas in other regions musicians tend to construct their own instruments. For the past few decades the variants of tube zithers have been expanded by creating chromatically tuned instruments with up to 54 strings and fixed bridges. Malagasy music schools also brought forth valiha-ensembles, including tube zithers of various sizes that are assigned to voice registers of vocal music (soprano *valiha*, alto *valiha*). Ultimately, the case zither shall find mention here, which is a descendant of the tube zither and widely encountered in many parts of Madagascar, particularly in regions where bamboo does not grow.

### *Tunings and scales*

The sound hole is regarded by musicians as the core of the instrument and is the point of reference for tuning the valiha. The lowest string can be found directly above that opening. Left and right strings are tuned in ascending 3rds. Here, the sequence of 3rds of the left hand is shifted by a 2nd when compared to that of the right hand. Thus, an ascending scale is produced when the strings are picked left and right in alternation. Cascading chord breaks are typical for the repertoire of the valiha and are facilitated by the tuning of the instrument. The sequence of 3rds is often interrupted at certain points by differing scales.

There is variety of various tunings that, however, always represent one of the four or five heptatonic scales of Malagasy music. In order to change the scale, the tuning of one or more strings has to be changed, which only takes a few moments to complete. In the highlands specific terms are used to denominate these types of scales: *lalandava* (straight ahead), *maty roa* (two dead), *maty dimy* (five dead), *maty sivy* (nine dead). Their character is not only a product of the specific scale but includes also typical melodic formulas and harmonic sequences.

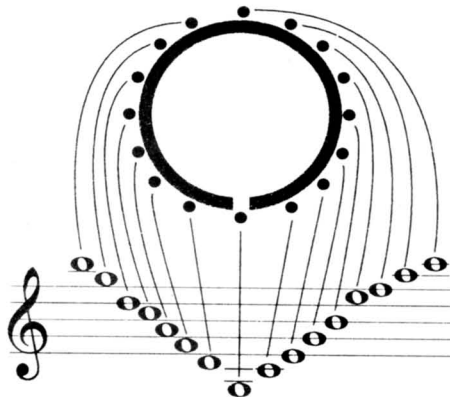


Figure 10. Widely practiced tuning for a valiha with 16 strings in lalandava scale

In southern parts of the country tube zithers have usually less strings and are often tuned in a pentatonic scale, such as it is practiced by the Bara. While its melodic function is more emphasized in the highlands, the rhythmical aspects of the tube zither tend to be prioritized in these regions.

### *History*

The *valiha* is particularly typical for the Merina in the Central Highlands, the ethnic group that has been most impacted by Indonesian culture. However, it should be mentioned, that the Sakalava in the northwestern parts of the island had already known the tube zither prior to the expansion of the Merina (at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) and used them to accompany dances; the instrument was also popular with the Betsimisaraka and in southeastern parts of the country.

In Merina society of former times the *valiha* was regarded as an instrument of the *andriana*, the upper class, and was associated with power and authority. Slaves were banned from playing the *valiha* up until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Early sources subscribe to a classification of the tube zither as an instrument for men, a fact that has survived till present times.

Historical narratives of the Merina edited and published as *Tantara ny Andriana* by Callet (1953-1978) and the history of the *Sampin' Andriana* (Domenichini 1985) cite the *valiha* alongside the ancestors' drums and conch shells in connection with historical events. During battles in the Central Highlands of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century conquered principalities were required to present a *valiha* to the Merina King as symbol of their subjugation. The *valiha* gained particular importance as a sacred instrument during the fetish cult, becoming around 1700 the most important symbol in the *Kelimalaza* cult that involved one of the most significant of all fetishes. Under King Andrianampoinimerina (1787-1810) it was attributed to the fetish *Ramahavalay* and played whenever the fetish was recovered from the place it was kept at. The *valiha* also plays a significant role for the Vazimba cult, where it was particularly associated with Ranoro, the Vazimba princess, who continued to be worshipped as a deity beyond her death. Domenichini-Ramiaramanana (1982:21) postulates that the Merina may have adopted the instrument from the Vazimba, these legendary people that were expelled from the Highlands with the ascent of the Merina.

Later, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *valiha* was primarily used in a profane context. Queen Ranavalona I. (1828-1861) loved to be entertained by dancers who were accompanied by a *valiha* player. Royal balls that adhered to European ideals were usually opened and concluded with a *valiha* piece. King Radama II. (1861-1863) was also a talented *valiha* player himself. "*Mokatejy*", a piece that is nowadays part of the repertoire of *valiha* virtuosos was supposedly composed by him. During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century *valiha* ensembles performed in the context of Christian missions at funerals, weddings and Christianizations. However, European clerics who associated the instrument with pagan practices banned the *valiha* around 1880. In 1900, *valiha* players participated in the World Exposition in Paris; the *valiha* became the Malagasy national instrument and was always played when Malagasy music was to be presented to an international audience. This fact is also reflected by recordings of Malagasy music. The first recordings were completed during the World



Exposition in Paris, and a series of recordings in 1931 during the Colonial Exposition in Vincennes near Paris. Even after Madagascar became independent (1960) the *valiha* continued to maintain its status as a national Malagasy instrument, such as in the function of the lead instrument within the national ensemble of Odéam Rakoto and the famous Trio ny Antsaly that performed worldwide during the 1960s and 70ths.

Today, the sound of the *valiha* is part of the repertoire of synthesizers and many bands, also outside of Madagascar, employ the instrument in their music. Even though the boom of Malagasy music worldwide is closely connected to the *valiha*, the trend in Madagascar is quite different. The heterochord tube zither is primarily disseminated with the Merina in the Central Highlands. In many parts of the south and west it is hardly encountered anymore and even in its core region the tradition of the tube zither has experienced a decline. The idiochord *valiha* is today only played by groups that focus on preserving autochthonic Malagasy music.

### **Hanging bamboo tubes**

In order to drive away animals from rice fields in some regions of Madagascar it is common to place bamboo tubes onto sticks; when the wind blows they hit another stick, thus generating a loud sound. I am not certain whether the tubes are tuned at all. Similar set-ups are also employed in Indonesia; which are to be seen as pre-cursors of the *angklung*, an instrument made of several bamboo-tubes of differing pitch which are fixed to a frame.

Figure 11. Hanging bamboo tubes (from Schaeffner 1980: P1.IV) (See Page [4](#))

### **Stamping tube**

The open end of a bamboo tube is struck against the ground and generates a loud and deep sound. In Madagascar the tubes are primarily used as rhythm generating instruments to accompany dances. Nonetheless, stamping-tubes are prevalent throughout the entire Indonesian and Polynesian region, which is why André Schaeffner (1936: 67) postulates a Malayan-Polynesian origin of the instrument. Furthermore, stamping tubes can also be found along the East African coast. Considering the lacking existence of the instrument in other parts of Africa we may conclude that it is of Indonesian origin. *Dombolo*, the Malagasy name that the Tanala and Betsileo of the Southern Highlands use for the instrument is an onomatopoeic term. As opposed to Oceania (Collaer [1965]: 106-107) in Madagascar it does not appear to be common to use differently tuned tubes. Generally, only one single tube is used. Alternatively, several tubes may be employed that are tied together with cords, in which the tubes generate a loud sound without being tuned. Consequently, McLeod (1977: 204) questions its Indonesian origin. Considering the simplicity of the instrument it appears safe to assume independent inventions on both sides of the Ocean. The same author (1977: 200-204) gives account of the utilization of stamping tubes in the context of a dance that imitates military exercises. Here, the stamping tube replaces the rifle that is struck against the ground during the



exercise. A “commander” who is blowing a whistle paces before his men that are lined up in two rows. Next to them there is a group of women singing and playing rattles.

Originally, stamping tubes were used in Madagascar as part of healing rituals such as *bilo* and *salamanga*.<sup>4</sup> Here, the patient has to dance frenetically for an extended period of time - literature sources (McLeod 1977: 202) mention 30 or more days - excited by ecstatic music in order to drive away the evil spirits. To emphasize the rhythm, apart from stamping tubes also planks can be smashed against each other. Dubois (p.1160) characterizes the rhythm that is generated with stamping tubes as: “ki-dom-bo-lon-do-lo”, which is a 6 beat rhythm that is characteristic for all types of trance music in Madagascar.

### **Bamboo clapper**

A rod made of bamboo is known as *kaiamba rambo* in Madagascar. Within the classification of musical instruments it is categorized as a clapper. A bamboo cane that is cut just above the node is split towards its open tip in thin flexible strips. The instrument is held at the lower end and struck against the opposite hand that is holding the instrument or against the thigh, or alternatively rubbed between both hands. A similar sound is generated by using bundles of dried grass. An identical variant of the instrument can be found in parts of Polynesia, such as Hawaii, where it is referred to as *pu'ili* (Collaer [1965]: 82), as well as on the Torres Strait Islands. A related instrument is the bamboo fork in Indonesia (Collaer [1965]: 138-139).

### **Jew's harp**

The Jew's harp made of bamboo is very popular in Asia and Oceania. In Madagascar particularly the European style jew's harp with metal frame became popular during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Other types existed previously as well, but only two citations could be found for them that, however, fail to provide an exact description of the instruments. Neither of the two instruments apparently had a frame. The sound is generated by holding the lamella between the slightly opened lips and plucking it. Sachs (1938: 66) refers to it as a precursor of the Jew's harp. According to the migration theory that he adheres to Malagasy instruments are probably, alongside other similar instruments that were found in South and East Africa, relicts of an early migration from Asia.<sup>5</sup>

### **Stick zither**

The origins of the stick zither have been speculated about early on in context of the Africa-Indonesia debate. The instrument is common in many parts of Southeast and South Asia, in East and Central Africa, as well as in Madagascar. According to Ankermann who postulates its Indonesian origin,

<sup>4</sup> They appear to have been used in a similar context in Malaysia (Collaer 1979: 82-83)

<sup>5</sup> See also Regina Plate: *Kulturgeschichte der Maultrommel*, Bonn 1992: 68-70, and Genevieve Dournon-Taurelle & John Wright: *Les guimbardes du Musée de l'Homme*, Paris 1978: 128-129.



the stick zither was supposedly brought first to Madagascar, from where it spread along the east coast and across other parts of Africa. According to Norma McLeod (1977: 189) the instrument migrated from Africa to Madagascar. Particularly striking is the similarity between the shapes of the East African and Malagasy variants, as well as their similar nomenclature: *jeju* voatavo (“*jeju* with calabash”) in Madagascar and *zeze* (or similar names) in East Africa. This indicates a common link, whose roots are, however, not known. Sources bearing witness to the more recent history of the instrument in Africa are on the other hand more abundant. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the *zeze* was propagated along the trade routes of the east African coast towards the mainland of the continent and spread to the Congo and to Zambia (Kubik 1982: 112-113).

Figure 12. Stick zithers from Mozambique and Madagascar (from Jones <sup>2</sup>1971: Pl. XI)  
(See Page 4)

The stick zither consists of a stick and a two-pieced resonator that is made of calabash and attached to the stick. The stick is equipped with three cone shaped appendages that are positioned laterally reversed on the bottom and top sides, and furthermore a forking on its opposite end. The parallels of these features between stick zithers from Africa and Madagascar point to a cultural connection in terms of the “Formkriterium” (form criterion) introduced by Graebner. The laterally reversed order of the appendages is only of esthetical significance and does not bear reference to its function. There are also obvious parallels to similar instruments found in Celebes, particularly in terms of the calabash fixture (Jones 1971: 169).

While the tradition of stick zither play is on the decline in Africa, the instrument is still widely found throughout many parts of the country in Madagascar, particularly in the Southern Highlands, where it comes with up to 11 metal strings. Some of the strings are strung across the appendages that serve as frets. Others stretch laterally along the stick, adapting the function of a drone string. Just like any other chordophone in Madagascar, also the *jeju* is reserved to be played by men. The players generally accompany the tunes with narrative songs or hymns, often with a moralizing content. This fact is interpreted by McLeod (1977: 207) as a feature that points to its African roots. She concludes that the stick zither may be of Indonesian origin, while its function is impacted by African traditions.

### Leg xylophone

The debate about the origin of the Malagasy xylophone is reminiscent of the debate around the origin of the xylophone in Africa overall, and has repeatedly resurfaced within Comparative Musicology for the past 100 years. A.M. Jones, the most important author on this topic and advocate for its Indonesian origin, had only very little information about the *atragnatra* xylophone in Madagascar, which is why he was not able to elaborate on it in further detail in his work. Albeit its wide existence in many parts of the Austronesian region and Africa, he claims that the leg xylophone is “too unspecialised to use as evidence for diffusion based on comparative organology. While they [leg xylophones] might, either in Indonesia or in Africa, be primitive adaptations copying in

the principle of the more developed types, they might equally well be separate inventions in both places.” (Jones 1971: 124) McLeod writes in her study about “Musical instruments and history in Madagascar” (1977): “If, as is possible, it has never been anything but a children’s game, its Indonesian origin is no longer certain, since African children make a similar toy.” Curt Sachs (1938) and several Malagasy authors had previously attested to the Indonesian origin of the instrument.

In a study (1991) that was based on nearly hundred recordings of Malagasy xylophones, I was able to verify a close link to Africa in terms of material, conceptual and structural characteristics. The similarities to the *mangwilo* - xylophone of the Makua in northern Mozambique that I was able to study on site are striking. Numerous features are identical: The instruments resemble in, both form and size of the keys. The number of keys - 5 to 7, rarely ever more or less than that - is identical, just like their arrangement with the deep keys in the middle and the high ones on the edges. Both parts are comparable. Time-line-patterns that are predominant in Africa are also encountered in Madagascar. Und ultimately, the gender of the player: within the *mangwilo* xylophone tradition frequently also women are the ones who play the instrument, as is the case in Madagascar. However, a significant difference can be found: the Malagasy xylophone is a leg xylophone: the keys are placed on a person’s legs who is sitting on the ground with her legs straight out in front of her, while for the *mangwilo* variant the keys are generally placed on banana stems. This intimate connection to one’s body is a feature that sets the Malagasy xylophone, despite all other similarities, apart from its East African counterparts, while linking it closer to its Austronesian variants. The Malagasy leg xylophone is the result of an encounter of two different cultures, that took place on the African mainland before the resulting hybrids were transported across the Mozambique Channel in the course of a migration movement that remains obscure.

Figure 13. Leg xylophone atragnatra. Foto: August Schmidhofer (See Page 4)

### Summary:

Malagasy music in its larger Austronesian context is generally researched in the context of comparative studies due to a lack of historical sources. Here, it is particularly informative to elaborate on musical instruments, many of which have been preserved till present day and they often display - in some cases very clearly - their cultural origins. Its Austronesian origin can be most clearly attested to for the conch shell, the cone drums and the tube zither; a fact not only proven by organological results, but also, for instance, by their significance of these instruments at the royal court of the Merina, where they were among the regalia of the monarch and objects of ancestors worshipping. It is postulated that this function was only adopted if the instruments were deeply rooted in their own culture. The same goes for the significance of the valiha as a national instrument.

While these instruments bear a clear reference to Indonesia and Oceania, others pertain to the East African-Malagasy-Indonesian cluster, such as the leg xylophone and the stick zither that, originally from Indonesia, were modulated in East Africa and arrived in Madagascar as hybrids.<sup>6</sup> Some



instruments that bear resemblance with instruments beyond the Indian Ocean are very simple in their style. Their propagation as a result of diffusion can not be ascertained in such cases; which is why separate inventions at two different places have to be considered.

The limitations of comparison can be seen in the music itself. Acculturation and innovation processes have superposed the ancient Austronesian legacy or wiped it out altogether. Cultural comparative research of vocal styles and Malagasy dance is still outstanding. Regarding contemporary Malagasy music as an addition of various external influences would, however, not adequately reflect the developments of the music in this country, particularly ever since its independence.

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<sup>6</sup> Sachs postulates for all instruments in Madagascar for which parallels could be found in Indonesia and Africa a common African origin (Sachs 1938: 72-73). This indicates his cultural historical approach, which tends to favor the geographically most proximal place in such a context.

# 馬拉加西音樂所標示的 南島語族背景

奧古斯特·施密德霍弗  
August Schmidhofer

## Some Remarks on the Austronesian Background of Malagasy Music

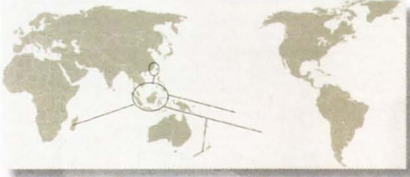


Figure 1. Expansion of Austronesian peoples

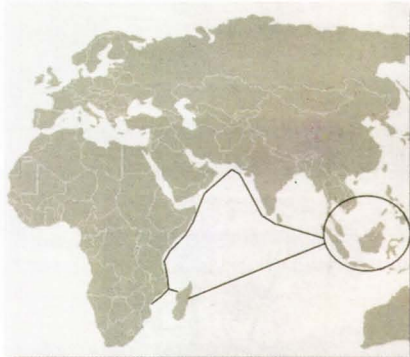


Figure 2. Possible migration routes from Indonesia to Madagascar: a) along the coastline, b) over open sea



Figure 3. Conch shell (from Sachs 1938: P1.VI)



Figure 4. Music in a *bilo* possession ceremony. Near Ankazoabo, Southern Madagascar, 1989, with conch shell. Foto: August Schmidhofer



Figure 5. *Hazolahy* (from Sachs 1938, P1.X)

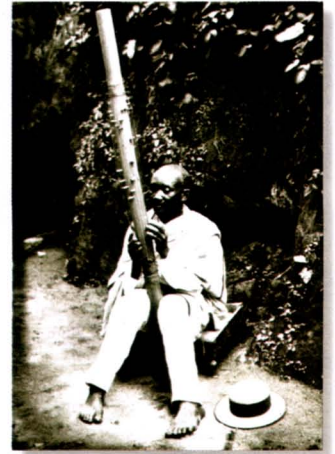


Figure 6. *Valiha*-player (1901)

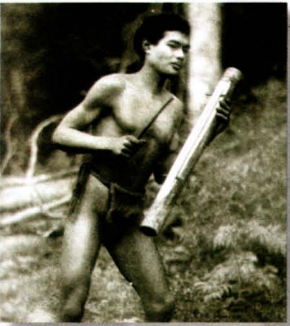


Figure 7. Tube zither from Thailand (from Collaer 1979:65)



Figure 8. Tube zither from West-Timor (from Collaer 1979:127)



Figure 9. Idiochord and hybrid (idiochord/heterochord) *valiha*



Figure 11. Hanging bamboo tubes (from Schaeffner 1980: P1.IV)



Figure 12. E. Africa Bar-zither, Makonde tribe, (left)  
E. Madagascar Bar-zither, Antaimoro tribe (right)



Figure 13. Leg xylophone *atragnatra*. Foto: August Schmidhofer