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## Off The Beaten Path: Obstacles to Success in a Community-Based Conservation and Ecotourism Project in Ankarana, Madagascar

Ashley Marie Patterson

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Off The Beaten Path: Obstacles to Success in a Community-Based Conservation and  
Ecotourism Project in Ankarana, Madagascar  
(Spine title: Obstacles to Success in a CBET Project in Madagascar)

(Thesis Format: Monograph)

By

Ashley Marie Patterson

*Graduate Program in Anthropology*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
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entitled:

**Off the beaten path: obstacles to success in a locally managed  
community-based conservation and ecotourism project in Northern  
Madagascar**

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## Abstract

This thesis examines a Community-Based Conservation and Ecotourism (CBET) project, known by the acronym KOFAMA (Kopa'beny Fikambanana Ankarabe Mitsinjo Arivo), operating in northern Madagascar. Developed in 2007 by local residents and a Peace Corps volunteer, KOFAMA was designed to foster community cohesion and participation, while creating awareness of environmental conservation in rural areas. In this thesis I address some of the obstacles that have faced those involved in the planning and execution of this project. Through ethnographic research and in-depth comparisons with other community-based projects operating in Madagascar and around the globe, I argue that although community dynamics play a role in the success of an enterprise, equally important is how such community projects fit into the local regional tourist economy.

**Keywords:** Community-based conservation (CBC), community-based ecotourism (CBET), Ankarana, Madagascar, participation, associations, tourism, social capital, neoliberalism

For My Parents  
and  
The Members of KOFAMA

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## List of Abbreviations

- CBC – Community-Based Conservation
- CBET – Community-Based Ecotourism
- CC – Community Conservation
- CI – Conservation International
- ICDP – Integrated Conservation and Development Projects
- MNP – Madagascar National Park
- NEAP – National Environmental Action Plan
- NGO – Non-Government Organization
- PCV – Peace Corps Volunteer
- USAID – United States Agency for International Aid
- WB – World Bank
- WWF – World Wide Fund for Nature

## Chapter I - Introduction

In a globally reported “coup d’etat” in March 2009, Madagascar’s President, Marc Ravalomanana, was forced to relinquish his position to Andry Rajoelina (mayor of the island’s capital city of Antananarivo). Controversial foreign investment deals in land and agriculture such as that made between Ravalomanana’s government and the South Korean company, Daewoo Logistics, were credited with sparking protests that became contributing factors to the coup. With this deal, the former Malagasy government agreed to lease (at no cost to Daewoo Logistics) over half of Madagascar’s arable land (approximately 1.3million hectares) for 99 years to this company which planned to grow palm oil and corn as a way to ensure South Korea’s food security (BBC 2009, Rakotomalala 2008). Although Daewoo Logistics stated that this was a positive move because it would provide jobs for the Malagasy people (such as through farming), others in the international community were more sceptical that such a deal would lead to direct economic benefits for the Malagasy people, and instead believed that it would most likely lead to very little “spill-over” and “broader industrialization” (Jung-a et al. 2008). Just one of the many factors that contributed to the growing hostility towards Ravalomanana’s government, Rajoelina’s supporters in the military stormed Ravalomanana’s offices in early 2009, forcing him to step down and hand over power (AFP 2009). What Madagascar’s newly appointed Prime Minister Monjo Roindefo said was not a coup d’etat but a “direct expression of democracy”, others in the international community were calling an “unconstitutional takeover” (AFP 2009). Word of Madagascar’s unstable political conditions spread quickly, finding its way into televised news broadcasts and newspapers all over the world. Over the ensuing months, tensions escalated between opposition leaders, the African Union (AU), and local protesters, and by April 2009

Madagascar had been flagged by many in the international community as an undemocratic and politically unstable country. Wary of supporting a corrupt and illegitimate regime, many foreign governments and other donors suspended economic aid to the country, thereby increasing its debt load and poverty levels, affecting the over twenty million people living on the island. To date, over one hundred people in Antananarivo have died because of this coup, and the country is still considered to be high risk by many in the international community, tourists included.

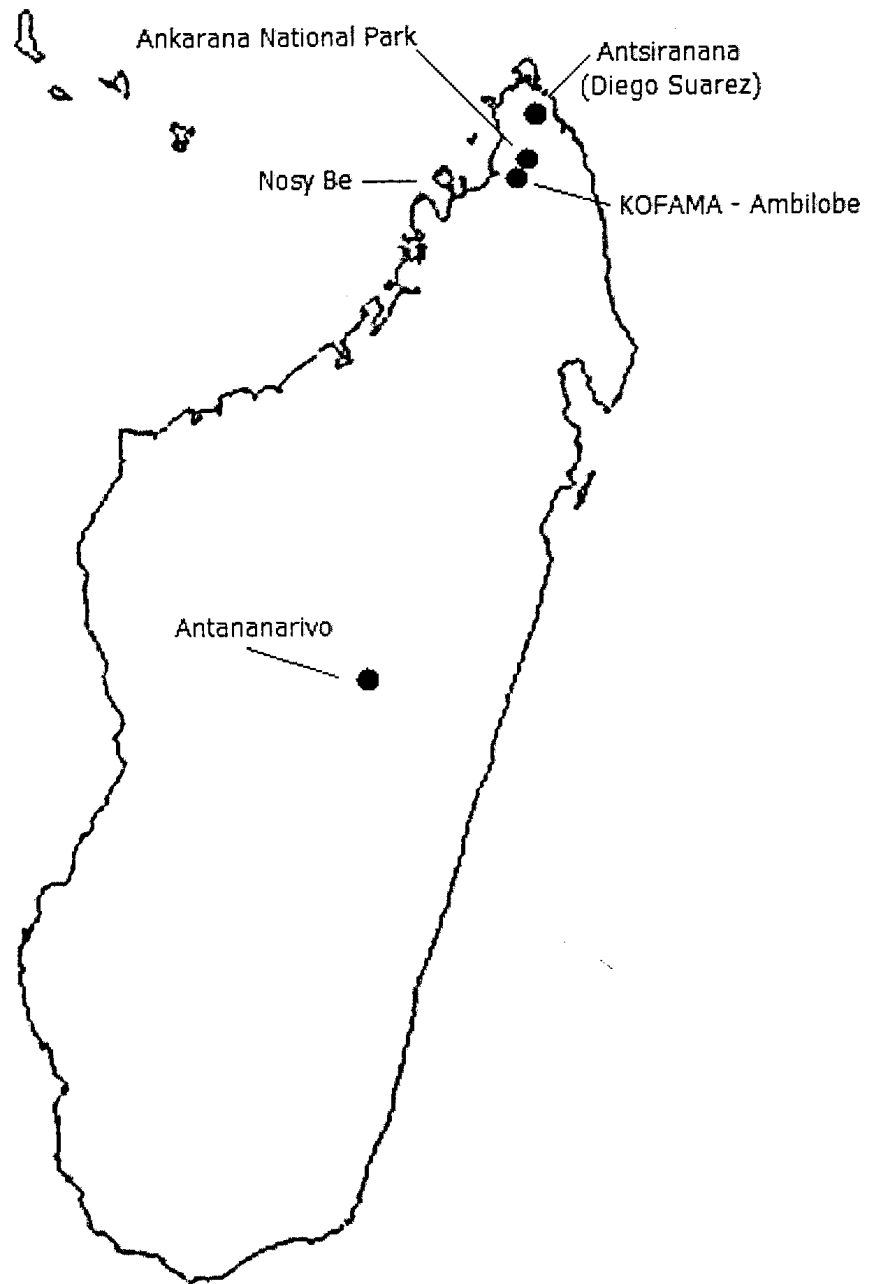
In the year following the coup, my *google news alerts* for “Madagascar” included a great number of articles expressing concern over issues such as the increase in the illegal trading of precious forest resources, the increase in hunting of wildlife (including endangered lemur populations), and even more concerning the decrease in international donor aid and tourism. As one newspaper article stated, the only significant aid the country is receiving at this time is that provided by the World Bank for conservation and national park programme development (Guardian 2011). The National Tourism Office estimates that in 2007, 344 348 non-residents arrived in Madagascar, and that 250 000 of these non-residents were tourists (Jensen 2010). By 2009, however, the number of tourists visiting the country had dropped to approximately 78 000 (Reuters 2011). That so much of the international press coverage concerning the coup’s aftermath focused on Madagascar’s threatened environments and species, not to mention the decline in tourism, and that what aid continues to go to the country is being channelled largely into conservation projects is not entirely surprising. Madagascar is internationally known as a biodiversity “hotspot” (Kaufmann 2008, Myers et al. 2000). Given that over 80% of the plant and animal species found on the island are endemic, a great number of NGOs (non-governmental organization) have invested large amounts of time and money in

efforts at protecting Madagascar's environment through conservation and development projects. Historically, investment in conserving the environment has focused largely on projects related to the country's network of national parks (Ghimire 1994).

In recent years, however, more attention has been paid to the role that community-based conservation (CBC) initiatives might take in protecting Madagascar's endangered ecosystems (Kaufmann 2006, 2008). Before former President Marc Ravalomanana was ousted, his government was pushing for "new" forms of conservation that could take root at the local level and that would contribute to rural development. In keeping with neoliberal development models, his government encouraged projects that fit nicely into international and NGO agendas of conservation and development, many of which push ecotourism as a means for accomplishing the goals of conservation and local development simultaneously (Duffy 2008). Supporters hope that promoting conservation at the local level through Community-Based Ecotourism (CBET) initiatives, would not only teach local inhabitants about the value of protecting the environment, but would also provide them with opportunities for income that do not involve environmentally destructive practices, such as shifting cultivation (Harper 2002, Marcus 2001). But as can be expected, CBET and CBC models carry with them their own sets of limitations (Ratsimbazafy and Kaufmann 2008).

This thesis focuses on one such CBET project, based in the Ankarana region of northern Madagascar. When I first visited this project and its creators in 2008, it was in its early stages of development (having just been conceptualized in early 2007), and with the booming tourist industry in the country there seemed very good reason to be optimistic. In 2008, KOFAMA had received approximately 42 visitors. When I returned in 2010, the situation had changed considerably. KOFAMA received no tourists in 2009,





Map 1, Map of Madagascar, 2011, <http://d-maps.com>

and at the time of this research, the Field Course had been the only visitors the association had hosted in 2010. My intention with this thesis is not to analyse the effects of the coup on this project directly, but instead to illustrate how the development or fate of a project like this one is tied to a broad range of influences that include both external and internal factors. That the project had changed so drastically between 2008 and 2010 indicates that although relations between members and non-members of the KOFAMA association are important factors in determining whether or not this CBET project would work, they are not the only ones.

### **Collaborations and Questions**

The rise of these “new” forms of CBC and CBET models is of particular interest to me for a couple of reasons. In 2008 I had the opportunity to participate in the Environmental Anthropology Field Course offered by instructors at the University of Western Ontario (UWO). This Field Course, headed by Dr. Ian Colquhoun and Dr. Andrew Walsh, was developed in conjunction with the faculty, including Professor Alex Totomarovario, at the University of Antsirananana (UA) as a way of offering UWO and UA students the chance to study issues related to conservation, development and ecotourism in northern Madagascar. While participating in this course, my Malagasy student partner and I conducted research on a local handicraft association in the Ankarana region of northern Madagascar that sold handicrafts through various ecotourism ventures in its vicinity. One of the ventures with which they worked was a CBET site called Tsingy Mahaloka, a project developed and managed by a local CBC association called KOFAMA (Kopaben’ny Fikambanana Arivo Mitsinjo Ankarabe) working in cooperation with a local Peace Corps volunteer (PCV). Through our research with this handicraft association, we learned generally about the importance of community associations for

people in the region, how this particular association was operating within the larger context of the tourist industry, and the difficulties that can, and often do, arise in establishing a successful, long-lasting association, especially one reliant on tourists.

When the field course finished, I stayed in Madagascar for an additional month volunteering at KOFAMA's ecotourism site. During this time, I worked with members of the association and the PCV working at Tsingy Mahaloka, helping to build various structures for the site, cooking food with some of the members, offering English lessons to residents living nearby, studying Malagasy with these same people, and generally, learning how KOFAMA's members and the PCV were trying to implement this CBET project in the region. I learned a little about the successes of this association and its ecotourist site as well as the obstacles it faced, and what members hoped this site would bring to the region in the future. Wanting to learn more, I applied to UWO's masters program in the hopes of continuing research on KOFAMA and its ecotourist site.

When I returned to the field in 2010 to conduct my MA research, I was joined by another MA student Emma Hunter, Dr. Walsh, Dr. Colquhoun, five UWO undergraduate students and five UA undergraduate students. Emma and I were also paired with MA students from UA. Although Emma's project and my project have resulted in independently written theses that focus on different issues related to the complexities of ecotourism, conservation and development in northern Madagascar, our work was intended to contribute to the larger collaborative project and will hopefully provide a useful stepping stone for future research conducted in the region. Additionally, we contributed to the development and writing of a provisional report and list of recommendations to be delivered to KOFAMA's members (see Appendix A).

In this thesis, I address a number of factors that have precipitated the successes and challenges faced by Tsingy Mahaloka and KOFAMA. Before proceeding to a discussion of the specific methods used to obtain the data on which this thesis is based, I should note that my research would not have been possible without my research partner Alette Soameva, an MA student in the Department of Anglo-American Studies at UA. From May 2010 – July 2010, Alette and I worked together conducting research in Ankarana. From September 2010 – January 2011, Alette came to Canada where she had the opportunity to conduct her own independent research project. Working with Alette, a person born and raised in Madagascar, was incredibly helpful because it meant that I could transcend cultural boundaries more easily than if I was on my own. It also meant that language barriers between me, a person with limited second language skills, and the people we were interviewing were easier to work around because Alette translated ideas and thoughts for all of us. During this collaboration, I learned many things about the research process that I would never have experienced had I been on my own. Although at times some of these experiences could be frustrating for both of us, they were also some of the most positive, enjoyable, and eye-opening experiences I had.

As a first time researcher responsible for generating results based on my own fieldwork, I was needless to say more than a bit nervous entering the field. Although I had prepared myself with readings, knew my questions, and had a solid research proposal put together, when it came time to enter the field, most of this no longer mattered. Although I had been told to not be surprised if my final research product looked nothing like my initial proposal, I was still concerned.

Cerwonka and Malkki's reflections on theoretical improvisation in ethnographic fieldwork, in their book *Improvising Theory*, played an important role in influencing my

approach. One of the most useful pieces of advice I took with me from their book was that it is important to be flexible and “open to change in one’s fieldwork, both methodologically and theoretically” (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007:79). This proved to be relevant to my situation on a number of fronts. Cerwonka and Malkki advise one never to expect that questions posed in original research proposals will be relevant or the same as those posed in the field, suggesting that “the living context of ethnographic research is *expected* to transform one’s original framing or animating questions” (2007:79, emphasis in original). I had no idea just how important this piece of advice would be until I arrived in the field and experienced firsthand the complexities involved in translation work and the loss of control felt when relying on someone else to help ask my research questions. Control is a word that does not work well in projects of collaboration. A better word is “time.” Through a good deal of trial and error, Alette and I eventually found a method for interviewing that worked best for us, although even this would be altered depending on the circumstances. The confidence we developed in doing this kind of research was not something that happened over night, but something that grew as we got to know one another better. I learned quickly that if a true collaboration is to develop from this kind of research, then I could not be anything but flexible in the way I approached it<sup>1</sup>.

My 2008 experiences with the Anthropology Field Course, KOFAMA, and Tsingy Mahaloka made it easier to re-connect with various individuals when I returned in 2010. These previous connections became an important guiding light not only in how

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<sup>1</sup> My experience in 2008 with collaborative projects fuelled my desire to continue participation in them. Alette played an integral role in this research and language translation and one which I am incredibly grateful. As such, Alette and I have done our best to make sure the voices of the people we interviewed are represented accurately throughout the pages of this thesis. Although place names have not been changed in this thesis, I have used pseudonyms for people who participated in interviews presented in this writing, with the exception of the Peace Corps Volunteers.

they helped give direction to my research, but also in how they enabled me to establish additional connections with others who had interesting and important things to discuss. In the pages that follow I introduce methods used during research including semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, surveys, and participant-observation.

### **Methodology**

Through the duration of this research, Alette and I conducted approximately 40 semi-structured interviews. Although my research focused on a particular CBC association in Ankarana, the diversity of participants in my research was great. Interview participants included local residents living in the Antsaravibe rural commune in the Ankarana region, local guides, private business owners, PCVs, and (eco)tourists. For the sake of comparison, and in order to comprehend better why KOFAMA is struggling as an association, Alette and I expanded our interviews to also include individuals who participate in other kinds of associations in the region. To better understand Tsingy Mahaloka's potential as an ecotourist site, it was necessary to interview tourists traveling through the region as well as local guides that may be accompanying them. We hoped that gaining an understanding of a wide range of preferences and desires could lend insight into why tourists have not been coming to KOFAMA. Informal interviews with PCVs<sup>2</sup> and private businesses involved in the promotion of sustainable development in the region have also been extremely valuable for understanding the development of KOFAMA.

In addition to these interviews we also helped to create a survey that was conducted (through interviews) with over 71 respondents living in the Antsaravibe rural

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<sup>2</sup> A dialogue that continues to expand between various players involved in the Field Course and KOFAMA.

commune (where KOFAMA is based), and a written survey completed by 38 tourists throughout the region. Surveys have been a useful research method because they have allowed us to gather a great deal of quantitative and qualitative information in a short period of time. The surveys conducted with local residents were carried out randomly. By doing this we opened up our target population to include not only people who participate with or alongside KOFAMA, but also people who do not participate with KOFAMA but are asked to conserve the environment around its ecotourist site.

Although the surveys we conducted enabled us to gather a great deal of information in a short period of time, this method is not without its problems. In his book, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, Bernard (2006) discusses problems that can arise during questionnaires and survey research. Because a number of factors including age, sex, and occupation of participants can play a role in the way questions are answered, understood, and whether or not people will participate in answering them, how we devised our questions was important (Dolnicar et al. 2009). Equally important, though, was how we asked these questions. Bernard states that, “[the] problem of reactivity increases when more than one interviewer is involved in a project” (2006: 257), or in other words, the manner in which a question is asked can influence a person’s response. The distribution of these surveys involved a number of different people, including both UWO and UA undergraduate students involved in the field course. In heed of Bernard’s advice we had to be meticulous in making sure the ways in which survey questions were asked were standardized. Thus, before we conducted surveys, we went through all questions together, sorting out any misunderstandings and problems we had or could foresee. It was also useful while conducting the surveys to record any incidence that happened during or after an interview and to discuss this among the group.

Finally, in addition to these interviews and surveys, Alette and I were also participant-observers, an important role that helped to develop rapport with various individuals we were working with, through our several weeks of research together in the Ankarana region (Johnson et al. 2006). We began our research living with a family in the village of Anasatrana, approximately 3km from the Tsingy Mahaloka campsite, where we conducted most of our research on local participation in associations. Our home-stay family was involved in a few different associations and as such provided us with opportunities to attend various association meetings and to participate alongside them in their activities, such as harvesting rice, cooking, and attending traditional Ankarana "antsa" and "vako-drazana" or "the distinctive song, dance, and rhythmic clapping used in celebrations and ancestral rites and rituals in the region" (Turner 2007a: 3). We also lived at KOFAMA for weekly periods helping members with activities around the site, and interviewing people living in the area. We also participated with the field course hiking through the Ankarana National Park, where we could observe and participate alongside other tourists visiting the area.

### **My Thesis in a Broader Sense**

The research discussed in this thesis joins other recent anthropological considerations of how globalizing processes influence conservation and development practices in "developing" countries (Brockington et al. 2008, Zimmerer 2006, Zimmerer et al. 2004). Of particular interest to me is work that addresses how multiple actors with multiple interests (Koronen 2008) influence the development, execution and management of CBC and development projects, as well as work in the field of Political Ecology that critiques powerful, but overly simplistic, visions of the relationship between people and their environments (Brosius 2006a, Brosius et al 2005, Gezon 2005, Li 2005,



Ratzimbazafy et al. 2008, Tsing 2000, Watts 2004, West 2004, 2006). In the case described here, I suggest that in our efforts at understanding local contributions to global conservation efforts, it is important not simply to recognize the many complex factors that influence people's relationships with the environments around them. We must also recognize the many complex factors that can influence the development of community-based efforts at conserving such environments, especially efforts devoted to CBET projects like the one discussed here (Brockington et al 2008). Simple explanations for why such projects might succeed or fail are never sufficient. The nature of interactions among local people and between local people and outsiders certainly plays an important role in determining how such a project will fare, for example, but as hinted in my opening paragraphs, so can national and international political events and economic trends.

I also join others in critiquing overly-simple definitions and understandings of "community" and "participation" that sometimes appear in discussions of community-based conservation (Campbell and Vainio-Mattila 2003, Little 1994). The term "community-based conservation" suggests that communities are harmonious and homogenous groups of people sharing the same values, beliefs, and ideals (Brosius et al. 1998, 2005). As I will discuss further in Chapter 3, recent literature challenges the uncritical use of these general terms, and critiques how they often overlook the diversity and dynamics that can influence the success of these kinds of projects. With this understanding, my research also suggests that the diversity found in the "communities" meant to be served by projects like this one can also be apparent in the voluntary associations behind these projects.

The case of KOFAMA is complicated because it is a voluntary association that aims to promote two things. On the one hand KOFAMA was created with the intention

of promoting the importance of conserving the local environment to residents throughout the region. On the other hand, KOFAMA is also an association in and of itself, and as such is intended to promote the interests of its members, people who have willingly come together in pursuit of a common goal. The situation becomes complicated in that KOFAMA's members' interests in environmental protection have implications for non-members. KOFAMA members are asking people in the surrounding *fokontany*, or villages, to participate in achieving the association's conservation and development goals (Turner 2007b). For example, local residents, who do not participate with KOFAMA, are being asked by this association to no longer cut down trees or hunt wildlife in the conservation area near which Tsingy Mahaloka was built.

Here, the distinction between "community" and "association" is important to acknowledge. While KOFAMA's members might be seen as the creators of a "community"-based conservation and ecotourism project, KOFAMA is in fact, an "association" that consists of only a small group of local people (around 40, though this number fluctuates as will be discussed in Chapter 3 and 4). Although KOFAMA has not experienced any concrete adversity from residents towards its ecotourist site, this could be because Tsingy Mahaloka has not yet received a consistent tourist clientele. Whether or not local reactions will change with an increase in the number of visitors to this site remains to be seen. In addition to potential resident opposition, KOFAMA has also been struggling to maintain member participation. Although members have come together for a common goal, ideas about how this goal is to be achieved vary among members, and disagreements within the membership have resulted in some members leaving the association.

KOFAMA is not only dealing with internal problems, however. It is also struggling to establish the Tsingy Mahaloka site in a broader (regional, national, and international) ecotourism industry that tends to place the needs of tourists before the needs of local people. In recent years, many in the international conservation community and the international tourist industry have shifted their attention towards neoliberal models of tourism that incorporate greater environmental education, economic and ecological sustainability, and an increase in local participation (Duffy 2006a, 2008, Conklin and Graham 1995, Stronza 2001, West et al. 2006, West and Carrier 2004). For such advocates of what can broadly be termed “ecotourism”, Madagascar has been an especially attractive target. In addition to being one of the world’s “biodiversity hotspots” (Myers et al. 2000, WWF 2011), Madagascar has a long history of community development programs and conservation programs that involve NGOs working in collaboration with governmental agencies. Such collaborations have enabled the growth of Madagascar’s National Parks system and have helped the country promote alternative forms of tourism, such as ecotourism, adventure tourism, and cultural heritage tourism that not only support trends in the tourist industry, but positions Madagascar on the map as a desirable place for any type of traveller to visit (Duffy 2006a, see also Honey 1999, 2009, for discussion on tourism). And more recently, CBET has been seen as a positive and viable means for increasing and encouraging both development and conservation at the local level (WWF 2001).

So how is an association like KOFAMA’s competing in this industry? KOFAMA’s hope to use the Tsingy Mahaloka project as a way to conserve their environment and develop their village fits well with neoliberal ideologies that see environmental protection, sustainable natural resource management and local

development as goals that can be accomplished through ecotourism ventures (West and Carrier 2004). The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as, “the responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and improves the well being of local people”<sup>3</sup> (TIES website). Implicit in this definition is the idea that ecotourism is different from other sorts of “mass tourism” that can have negative effects on local people and environments. Along with other scholars (Munt 2004a, Weaver 2001), I am unsure as to whether such a distinction between these different sorts of tourism can be drawn. My research around Tsingy Mahaloka and other, more developed, ecotourist destinations in northern Madagascar has led me to appreciate that trying to meet the needs and desires of ecotourists is no less complicated than trying to meet the needs and desires of any other tourists.

The remainder of this thesis consists of three chapters and a conclusion. I begin in Chapter 2 with a discussion of anthropological research that analyses the rise of “new” forms of conservation projects, such as CBCs. These projects were designed to correct some of the shortcomings of other conservation projects that tend to work from the top-down, leaving local people out of their planning and execution. In my discussion of such projects, I focus on factors that drive this new form of conservation, such as the desire to place conservation in the hands of local people, and the rise of conservation in neoliberal economic thinking. With this understanding, I continue by examining why such models have been implemented in Madagascar, as well as how ecotourism has found its niche within alternative models of conservation and development in the country. I close this

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<sup>3</sup> It does this by forging international relationships between individuals, institutions, and the tourism industry, by educating tourists, and by promoting principles of ecotourism into global and local operations and policies, promoting it as a positive alternative to the sort of mass tourism that has traditionally put the needs of foreigners before the needs of local people and their environments (TIES website).

chapter with a discussion of past research concerning local involvement in, and opposition to, conservation efforts and ecotourism in the region in which I worked.

Having established the necessary foundation for understanding how CBC models and ecotourism have become seen as a means for achieving community development in Madagascar, I continue, in Chapter 3, by examining how and why people have become involved in KOFAMA and the Tsingy Mahaloka project. In documents intended to secure support for this project, KOFAMA has been presented as an association that promotes “community” development. And yet, as noted above, it is also an “association.” In this chapter, the complexities of these broad terms will be further discussed. I consider both how the “community” surrounding the Tsingy Mahaloka site is more heterogeneous than this term might imply as well as how “associations” like KOFAMA are not always as harmonious as some might think. The importance of voluntary associations in Madagascar is clearly evident in the number of people who participate in them (something that will be discussed in greater detail in this chapter). But this interest does not necessarily mean that they will be successful. KOFAMA is one association that has been struggling to keep its membership. For a different perspective on why KOFAMA is struggling, I also consider how other associations operate in the region, what the struggles of these associations are, and how some associations overcome adversities.

Finally, Chapter 4 discusses how KOFAMA has been trying to manoeuvre its CBET project within the dominant structures of the tourist industry. Despite the push from international and national actors that have promoted such locally-managed ecotourism initiatives, these advocates have not necessarily provided local managers with the proper skill set necessary to establish them successfully. This lack of training has been especially problematic for KOFAMA, which depended from the start on the

considerable assistance of a Peace Corps volunteer. The paperwork required to establish KOFAMA and its site was extensive, and without the support of this PCV, who applied for funding and land transfers, it is unlikely that this documentation would have been completed successfully if only for the fact that it is incredibly time consuming<sup>4</sup>. By the time all Peace Corps Volunteers were evacuated from the country because of the 2009 political crisis, KOFAMA's managers had limited experience receiving tourists. And when tourist numbers fell for the entire country, KOFAMA received no tourists at all. As a result, the site was left at a standstill, something from which KOFAMA has not yet fully recovered.

It would be wrong, however, to blame KOFAMA's struggles to attract visitors only on the coup, the evacuation of the project's PCV supporters, the lack of local manager's skills, or internal member disputes. To travel to Tsingy Mahaloka is difficult. Located off of the national highway, one of Madagascar's few paved roads, there is no direct transportation available for tourists to get to the site. Instead tourists must navigate their own way there, generally requiring a full day of travel. Despite the natural and geographical attractions the site has to offer, to a tourist who has only a minimal time in the country, this may not seem like a wise investment of time.

I argue in this thesis that although CBC is supposed to include a greater degree of local participation through projects such as CBET ventures, whether or not this new form of conservation can achieve its goals of protecting the environment while promoting local development is contingent on numerous factors. Since 2008 KOFAMA has consistently attempted to establish Tsingy Mahaloka despite the setbacks of the political crisis, a

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<sup>4</sup> In fact, the first PCV who was initially involved with this project said it took two years before all of the documentation was completed successfully and KOFAMA and Tsingy Mahaloka were legally recognized as a CBC association and CBET site.

decrease in tourist traffic, and disputes among its own members. That it has not lived up to its promise is the result of numerous complex factors.

## Chapter II: Reviewing the Literature

In this chapter I aim to provide the reader with an overview of the rise of community-based conservation (CBC) projects around the globe. This broad overview will be useful in explaining why the former Malagasy government had begun to encourage such projects in their own country.

CBC initiatives have come out of neoliberal economic thinking that suggests that sustainable economic development and environmental conservation can be more effectively achieved together when placed in the hands of local people and out of the hands of the state. For example, West and Carrier (2004) define neoliberalism as the, “privatization, deregulation, and liberalization, all encapsulated within political beliefs about democracy, entrepreneurship, and individual freedom...[neoliberalism] stresses “the community”, local voluntary associations and organizations at the expense of the state agencies [which are] seen as lethargic, inefficient, and unresponsive...it fosters market-based models of political-economic and even social life” (2004: 484).

Top-down conservation approaches created by states, NGOs, and international donors have frequently been criticized for failing to include local people in the design, planning and execution of conservation programs (Alcorn, 1993, 1995, Brosius et al 1998, Brockington 2002, Chapin 2004, Hackel 1999, Kull 2008, Peters 1998, West 2006, West and Carrier 2004). Initial conservation projects were designed by state actors, in collaboration with external agencies, to conserve plant and animal species. This model, better known to its critics as “fortress conservation,” (Brockington 2002) was based around the idea that endangered environments are best managed under the guidance and regulation of the state, and that local people are potential threats to their environment and



not part of its living space (Brockington 2002, Kaufmann 2001). Recently, critics have called for newer conservation methods that privilege local perspectives on local environments and value local concerns regarding how such environments might be used by people in sustainable ways (Fabricius et al. 2007, Hulme and Murphree 1999, Kaufmann 2006, Kull 2002). The project on which my thesis focuses might be broadly understood as having come out of reactions to traditional top-down approaches.

Such methods commonly center on the creation of protected areas (West et al 2006). Since the 1980s, protected areas have undergone extensive overhauls in how they are designed, implemented, and managed (Kaufmann et al. 2008, Zimmerer et al. 2004). In the initial push for the increase in conservation areas, many were controlled and implemented by bi-and multi lateral organizations, such as the World Bank (WB), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and Conservation International (CI), to name a few, and came along with integrated conservation and development programs (ICDPs) (Peters 1998). Although ICDPs were designed to preserve biological diversity in protected areas through conservation while raising the standard of living for local residents, they were criticized by many in the international community as failing to include local people sufficiently (Dressler et al. 2010, Marcus and Kull 1999, Sodikoff 2008, 2009). In some cases, ICDPs appeared to increase the gap between local people and the endangered environments alongside which they live and in others they precipitated the decrease in nutrition levels among people living near park projects (Harper 2002; Peters 1998). As a way to correct some of the short coming of ICDPs, Community-Based Conservation (CBC) initiatives were developed (Alcorn, 2005; Fabricius 2004; Gezon 2006; Kull 2002; Marcus 2001). CBC projects are meant to be grassroots endeavours that focus on

bridging the gap between community development and conservation initiatives, meaning that they should be designed in a way that promotes and encourages the responsibility of local people while raising awareness of the value of conservation (Fritz-Vietta et al. 2009: 87). As such, CBCs have been considered by many to be different than ICDPs because they begin at the local level where people's interactions with landscapes are not seen as potentially destructive but as necessary for the successful conservation of an area (Berkes 2004; Brosius et al 1998, 2005). This idea, however, is contingent on the fact that CBC models include a community participatory element in their development and execution (Campbell 2002, Campbell and Vainio-Mattila 2003, Little 1994).

The shift to conservation models that promote the incorporation of local participation in the design, execution, and management of conservation projects requires that the relationship between "on-the-ground people" and external actors be monitored in different ways (Cundhill and Fabricius 2009, Fabricius 2002). Simply including the term "community" in conservation initiatives is not enough to ensure success (Brosius 2006a). As Duffy notes, if local people are not provided with agency in decision making processes related to the environments in and around which they live, this "new conservation" can be considered nothing more than a "tokenistic form of participation" (2008: 336).

There are approximately 105,000 protected areas in the world today covering between 20.3-21.5 million km<sup>2</sup> of land and water (West et al. 2006). What makes these numbers even more incredible is that they are products of a relatively recent history of large scale, global, environmental protection efforts – coverage of protected areas has increased 10 times during the last three decades (Zimmerer et al. 2004), with the establishment rate of protected areas having peaked from 1985-1995 (West et al. 2006).

In many cases, protected conservation areas have changed people's social, economic, and political relationships with their environments while at the same time creating new relationships with the national agencies and international organizations that are promoting conservation and protecting conservation areas around them (Brockington et al. 2008, West et al. 2006). They have also commonly created new contexts of interaction, where different actors (local people, conservationists, ecotourists, etc.) are coming together with very different perspectives on the value of local environments and ecosystems in mind. As West, Igoe, and Brockington note, "...protected areas matter because they are a way of seeing, understanding, and (re)producing the world. As such, they are rich sites of social production and interaction" (2006: 252).

As noted above, in the last two decades there has been a shift towards a conservation that incorporates direct local involvement (Hulme and Murphree 1999). Words such as "community" and "participation" have become commonplace in proposals, policies, and practices that once ignored the needs of local populations living around protected areas (although some critics of CBC are concerned about their validity see Brockington 2003). CBC and CC (community conservation) are now standard rhetoric in proposals by NGOs, international aid programs, and states. In fact, a conservation proposal that does not feature the term "community" prominently is sure to receive little chance of funding (Duffy 2002, Hackel 1999). As Hulme and Murphree state, "By using the term "community" politicians, planners, and activists can attempt (consciously or unconsciously)...to move conservation policy and practice into the realms of motherhood and apple pie: what reasonable person could object to community conservation?" (1999: 283).

Factors that drive CBC can range greatly depending on who is looking to implement community-based projects. It is certainly driven by more than just a politically correct need to try to bridge the divide between nature and people. Hulme and Murphree (1999) see two main factors as having guided new conservation models. First, in an effort to dispel the idea that international and national institutions are more interested in the protection of biodiversity than the well-being of local people, many began to promote CBC and CC as a way of providing local people with greater agency and a greater role in the development of conservation projects that were sure to affect them. Second, CBC and CC are clearly inspired around neoliberal economic thinking and market trends. If conservation and development goals can be worked around market processes, the thinking goes, then, the economic value that might be generated from achieving these goals can improve chances for successful conservation and development (Hulme and Murphree 1999: 278-280). Accordingly, a common feature of CBC projects is that local people might start “benefiting” economically from the endangered environments around them by participating in activities such as fair-trade and environmentally responsible commodity production, sustainable harvesting of rainforest resources (Brosius 2006b, Dove 1994), or, as in the cases discussed in this chapter, tapping into the booming international ecotourist industry (Duffy 2002, Honey and Stewart 2002).

Ecotourism is a term coined in the 1970s that refers to a branch of tourism that encourages a more environmentally friendly and ‘culturally’ aware form of travel, and has largely been promoted to people living in North America and Europe by governments, NGOs, and international organizations as an “alternative” to traditional travel. This industry has become a major source of economic revenue for many countries,

and has helped provide ways for local people to support and develop their communities (Duffy 2002, Stronza 2001, Vivanco 2006). It is also an industry that fits well with a neoliberal perspective that promotes the idea that as West and Carrier observe, “a country’s natural environment is part of its ‘capital’ to be exploited in a rational capitalist way” (West and Carrier 2004: 485).

Planning a CBC project and implementing one are two very different things, and as some critics of CBC have stated, the failure of these models to meet expectations has seen a shift back to approaches that resemble those associated with the “fortress conservation” of the past (Brockington 2002, Chapin 2004, Kaufmann 2001). And despite CBC initiatives attempting to incorporate locally managed projects, they are criticized for still operating under dominant structures of conservation and development models, often run by large scale conservation organizations and governments, which continue to separate local participation from conservation projects (Chapin 2004).

CBC initiatives involving locally managed ecotourism ventures are no less complicated than any others. As a way to better understand some of the diversity, issues and critiques of such initiatives, the following two sections will explore case studies that have much in common with the one I will be discussing in Chapters 3 and 4. In the first of these two sections I focus on projects operating in different parts of the world, paying close attention to some of the factors that seem to make such projects work or not work. Following this, I narrow in on the emergence of CBC and CBET (community-based ecotourism) projects in Madagascar specifically, focusing in particular on the political context out of which support of such projects developed. Finally, having offered a general overview of the emergence of CBC and CBET in Madagascar, I narrow the focus

further by discussing some of the relevant socio-economic and political issues related to conservation that are present in the region in which I conducted research.

### **Community-Based Conservation: Three Case Studies**

It is not uncommon for CBC and other, larger, conservation projects to include rhetoric around the value of ecotourism in their mandates. Although there are many reasons for this, one of the most interesting is that ecotourism is viewed by many in international, national, and even local communities as “big business” (West and Carrier 2004: 483). And *where* this big business is occurring is just as interesting. Places once considered “off the beaten path” (May 1996), although still very much marketed as “exotic” and “mysterious,” are now, thanks to ecotourism, places of interest where a multitude of actors such as tourists, corporations, NGOs and local communities are coming together.

The globalization of the international economy and advances in transportation and technology have made ecotourism a suitable and profitable industry in many countries (McLaren 2003, Stronza 2001). But ecotourism’s growth has not affected all parts of the world in necessarily similar or equal ways. Although it is an industry with outposts all over the globe, it appears to have found an especially important niche in tropical developing countries (Tobias and Mendelsohn 1991). One of the reasons for this is because the environments found in these countries offer what many tourists desire – warmth, forests and great biodiversity, among other attractions. Another reason is that the governments of these countries are eager for opportunities to promote new industries that might bring foreign investment and provide benefits to local populations in a way that will not destroy already threatened environments (Rome and Romero 1998).

To illustrate some of the variability in how CBC projects involving ecotourism in tropical developing countries can take shape, in the following pages I discuss three case studies. The first case study examines Amanda Stronza's (2005) work on a collaborative, joint-venture ecotourism project involving a local community and a private company in the Peruvian Amazon. The second and third case studies explore Paige West and James Carrier's (2004) examinations of problematic attempts at "bottom-up" conservation initiatives in Jamaica and Papua New Guinea. Although these are by no means the only case studies to have been produced concerning projects like these, I have chosen them because they provide a good sense of the wide range of factors that can affect ventures like the one that is my focus in this thesis.

### **Posada Amazona**

Conceptualized in 1996, "Posada Amazona" is a joint business venture involving local people living in the village of Infierno in the Peruvian Amazon and a private Peruvian-based ecotourism company called Rainforest Expeditions. As described by Stronza, an anthropologist who began working on and with this project in that same year, it was founded with a twenty year binding contract that ensured that members of the community of Infierno and the owners of Rainforest Expeditions could both share rights and responsibilities over the direction and ownership of the project and decision making processes (Stronza 2005: 173). Located in south-eastern Peru, along the Tambopata River, Infierno's location was ideal for designing a conservation and ecotourism project in that it contained one of the lowest human population densities in the Amazon basin and is considered to be a "mega diversity hotspot" consisting of three major protected areas as well as a diversity of wildlife (Stronza 1995, 2001: 174).

The terms and agreements of the twenty year contract between the people of Infierno and Rainforest Expeditions were strict and mutually determined. They included provisions for direct participation from community members as owners, planners, and administrators of the site, as well as the condition that after twenty years all rights to the operation would belong to the community, though they would retain the option of continuing with the collaboration. Members of the community were prohibited from starting independent ecotourist ventures on this land, however, and from joining forces with other companies for the duration of the contract.

These terms and agreements were designed first and foremost to benefit people in the community of Infierno. As Stronza states, "it wasn't just a noble social experiment; it was a new kind of business model, built on the very real need to have active participation of the people of the community" (2005: 183). This collaboration was one of the main driving factors behind the success of the business venture. Where the company provided financial support and market experience, combined with the knowledge of the preferences of tourists, the community supplied labour, knowledge of the local environment, and access to community owned land (Stronza 2005: 177).

Stronza is careful not to idealize this seemingly unflawed example as the final answer for achieving success between private companies and local communities, and for good reasons. For a start, this site is co-owned and co-managed by over 80 different families from three different ethnic groups, all of whom claimed to be unanimous in their decision to be a part of the project. The company involved has also provided complete ruling power to the community, after the contract expires, to decide if they want to continue their collaboration or run the site independently. Although the outcome of this



project remains to be seen, the terms of the agreement allow both parties to profit equally (Stronza 2005).

This is not to say that problems have not arisen along the way. There were also obstacles that proved to be more difficult to overcome than initially anticipated. During her first year of research at Posada Amazonas, Stronza found that although the community seemed to be unanimous in its decision to jointly host an ecotourist project, the understanding of what their participation meant was less clear. As seems to be common in conservation and development projects where the planning and execution of a project are generally under the control of outsiders (Harper 2008, Stronza 2005: 183), Stronza's role as an anthropologist became important to both Rainforest Expeditions and the local people. Indeed, she became a key mediator between these two groups of people. As an objective observer, she was able to mediate between these two different groups about various community concerns and confusions about the project's goals, as well as the company's expectations. She notes that while "the intention of acting as equal partners was there...neither side was prepared...to deal with the other on such progressive new terms" (2005: 183). Her biggest concern was that the community be able to continue to develop autonomy and social sustainability throughout and beyond the contract of the project (Stronza 2005).

Stronza's presence did appear to have impacted the project in a positive way. By encouraging the community and Rainforest Expeditions to question how they each view issues of "culture" and "ethnicity" and how they wanted to portray these aspects of local life to tourists, she helped to mediate between two very different understandings of what some people in the community thought was appropriate (or not) and what the company wanted to present. Where Rainforest Expeditions saw the community as a homogenous

group of people, Stronza could explain to them how ethnicity, age, and gender impacted the dynamics of the project and ultimately, its chance for success (Stronza 2005). One wonders whether this project would have been so successful without her mediation. One thing that is certain is that her presence increased the chance for this project to work effectively. Although she does not claim that anthropology is the absolute answer to solving co-managed projects, she does believe that there are benefits to having a mediator involved. Stronza presents an encouraging case for how two different groups of people developed a successful ecotourism site that promoted community conservation and development as well as a mutually beneficial working relationship (see also Stronza 2001). Examples such as Stronza's are not necessarily representative of the majority of CBC projects operating around the world, however. As West and Carrier (2004) demonstrate in the next two case studies, although the intentions behind CBC projects that incorporate ecotourism ventures may be good, the projects themselves do not always take shape in the way that the local people they involve hope.

### **Negril and Montego Bay Parks, Jamaica**

In the 1990s, two parks in Jamaica, Negril Park and Montego Bay Park, underwent a shift in governance. Looking to move responsibility for the environment from the hands of the government to the hands of NGOs and local communities, the Natural Resource Conservation Department Authority Act changed Jamaica's NRCD (Natural Resource Conservation Department), a government department heavily supported by USAID, into the NRCA (Natural Resource Conservation Authority) (West and Carrier 2004). The NRCA was designed to increase the autonomy and power of local people who wanted to increase environmental protection and development in ways that met the needs of all individuals in their communities (West and Carrier 2004).

Although established by the Jamaican government, Negril and Montego Bay Parks were created under tremendous pressure by an NGO that was influenced by people from North America and Western Europe (West and Carrier 2004: 486). This NGO promoted ecotourism as a means for conserving the environment while at the same time providing development opportunities and power to people living in the area. Although the NRCA was determined to provide local communities with social and economic support, the development side meant that they needed to market these parks in a way that would attract large numbers of ecotourists to the area and thus they needed to manufacture attractions to fit these expectations (West and Carrier 2004: 486, 488).

Montego Bay Park was established along the coast. Despite the fact that this area was already heavily degraded, the NRCA believed that creating a site close to the water would appeal most to tourists visiting the area. From the start, managers of this park showed a skewed interest supporting ventures that promoted financial gain over the needs of communities and unprotected forested areas that could benefit more from environmental protection. In a striking example, West and Carrier (2004) discuss a case in which local people's livelihoods were dismissed by park administrators when a tourist complained about people fishing in park waters that they thought should be free of people (even though local people had permission to fish in this park). By accommodating this tourist, park managers demonstrated where their support lies, and unfortunately it was not with the local people.

### **Crater Mountain, Papua New Guinea**

In their second example, West and Carrier (2004) analyse a conservation and ecotourism site built at Crater Mountain in highland Papua New Guinea (PNG). In 1994, the Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Act established an ecotourism site at Crater

Mountain. Managed by the RCF (Research and Conservation Foundation), Crater Mountain was developed to support wildlife management and the lives of the local people. The RCF believed that if they could tap into the ecotourist market, they could bring money and development to the area while conserving the environment at the same time (West and Carrier 2004). Bordering three provinces, Crater Mountain is an ethnically diverse area composed of many different clans. This diversity was initially seen as a good thing by managers of the park because they believed that it would provide visitors with the opportunity to experience the rich “cultures” of the area in addition to its environment and wildlife.

Previous development in the region, including the construction of an airstrip and an earlier attempt at an ecolodge, created feelings of inequality between different clan groups as some individuals felt that some clans were benefiting more than others. When the RCF proposed this new ecotourism plan to the local communities, clan elders were worried that it would create new feelings of hostility or bring up old disputes between clan groups, leading them to hold discussions over how to prevent the problems of the past (West and Carrier 2004). After months of negotiations between clan elders and the RCF, the location of the ecolodge was finally decided and everyone seemed pleased with the outcome. This was an important decision because, as West and Carrier (2004) point out, it reflects the concern that local participants have for resource sharing (see also Agrawal and Gibson 1999). Unfortunately though, the final decision was not up to them.

When the director of the RCF came to Crater Mountain to review the chosen placement of the lodge, it was decided that, despite the greater environmental attractions that would surround this lodge, the planned location was not ideal for tourists visiting the area because it was too far away from the airstrip and ecotourists would have to walk too

far to get to their accommodations. The director also overruled agreements set up between village clans to alternate turns in looking after ecotourists as a way of spreading benefits in the most effective and equal way. Instead they were instructed to hire permanent workers from different villages with the understanding that money earned would still go back to the community and be dispersed through the “trickle-down” effect (West and Carrier 2004: 490).

In the end, ecotourists did not come to the lodge, and resentment and disputes between communities and clans increased because of this. The RCF did not see themselves as contributors to the ecolodge’s lack of success, however. Instead, they blamed arguments between local people as a reason for its failure.

With references to both this case and the previous one, West and Carrier (2004) warn about the problems of the “generification” of nature, or the shaping of nature and culture to fit the images tourists think nature should be (2004: 491). West and Carrier (2004) are concerned with how neoliberal ideology plays into the practice of ecotourism, and more specifically, what aspects of a place are promoted to ecotourists by governments, international organizations, or NGOs. They feel that ecotourism constructs a kind of “virtualism,” or “seeing things” of a place that may or may not be true or accurate (see also Cater 2006, Vivanco 2006). Their analysis of how western models of society and nature are adopted by ecotourist ventures in different countries indicate that some ecotourist sites do in fact shape and reshape certain aspect of the social and natural world to suit the expectations of (eco)tourists (West and Carrier 2004: 485, see also Cater 2006). Designing a nature that fits the expectations of ecotourists more often than not seems to do the opposite of what it was supposed to do – i.e. support local communities and sustainable development.

What these latter two cases suggest is that as long as ecotourism projects remain “one more instrument for reinforcing Western values about nature and culture...” (West and Carrier 2004: 485), then ecotourism will not be successful in accomplishing central professed goals of providing benefits for local communities and development through environmental conservation. However, where West and Carrier (2004) remain sceptical about the value of ecotourism, Stronza (2005) sees ecotourism as a very real and potentially positive way for local communities to gain access to resources previously unavailable to them. Her example of the collaboration between Rainforest Expeditions and local community members demonstrates that these business models can be successful as long as people leave open the networks and opportunities for communication.

In a commentary on West and Carrier’s (2004), Stronza notes that although she agrees with West and Carrier that local populations can be, and are, negatively affected by ecotourism, she believes that where ecotourism initiatives and local participation are “truly intent on shifting power away from elites [they may also] be able to alter their capitalist structures and values” (Stronza in West and Carrier 2004: 493). West and Carrier (2004) present cases that clearly demonstrate the divide between local participation and development, but Stronza asks if these projects they described were actually meant to empower local people in the first place, seeing as local people were not actually given any decision making power during any one stage of development (West and Carrier 2004). Stronza’s main point in this discussion is that although ecotourism initiatives are not perfect, they can be an effective tool for development if implemented alongside local initiatives. I will return to these issues again in chapters 3 and 4 with my discussion of KOFAMA and Tsingy Mahaloka.

The next section of this chapter will take a closer look at the circumstances under which CBC projects involving ecotourism ventures have developed in Madagascar specifically. Madagascar has a long history of hosting conservation and development projects influenced by international, national and local actors. Although environmental and conservation concerns are not necessarily new to the country, certain ways of going about trying to protect and conserve Madagascar's endangered ecosystems, such as through community-based models and ecotourism, are quite recent.

### **Community-Based Conservation and Ecotourism in Madagascar**

In 2003, former President Marc Ravalomanana announced to the world that his government would work towards increasing the coverage of protected areas in Madagascar from 1.7 million hectares to 6 million hectares by 2008 (USAID). This ambitious goal was widely commended by the international community, raising not only the country's profile among NGOs and donor and aid programs, but also its reputation as an attractive destination for responsible ecotourists.

Although Ravalomanana's promise for large-scale conservation initiatives demonstrated to international donors a renewed commitment to conservation, his government was also clearly concerned with how to effectively achieve these goals in ways that would ensure that people living around protected areas would also receive benefits (Duffy 2008, Harper 2002, Kaufmann 2001). In this respect he was not the first. In the 1990s, under a different President's rule, Madagascar's government adopted Africa's first National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP). Developed with international and national donors, conservation organizations, and NGOs, the NEAP proposed a three phase 15 year environmental plan of action that gave ownership of the "environmental

agenda” (Razafindralambo and Gaylord 2003:76) to the country instead of donors (Peters 1998, Razafindralambo and Gaylord 2003, Walsh forthcoming).

As described by Falloux, Talbot and Larson, “NEAPs are intended to provide a framework for integrating environmental considerations into a nation’s economic and social development” (1991: 1, cited in Larson 1994: 671). Supported by the initiatives of large organizations like the World Bank and USAID, a NEAP is a means for countries to receive guaranteed, long-term funding to help implement environmental programs and increase development and economic revenue (Larson 1994, Peters 1998). Madagascar’s fifteen year NEAP was divided into three phases, each designed to achieve different objectives. The first phase (1990-96) was targeted at creating proper policies and institutional frameworks that ensured government control and ownership over the environmental agenda, as well as at addressing environmental concerns occurring on the peripheral zones of protected areas (Razafindralambo and Gaylord 2003: 76). Although the core zones of existing protected areas was considered to be relatively secure, people’s daily activities on the peripheries of these areas were seen to be contributing to significant biodiversity loss (Walsh forthcoming). One activity considered particularly harmful to the environment was the traditional agricultural practice *tavy* (or shifting cultivation) (Marcus 2001), but other activities such as small-scale gemstone and gold-mining, lumber and charcoal production, and hunting were also considered harmful.

During this first phase, the NEAP encouraged alternative income generating activities among rural people living near protected areas through ICDPs, and more recently tourism (Marcus 2001, Razafindralambo and Gaylord 2003: 76, 79, Walsh forthcoming). The hope was that if people living in environmentally sensitive areas could earn income equal to, or greater than, that from agriculture (and thus the periodic clearing



of new land), or other potentially destructive activities, then the threat of environmental degradation would be lessened. The second phase (1997-02) of the NEAP continued to support the government's control over the environmental agenda, but also began to consider incorporating larger more ambitious objectives that aimed to reverse environmental degradation by improving the management of conservation sites, planning and analysing various initiatives, introducing new technologies, and transferring management of some protected areas to local communities, to name a few (Razafindralambo and Gaylord 2003). Finally, the third phase of the NEAP (2003-08) was implemented with the objective of promoting "macroeconomic management" of environmental objectives by increasing community-centered and collaborative conservation approaches involving local people and the government, in coordination with other donor programs (Razafindralambo and Gaylord 2003: 77).

Although the NEAP has had some success in realizing its goals, insufficient planning, weak institutional collaboration, the ineffectiveness of conservation programs like ICDPs, as well as other obstacles, have made some of this plan's more ambitious goals, such as reversing environmental degradation, difficult to accomplish (Razafindralambo and Gaylord 2003, Marcus 2001). Recommendations for the continued achievement of NEAP initiatives include the continued monitoring of projects, continued collaboration between local populations and the international community, building infrastructure, and increasing the country's investment in the tourist industry, especially the ecotourism sector (Razafindralambo and Gaylord 2003).

Although it occurs everywhere in the world, ecotourism has found an especially successful foothold in tropical developing countries where people from North America and Europe generally come to vacation and enjoy local culture, environments and wildlife

that are different from their own (Honey 1999). Ecotourism is often described as being a “problem free pathway to sustainable development” (Duffy 2006a: 131), but as case studies in Madagascar suggest, ecotourism is anything but problem free or a completely “sustainable form of development for Africa” (Duffy 2006a: 131). Rather, the promotion of ecotourism as a catalyst for development is a politically motivated and conscious choice that does not always have the interests of people living around protected areas at its core (Duffy 2006a).

Rosaleen Duffy has provided detailed accounts of the rise and development of ecotourism in Madagascar. Critical of neoliberal modes of development and global governance she states that “tourist development is almost synonymous with neo-liberal definitions of economic growth, westernization, and modernization for governments since tourism means employment, balance of payment, regional development and foreign exchange” (Duffy 2006a: 132, see also 2006b). As such, efforts from government donors, NGOs, and international organizations that support conservation through ecotourism need to be monitored closely (Berkes 2007).

Duffy examines the link between former President Ravalomanana’s 2003 commitment, called the Durban Vision Initiative, to increase protected area coverage to the rise in ecotourism in Madagascar. The brainchild of NGOs, donors, and Malagasy government agencies, this initiative changed the definition of “protected areas” to mean more than just large scale conservation projects, such as national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and nature reserves, which have proven to be costly and time consuming to set up (Duffy 2008). With the introduction of the Durban Vision, protected areas now also included “multi-use” areas or land that is multi-functional and accessible, open to

large groups of people for public access and use that could also be transformed into conservation areas regulated by local people (Duffy 2008).

Along with promoting more community-oriented land management systems, the Durban Vision Initiative also promoted ecotourism as a means through which environmental conservation and local and state level development could be achieved simultaneously. As noted earlier, ecotourism is commonly understood as a way to tap into the economic value of nature, wildlife, and culture by transforming them into highly profitable and “marketable goods” (Duffy 2006b, 2008). However, encouraging private businesses and foreign investors to establish ecotourism businesses in the country has not necessarily enabled the achievement of small-scale environmental objectives, nor has it promoted local conservation and development in significant or complementary ways.

One option for ensuring that ecotourism involves and benefits local people is through the promotion of Community-Based Ecotourism (CBET), which Duffy characterizes as involving “participation by economically weak or otherwise disadvantaged people with the intention of extending any benefits derived to these economically marginal groups” (Duffy 2006: 137). This type of ecotourism is supposed to provide local people not only with decision-making roles, but also with possibilities for having control over the development of ecotourism in an area, meaning that they would determine how benefits received are managed and distributed among their communities (Duffy 2006: 137).

Duffy (2006) discusses two examples of positive community-based ecotourism projects in Madagascar, both of which involve partnerships involving communities, well established private companies, and international organizations that have helped support the initial stages of CBET development. The first example is that of a privately owned

and “community-oriented” ecotourism project/resort, called Anjavy, located in northwest Madagascar. Catering to “high end/luxury” ecotourists, this ecotourism site (owned by a company from South Africa) is viewed by many as a successful CBET project because it employs people from surrounding communities and because money earned from the resort has been used to build schools and clinics in the area (Duffy 2006a). Duffy’s second example is that of the Andasibe-Mantadia National Park in eastern Madagascar. Supported by Conservation International (CI) this park is viewed as a successful CBET because CI hires local people living in the area for guiding and ranger jobs. CI has also encouraged local women’s groups to make and sell handicrafts to ecotourists, providing them with supplies to do so. In this way, people who are not directly participating in the park’s management or operation can also benefit from ecotourism in the region. It should be noted, however, that although CI has been successful in providing jobs for local people living in the area, they have also placed major restrictions on forested areas and peripheral zones surrounding the site of the CBET project, preventing local people who do not participate in the project from having access to local land (Duffy 2006a).

Although these two projects are considered successful examples of CBET, they are different from what we see in Stronza’s (2005) example. Although Duffy does not go into further detail about contracts between the private company, CI, and local communities, it appears that local people have not necessarily been included in the planning and design of these projects, but instead as people who participate alongside them.

Duffy states that in order for collaborations between local communities, organizations, and tourists to be successful, there has to be an enthusiastic and dynamic

arrangement between all groups involved (2006a: 138). Even where such collaborations exist, though, if management and business strategies are weak to begin with, and the complexity of costs and benefits are not understood properly (Duffy 2006b), the probability of success of an enterprise is likely to be low. Duffy also makes the important point that establishing a CBET project means that there will most likely be some individuals who benefit from it more than others, and that this may lead to contestation and conflict (Gray 2003).

Another problem that critics have noted with regard to efforts made at incorporating the interests of Malagasy people into the planning and execution of conservation projects has to do with the selective visions of Malagasy “culture” with which those making these efforts tend to operate. In her critique of conservation efforts in Madagascar, for example, Keller (2009) states that although conservationists have made some attempts at understanding various aspects of Malagasy people’s lives and traditions, they have only encouraged and accounted for those aspects of Malagasy “culture” that favour conservation objectives (see Gardner et al. 2008 for further discussion). She argues that if culture is to be used as a tool for promoting conservation to (especially) people living in rural Madagascar, then “a deeper understanding of what ‘culture’ is” is necessary (Keller 2009: 83).

As with any and all cultures, Malagasy “culture” cannot be easily defined. It is dynamic, fluid, and constantly shifting. There are, however, certain Malagasy cultural traditions and practices that are distinguishable and unique and that have become notable topics of interest among conservation specialists, development entrepreneurs, researchers, and tourists working in and visiting the country. For example, certain traditional taboos or *fady* in particular parts of the country are described as being compatible with

conservation strategies and practices (including taboos regarding eating lemurs or cutting down certain trees in a particular area), and as such they have been used by conservationists as both evidence of, and tools for encouraging, an ethos of conservation that is tied to Malagasy tradition and culture (Keller 2009). While there is certainly some truth to this, Keller cautions against the over-simplified image of Malagasy people and the place of taboos in their lives to which such thinking can lead<sup>5</sup>.

Ultimately, Keller is critical of how far conservationists are willing to extend their understandings of the culture of people in a place, stating that initiatives that integrate the need for addressing and incorporating “local culture” into conservation models stop short of anything deeper than considering how local taboos appear to fit with conservation strategies (Keller 2009: 83). She argues that in order for long term conservation goals to be met, conservation organizations must also include what they see as those “less desirable” aspects of Malagasy culture (Keller 2009). For example, Keller states that one of the less desirable, but no less cultural, practices that some conservationists are trying to discourage is the desire, common among many Malagasy people, to have many descendants. In the communities around the Masoala National Park, in northern Madagascar, where Keller has worked, large families, and the kin ties they enable, are important because they act as a measurement for how successful and meaningful a person’s life is and they encourage positive relations among living relatives and between the living and their ancestors (Keller 2009: 84). She further describes how

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<sup>5</sup> Walsh (2002) also examines how the behaviours and discourses around the concept of taboo, when taken as more than just a set of restrictions, actually indicate a person’s position and relationships to their surroundings. He states that, “In the lives of many people in the Ankarana region of northern Madagascar, respecting a taboo might be viewed as more than just a respectful act...it might be understood as a responsible act: on indicating the deeply felt willingness of individuals to be grouped among some and in ‘contraposition’ to others” (Walsh 2002: 425-453).

by enforcing land restrictions both within and around the park's peripheral areas, park officials have not only severely limited local people's access to land, but have encroached on their ability to have large families because there is less land to provide for them. As a result, the park was, and continues to be, perceived by many local people as a threat to their traditional cultural practices and it has thus negatively influenced relationships not only with park officials but between local people and their ancestors (Keller 2009: 84).

In addition to highlighting how complex it can be to try to incorporate local cultural perspectives into conservation efforts, Keller's critique is eye-opening in suggesting the obvious point that if culture is complicated, flexible, adaptable, and in a state of constant flux, then culturally sensitive conservation and development objectives ought to reflect this fact. Standardized models for conservation and development projects can make them easier to plan, but such projects will remain difficult to implement so long as they require local people and contexts to fit into them, instead of developing in ways that fit best with local people and contexts. In the next section I will look specifically at the Ankarana region where my research was based.

### **Ankarana, Northern Madagascar**

Featuring rich forested and agricultural land and abundant natural resources, the Ankarana region has long experienced the interest and interventions of a wide range of people. In recent years, international interest has focused largely on environmental protection and conservation projects which see Ankarana's fragile ecosystems as threatened and thus of pressing concern. Indeed, the Ankarana region is perhaps best known internationally today for the national park that shares its name: the Ankarana National Park (Cardiff and Befourouack 2003).

The Ankarana National Park is best known for its limestone massifs. Hundreds of thousands of years of extreme weathering and erosion formed walls of *tsingy*, or jagged rock, which today has defined the massif on which they are found as a natural phenomenon and popular tourist attraction. In addition to its limestone massif, Ankarana also contains some of Africa's largest cave systems as well as many endemic plants and species of bats, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals, including a number of species of lemurs (Cardiff and Befourouack 2003: 1503-1505). Just as complex as the environmental history of the region is the comparatively recent political and social history of the people most closely associated with Ankarana, also known as the Antankarana (or "people of the rocks") (Gezon 1997, 2006; see also Walsh 2001).

During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, internal political dispute among members of the Sakalava royal dynasty, located on the west coast of Madagascar, caused some members to move to the north of the island and establish their own networks of social, economic, and political organizations. Upon arriving to the region surrounding the massif described above, these traditional leaders and the followers they gathered took to calling themselves Antankarana (Gezon 1997: 87). This group began to associate and identify themselves with the massif in more than just a name. Indeed, the Ankarana massif has become an important and sacred symbol of local identity (Walsh 2001). On two separate occasions the Antankarana used the massif's caves for extended periods as hideouts during attacks by powerful opposing ethnic groups looking to take over the region and its people (Cardiff and Befourack 2003, Gezon 1997, Walsh 2001). What is more, up until the 1920s Antankarana royalty were buried in caves within the Ankarana massif. Ceremonial visits to honour these royal ancestors continue to occur regularly, every four to five years. Because of the historical and religious significance attached to the massif, there are many



taboos associated with the royal caves that are still respected by many people living in the region today (Cardiff and Befourouack 2003: 1505, Gezon 1997, Walsh 2001, 2002, 2005).

Before the 1960s, when Madagascar was still a French colony, the French recognized the authority of the Antankarana royal line, giving royal leaders, known as Ampanjaka, positions in the colonial administration and, along with them, a certain amount of responsibility over people and territory in the region (Gezon 1997). In such roles, these Ampanjaka served as mediators between their own followers and the French, mobilizing local support for colonial projects while at the same time promoting local interests to the colonial administration. The living Ampanjaka continues to play a central role as a political and religious leader to people living in and around the Ankarana region, organizing and maintaining important cultural markers such as royal rituals at which with the blessing of royal ancestors is sought and, more recently, continuing the work of past rulers, by acting as mediator between people living in the region and state and global authorities (Gezon 1997: 87). In recent decades, the Ampanjaka's role in conservation and development initiatives in the region has been especially noteworthy.

Although the Ampanjaka's role has traditionally been that of a political and religious leader, it took on new meaning with the arrival of conservation organizations and projects during the first phase of Madagascar's NEAP in the early 1990s (Gezon 1997). And there is a good reason for this. The Ampanjaka is a royal indigenous leader who was (and still is) generally well respected by people in local communities. As such, both Malagasy and foreign conservationists saw his support for conservation and development projects they had planned for the region as crucial in order to ensure their success. Many had assumed, and not necessarily wrongly, that if they had the support of

the Ampanjaka, they would have the support of local people (Gezon 1997). But as some studies suggest, this is not always the case.

Gezon (1997) analyses two cases where local people and the Ampanjaka disagreed over land use rules and restrictions imposed by outside organizations looking to establish conservation and development projects around the Ankarana National Park. Her first case analyzes a conflict that occurred between the Ampanjaka and villagers living on the periphery of the protected park area. Her second case analyses a conflict that occurred between conservationists and the Ampanjaka at the time of a religious ceremony that necessitated a visit into a protected area. Although these two cases present different conflicts between different groups of people, they both show how local politics and differing interpretations of land rights can influence local support for conservation initiatives.

In her first case, Gezon (1997: 89) discusses how local people fell into conflict with the Ampanjaka when he agreed with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the conservation organization that was managing the Ankarana reserve at the time, that local people should not be permitted to enter the reserve or cut wood in the area. Villagers were opposed to WWF's conservation rules and restrictions and wanted permission to have access to particular forested areas. When the WWF refused their request, many were surprised and disappointed that the Ampanjaka's ruling on the matter supported the WWF's position and not their own.

The Ampanjaka had received many benefits from the WWF, including an honorary status and invitations to conferences and conservation meetings within and outside of Madagascar. Obviously, such benefits were not necessarily felt by his supporters, including villagers discussed above (Gezon 1997). In fact, villagers felt

slighted and overlooked by WWF, as well as the Ampanjaka, and decided to defy the rules anyway, even if this meant going against their respected leader. This defiance did not last long, however. As shifts in the management of the WWF occurred over the years, their relationship with the Ampanjaka weakened significantly. Land use restrictions became less severe and relationships between the local people and the Ampanjaka became stronger as a result.

Gezon's (1997) second case is that of an interesting conflict involving the Ampanjaka and local people on one side and managers of the Ankarana National Park on the other, where both groups were claiming the rights to, and control over, certain sites within the reserve. This conflict began at the time of a sacred ceremony during which the Ampanjaka and local people intended to camp inside the park's boundaries. As some sacred sites (including the tombs of former Ampanjaka) are found within forests and caves located inside the protected area, ceremonies have often presented challenges to conservation policies.

Without asking permission from project coordinators, the Ampanjaka and local people entered into the reserve for the ceremony, inviting park staff and other reserve officials to the ceremony as honoured guests – an invitation that they accepted willingly (Gezon 1997: 91). As Gezon discusses, these gestures, on both sides, were important in a couple of different ways. On the one hand, the Ampanjaka, although asserting his and the local people's rights to practice sacred ceremonies, realized that he still needed to maintain good relations with park administrators. On the other hand, the project coordinators realized that they would have to attend the ceremony in order to show their support for local customs as well as to earn the respect of the Ampanjaka and local people (Gezon 1997: 91). Prohibiting people from entering the reserve not only would have

created new conflicts between park officials and the local population, but would have delegitimized any authority and good relations the park was hoping to maintain (Gezon 1997).

What these cases demonstrate is a point that has much in common with Keller's (2009) previously discussed critique of how "culture" is often misused in conservation efforts in Madagascar. In Ankarana, as elsewhere in Madagascar, conservation efforts that do not account for the complexity and diversity of local people's lives are likely to run into problems no matter whose support they have. A different set of perspectives on conservation in the Ankarana region can be found in Walsh's (2005) discussion of how people involved in illegal small scale sapphire mining inside the Ankarana park view conservationist efforts at restricting their access to this place. In the 1990s, sapphires were discovered in the Ankarana region. As Malagasy and foreign companies claimed large areas of land around the Ankarana National Park to develop mining projects, there were just as many independent prospectors also looking to benefit from this new discovery. Because many of the rich sapphire areas had been taken over by companies, local people found that the best way to become part of this flourishing industry was to illegally mine sapphires inside the reserve where no large-scale projects could ever get a foothold (Walsh 2005: 658). In addition to being concerned about the destructive impact that small-scale artisanal mining was having on the ecosystems in the park, conservation authorities were also concerned about the negative impacts these independent prospectors could have on the ecotourist industry if they continued with their environmentally destructive activities (Walsh 2005). In response to this threat, park authorities stepped up their efforts at keeping people out of the reserve, eventually calling in the national police force to help them. At the same time, though, they continued to promote ecotourism in

the region, inviting foreigners into the same place. Signs placed around the reserve indicated quite clearly who was and was not welcome. While some signs invited tourists into the reserve with the reminder to respect the forest and rules of the park, signs intended for local people marked the boundaries of a “taboo forest” (*ala fady* in Malagasy) (Walsh 2005), a place from which they were restricted. This juxtaposition aroused much speculation among miners, many of whom believed that conservation efforts and regulations were in fact means to ensure that foreigners could exploit the park’s resources. Walsh states that these speculations were not so unreasonable: “...where ecotourism is promoted as a significant component of a sustainable development strategy, what conservation efforts actually conserve is, among other things, the access of foreigners to the resources they desire” (Walsh 2005: 660)<sup>6</sup>.

As in Gezon’s (1997) case studies, what Walsh’s (2005) research with sapphire miners in Ankarana demonstrates is that local responses to conservation efforts in the region are likely to be variable and influenced by particular and situated perspectives. As such, all of these case studies also hint at the complexities that would likely be involved in any effort at establishing a CBC project in the region.

The history of CBC projects in Madagascar, as well as globally, is a relatively new one. In their attempts to overcome traditional top-down approaches to conservation, various international, national, and local organizations have begun to promote such efforts as a way to incorporate local participation alongside the pursuit of conservation goals. However, like with traditional forms of conservation, they still operate under top-

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<sup>6</sup> Note: illicit sapphire mining is sustained because sapphires are a desired commodity among foreign consumers, including the tourists who come to the region to visit the Ankarana National Park. In this case, then, foreign demand is fuelling both the region’s sapphire and ecotourism industries simultaneously, yet there seems to be little acknowledgment given to this connection by park authorities, or even tourists themselves (Walsh 2002: 659).

down systems and power structures. As indicated in the case studies presented, the most successful collaborative community projects seem to be those that are based on a collaborative working relationship with more successful, established and often foreign-owned enterprises. Even in these successful projects there is considerable variation, however. Although Stronza's (2005) example of the collaboration between local communities in the Peruvian Amazon and Rainforest Expeditions was a largely positive one, Duffy's (2006a) examples of collaborative partnerships were more problematic because they indicated that despite a collaborative approach, these projects were still operating under the model of top-down conservation.

Ecotourism has found a niche in neoliberal models of development, and has also sparked new forms of collaboration between local communities and various national, international and non-government organizations. One form of this sort of collaboration that has gained popularity in Madagascar is Community-Based Ecotourism (CBET). In Madagascar, CBET projects have been developed to do a couple of things. First, they attempt to provide local inhabitants with an alternative, environmentally sustainable form of revenue as well as opportunities for developing awareness and education about the environment. And second, they have become a mechanism for helping Madagascar to reach its goals of increasing the overall coverage of protected areas, increasing rural development and decreasing rural poverty (Duffy 2006a 2008, Turner 2007). However, as the various case studies presented in this chapter show, implementing a project at the community level is difficult.

Ecotourism is seen by many in the international community as a sustainable solution for conserving wildlife and promoting community development, especially for individuals located around already established protected areas like the Ankarana National

Park. However, it has so far only provided benefits for few. International agendas have pushed the idea of CBET projects as a way to discourage “seemingly unsustainable behaviour” (Walsh 2005: 663), but not everyone can, or wants to, participate in such enterprises. Even when local people are interested in participating in them, there are many obstacles they must face along the way.

In the next chapter, I introduce the central focus of my research: a CBET project developed by a local voluntary CBC association called KOFAMA, in the Ankarana region. Despite having been developed out of local people’s willing participation, this project has faced many obstacles to success.

### Chapter III: Associational Life in Madagascar

Terms such as “community” and “participation” are used widely among international, national, and local actors working in conservation and development. As seen in Chapter 2, “new” approaches to conservation have increasingly begun to include the term community in their initiatives, calling for a more people-centred approach that lessens the disparity between various actors involved in the implementation of conservation and development projects (Brosius 2006a, Fabricius et al 2007, Kull 2002). But how do local people perceive the idea of “community” and how are they participating in community-oriented activities? One way by which to understand this is to look at Malagasy people’s participation in voluntary associations.

In an important paper concerning associational life in Madagascar, Marcus states that “Madagascar is often cited as an example of a country with a long history of local institutional strength and stalwart community participation in the decision-making process” (2008: 86). He further notes that one way in which this kind of community participation can be seen is in the creation of and participation in voluntary associations. But Marcus (2008) also argues that in recent years, the ideals underlying strong Malagasy community and association participation have been in decline due to external influences and internal disputes.

With Marcus’ argument in mind, I focused a great deal in my research in Ankarana on questions surrounding participation in voluntary associations. I found that although, as Marcus (2008) states, participation may be in decline, or at the very least changing, people still continue to create, develop, and participate in associations.. In keeping with my interest in CBC and CBET, I focused specifically on the community-based association called KOFAMA (Kopaben’ny Fikambanana Ankarabe Mitsinjo Arivo)



and its community-based ecotourism site, Tsingy Mahaloka. This chapter begins with an overview of the development of KOFAMA and Tsingy Mahaloka. The history of this association is unique for a couple of reasons: First, because of the role that PCVs have played in its creation, and second because an association like this has never been attempted in the region before (Turner 2007a, 2007b). Next, I compare KOFAMA with other associations in search of possible explanations for why KOFAMA has been struggling to achieve its goals as both an association and community-based project. Finally, I consider the situation in Ankarana with Marcus' (2008) discussion and analysis of associational life in mind, arguing that although associations in this region are by no means perfect, they remain a strong and important feature in people's lives in the region.

### **History of KOFAMA**

The town of Ambilobe is located in the northern most region of Madagascar. Located approximately 15km outside of this town is the Antsaravibe rural commune. This is where KOFAMA took root. The Antsaravibe rural commune consists of 14 villages or *fokontany* (see Table 1) that lie within a 15km radius of the commune center, the town of Antsaravibe. In 2007, a group of residents of the Ampotsehy-Ankobahoba fokontany created a local CBC association called KOFAMA. The association's goals were simple: they wanted to increase local people's knowledge of the value of environmental protection and to develop their village by building essential and easily accessible services such as a school and a health clinic (the nearest school in Antsaravibe, being around thirty minutes away, and the nearest clinic in Ambilobe about one hour away by car). With the support of a local Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) working in the region, founding members of KOFAMA decided that developing a CBET site in the region could be a suitable, potentially profitable way of promoting and achieving the

association's goals, not only for conservation and environmental protection, but also for local development (Turner 2008).

Never before had a voluntary association in the region attempted to take on a project like this. Although people had previously created associations to participate alongside larger ecotourism ventures operating in the region – handicraft associations such as the one described in my Introduction, for example – KOFAMA was different because it was the first association created with the sole purpose of developing a CBET site for community development and environmental conservation. That it happened to come at a time when the Malagasy government was promoting concepts such as CBC and CBET for rural development (as discussed in Chapter 1) is certainly no accident.

Here I relate the story of KOFAMA as it was told to me by some of the founding members and by the first PCV who became involved with it. In 2007 founding members of KOFAMA went to the mayor's office in Antsaravibe to look at the "plan du campagne pour le developement communal" (the campaign plan for the development of the commune), a government publication that featured a list of community projects in which local people might engage. They wanted to find a project that would increase both village development and environmental protection.<sup>7</sup> As one member stated, "the environment here is destroyed, conservation is welcome" (Jonah, June 10, 2010). This publication included the idea that an area not so far from Ampotsehy might be a good site for an ecotourism project (Turner, personal communication), and since this idea had not yet come into fruition, KOFAMA's founders took it up, seeing an opportunity for realizing

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<sup>7</sup> Although there are various associations in the region, such as women's associations, footballers associations, parent's associations, and ethnic associations, to name a few, that worked to improve local services and raise awareness about the environment, such efforts were never the first priority of these associations.

and legitimizing their goals for community conservation and development. They enlisted the assistance of the local PCV, and through this collaboration created an ecotourism site that came to be known as Tsingy Mahaloka<sup>8</sup>.

Tsingy Mahaloka was intended to be a way for people in the local community to benefit from KOFAMA's efforts. The PCV developed a detailed proposal that outlined the goals and objectives of KOFAMA and the Tsingy Mahaloka project for external funding agencies. She also reached out to the Madagascar National Parks (MNP) offices and the Malagasy Forestry Services, the ministry responsible for land transfer, and various other conservation organizations to provide KOFAMA members with additional funding, training and support in natural resource management and other activities such as guiding (Turner, personal communication).

In one version of this proposal, written in English for the sake of foreign donor agencies, the PCV outlined various initiatives that both she and KOFAMA were hoping to accomplish with the creation of their ecotourist site. They wanted to "help local communities to derive direct economic benefits from preservation and protection activities", they wanted to "protect, preserve, and celebrate the distinctive culture, sacred sites, and unique environment" and they hoped that these efforts might also reduce poverty in the region (Turner 2007b: 3, 8). Indeed, the proposal elaborates on

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<sup>8</sup> The role of Peace Corps in the development of KOFAMA and creation of Tsingy Mahaloka was a crucial, and eventually a determining factor, for both the success of the association and its ecotourism site. Since 2004 three different PCVs have worked with KOFAMA. The first volunteer who helped establish and legitimize KOFAMA worked with them for four years (2004-2008). When I arrived in 2008, the second volunteer was getting ready to take over. The plan was she would live and work in the region and with the association for two years (the required amount of time a Peace Corps volunteer is expected to stay at a site). However, with the political crisis in 2009, a state of emergency was called and all Peace Corps volunteers were evacuated from the country. On my return in 2010, a new volunteer was working in the area, having arrived six months earlier. Because she had volunteered for a year at another site before the evacuation, she was only required to stay at KOFAMA for one year before her contract was finished. This meant that by November 2010, there would be no Peace Corps volunteers working in the region.

KOFAMA's concern over the loss of Antankarana culture that some members in the association felt had been eroding as a result of a number of internal and external factors (settlers from elsewhere who do not respect local taboos and customs, for example, or even local inhabitants who call themselves Antankarana, and yet transgress taboos and destroy the environment for their own personal gain).

In 2007 KOFAMA's plans for effective conservation and development were big and optimism was high, and really, it should have been. Tourism was bringing in significant revenue for the country and there was a demand from tourists to see and experience both the natural wonders and local cultures of different regions of the island. For example, tourist numbers for the nearby Ankarana National Park reached peak numbers in 2008 with an indicated total of 11, 639 visitors to the park, 9663 of these visitors considered to be foreign tourists (this is up from a total of 9740 visitors that entered the park in 2007, 8076 of which were foreign tourists). The total number of visitors, however, dropped to 9625 in 2009 (MNP Office Statistics, field notes, July 5, 2010). Significantly, the Tsingy Mahaloka site features many of the attractions that tourists want to see in Madagascar. For example, the landscape surrounding the site includes naturally occurring lime-stone massif (or tsingy) and cave systems for which the nearby Ankarana National Park (located 10km to the north) is so well known. What is more within the caves located on KOFAMA's land are sacred ancestral tomb sites featuring coffins, bones, offerings and ritual paraphernalia (Turner 2007). In addition to this, endemic and endangered bat species have made their homes in these caves and lemurs can be observed climbing the limestone massif. In sum, this site contains the natural, traditional, cultural, and environmental attractions that generally appeal to tourists who come to a place like Madagascar (Cardiff 2003, Turner 2007a: 3, 2007b).

However, just because KOFAMA's site could offer biological, geographical, and cultural wonders to tourists visiting the region does not necessarily mean that it is a venture that is suitable for or desired by local people living in the surrounding areas. For example, the conservation area proposed to go along with this project included land and resources that some local people use in their daily lives. As such, KOFAMA's members were worried that not everyone in the surrounding villages would support a project that would prevent them from having access to forest resources in order to preserve this place for tourists<sup>9</sup>. If KOFAMA wanted to legitimize their ecotourism site, the association first had to gain the support, trust and confidence of different groups of actors, most importantly the "local community"<sup>10</sup>. But who exactly is this "community" and how are they expected to participate alongside KOFAMA's objectives? The next section will discuss the implications of using such a term that encompasses such a diverse group of people. Although KOFAMA and the PCV saw the community to include local individuals living throughout the Antsaravibe rural commune, it has so far been assumed that people who make up this group are similar to one another. Looking more closely at

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<sup>9</sup> Most of the 71 respondents to a survey conducted by the larger research team were unaware of KOFAMA's long-term goals, although many did understand that they were not supposed to cut wood or hunt wildlife on KOFAMA's land. A very small minority of the 71 respondents stated that KOFAMA has caused them problems. Although KOFAMA has not experienced any major negative reactions from local people who are not a part of the association, this could be due to the fact that KOFAMA has not experienced a consistent clientele, and has not really disrupted people's daily activities. In addition, because KOFAMA's ecotourist site has not been functioning consistently, the association's rules may not be strictly enforced.

<sup>10</sup> At the bureaucratic level, KOFAMA had to become a legalized association if it wanted to have any kind of authority in the region. For an association to be considered legal it must have the standard and proper paperwork to support it. Key features of such paperwork are lists of statutes, and *dina* (a list of rules/regulations of the association), that must be approved by authorities of the region where it is established (Interview with Marcus, June 22, 2010). Because KOFAMA was trying to develop into a formal association that would necessarily have to carry a certain amount of recognized authority (March and Taquu 1986), it was especially important for KOFAMA to obtain this legal status.

who makes up local “communities”, however, we can see that there is much more diversity among local residents than the term “community” may suggest.

### **The “Community” around Tsingy Mahaloka**

The use of the term “community” in CBC rhetoric is applied frequently and freely within conservation mandates, yet it is rarely defined. It does, however, tend to imply a large homogenous group of people who share common interests, beliefs, and ideals (Brosius et al. 2005, 1998, Smith 2001). Such a definition is problematic because it overlooks the fact that the people to whom the term is meant to apply are a diverse group of individuals, who may or may not share similar values and beliefs or desire similar things (Brosius et al. 2005, Campbell and Vainio-Mattila 2003). To better understand the complexities of this term it is useful to see how use of the term “community” has changed over the years.

The concept of “community” has been used in various capacities in the English language since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Initially used to define actual social groups (such as the commons or common people, a state or organized society, or the people of a district) or a particular quality of relationships (such as holding something in commons i.e. - such as common interests with others, or a sense of common identity) (Williams 1976: 656), Raymond Williams notes that the term has undergone incredible changes in its use and meaning over the years, and as such is difficult to define. “The complexity of community”, he writes,

“can...relate to the difficult interaction between the tendencies originally distinguished in the historical development: on the one hand the sense of direct common concern; on the other hand the materialization of various forms of common organization, which may or may not adequately express this...unlike all other forms of social organization...[community] seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term” (1976: 66).

During the 19th century, the term “community” was being used by many scholars as a way to distinguish between “modern” and “pre-modern” societies, where the term *society* represented a group of people who, through modernization, created ties and bonds that extended outside the network of kin relations, and *communities* represented those people whose relationships were based on blood ties and geographical proximity (Walley 2004: 107-108)<sup>11</sup>. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century this term has yet again changed in use and meaning with the rise of industrial societies. Expanding on Williams understanding of the changing use of “community”, Watts states how more recently “community” has been used as a way to discuss a certain kind of national and local politics, distinct from former discussions of politics, where now there is direct action and direct community participation. It is increasingly used alongside the “populist notion” of working directly “with and for the people” (2004: 197). Watts continues by stating that, “much of what passes for grassroots anti-development initiatives, or new sorts of anti-system or anti-globalization movements, would fall within the circumference of this more polemic notion of community” (2004: 197). As such, the increasingly neoliberal structures of conservation and development mandates influences in its own way how we understand, talk about, and apply “community” in community-based projects (Watts 2004). Where markets and states were once viewed by supporters of community conservation as obstacles to conservation success (Brockington et al. 2008), Brockington, Duffy, and Igoe state that,

“[w]ith the neoliberalization of conservation, private enterprise and profit motives have become widely accepted features of conservation, whether such conservation strategies engage communities or exclude them. Increasingly, rural people are

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<sup>11</sup> Today such glaring and ethnocentric distinctions have no merit, and in fact “community” is applied to a wide range of groups connecting over vast distances around the globe (such as the internet community) (Walley 2004).

targeted as potential partners in conservation-oriented business ventures...[a]ll of these issues and developments have profound implications for the role of rural communities as units of environmental governance” (2008: 90).

The term “community”, then, as used by government agencies, conservation NGOs, private companies and local people, has come to refer to apparently cohesive “units” that are seen to be able to control resources needed to make conservation initiatives, such as through CBET, possible (Brockington et al. 2008: 90).

Examining the more problematic application of “community” in community-based initiatives, Brosius, Tsing, and Zerner discuss the problems of using such a term which, as they see it, can lead to the assumption that local populations have a greater interest in sustainable resource management than states do, that they are more aware of local ecological conditions, and that communities can manage their resources better through local and traditional access (2005: 1-2). Brosius et al. (2005: 2) argue that “community” is a term that has been idealized by global financial and development institutions “to further their own agendas, to circulate capital through their institutional networks, and to rationalize national government’s environmental policies”. What we need to be aware of, they argue, is that community-based projects are imagined differently by different groups of people (such as populist activists, local peoples, development organizations, and conservationists) and that they in turn bring their own assumptions about the group of people who make up the particular “community” they have in mind (Brosius et al. 2005, see Tsing 2000 for further discussion).

Also concerned with how the concept of “community” is imagined and defined, Walley (2004) examines how this term has been applied and understood by international and national organizations and institutions involved in the Mafia Island Marine Park CBC



project in Tanzania, and how such applications and understandings in turn have influenced the way in which local people view their own sense of community. Walley is mostly concerned that the ways in which the notion of “community” has been applied in conservation and development rhetoric in this setting ignore the power structures found here, and thus assume that all actors involved are on an equal footing (Walley 2004). She argues that organizations that use the term “community” to define their projects are just as, if not more, problematic as other top-down conservation approaches because they tend to obscure the inherent inequalities, hierarchal power structures, and conflict between different groups of actors involved in them (Walley 2004: 108).

Problems that arise with the use of “community” in planning and describing CBC initiatives are thus not new. If we consider these concerns in light of KOFAMA’s mandate we can see where this association may be having some trouble in establishing itself as CBC project. For example, KOFAMA’s desire to preserve the local Antankarana cultural and traditional customs as well as the surrounding environment is a well-intentioned goal and cited widely in their proposals (Turner 2007a, 2007b). But it overlooks the fact that this “community” is extremely diverse in its cultural, religious, and work practices and that this diversity may or may not bode well for KOFAMA’s goals for community conservation and ecotourist site development.

Information gathered from surveys indicated the diversity of the region in which KOFAMA’s ecotourist site is based. Among the 71 residents surveyed no single answer to the question “What is your *karazana*/firazana (kind, ethnicity or ancestry)?” predominated. In fact, only a small few (23/71) respondents stated that their *karazana* was Antankarana, that is, the *karazana* to which KOFAMA’s proposals refer most directly. Religious affiliation in the region is similarly diverse, including people who

identify as Muslim, Catholic, Protestant or Adventist as well as those who participate in traditional Malagasy religious practices. As Keller (2009) might have predicted, the “culture” of the region is accordingly hard to describe as anything but complex and diverse. For example, adding to the discussion on taboos in Chapter 2, Adventists, Muslims and people who follow ancestral customs all follow different taboos. More importantly, practitioners of world religions may not stress the importance of following local traditional taboos regarding land use and the killing of animals that are so often cited as supporting conservation efforts. And even those who are meant to follow traditional taboos cannot be counted on to do so (Walsh, personal communication). When asked about whether others around them followed or transgressed local taboos, many respondents indicated that it is, in fact, Antankarana people who are most likely to transgress local land taboos (a perspective on taboos that is also discussed in Walsh 2002 and Walsh 2006).

In addition to the ethnic and religious diversity in the region where Tsingy Mahaloka is based, we also examined people’s daily work practices to see how they are using land in region. The majority of respondents we surveyed were farmers, although other professions included teachers, shop merchants, and office administrators. Almost all respondents however grew crops including rice, cassava, manioc, sweet potato, tobacco, bananas, and sugarcane with most stating that these crops are their main source of income and means of nutrition. Moreover, land is also significant here as many of the respondents (well over half) had two or more children, as well as grandchildren living with them. As such, again if we compare with Keller’s (2009) findings, it is clear that having land to provide for them is necessary.

Kiss notes that the potential for the successful contribution of CBET projects to conservation and community development is actually “limited by factors such as the small areas and few people involved, limited earnings, weak linkages between biodiversity gains and commercial success, and the competitive and specialized nature of the tourism industry” (2004: 232). Furthermore she states that CBET projects seem to be the most successful when there is minimal change in local land and resource use practices and when external support is present (Kiss 2004). She argues that if people have to change large areas of their land drastically to accommodate this kind of ecotourism it will not be as effective. This is because the gains from CBETs generally tend to be minimal for both the environment and local communities and they “rarely [displace] existing land uses or economic activities on a significant scale” (2004: 233). However, where CBETs provide modest changes to local resource use and access and incorporate skills and technologies of local people, the incentive to contribute to CBET projects is usually greater (Kiss 2004, Salafsky 2001). As such access to land is obviously very important to them. These survey results have not only indicated the diversity of people living in the region, but also how necessary land is for agricultural practices and food production and kin. As such, KOFAMA’s efforts at reaching out to the local populations to promote its CBC objectives must be broad.

But as with many kinds of CBC projects, KOFAMA’s case requires something a bit more complicated than just gaining the support of people surrounding the ecotourist site (although this is vital). In addition to trying to promote CBC initiatives through their ecotourism site in the region to local “communities”, KOFAMA is also an association that includes its own diverse membership and objectives. With this in mind, in the next section, I will take the kind of critical perspective that I, and many others, have used on

the term and concept of “community” and apply it to the term and concept of “association”. As with “community” the term “association” is one that tends to overlook the heterogeneity of the individuals who make them up, as well as the conflicts, hierarchies, and power structures inevitably found within.

### **KOFAMA as an “Association”**

People’s participation in voluntary associations has been dated back to 7000BC in what has been called by some scholars “common interest associations”, generally based around religious beliefs and agriculture (Anderson 1971: 209). As modern urban-industrial societies began to rise and flourish, the ways in which people understood and participated in associations also changed significantly. The industrial revolution has been credited with creating new and different forms of voluntary associations that extend to all levels of society (Anderson 1971: 215), many of which are based around and related to increased political participation and the development of democracy (Baumgartner 1988, Putnam 1995). Even more recently, associations have been discussed as contexts for the creation and circulation of social capital, that is with the assumption that membership in voluntary associations produces trust and develops cooperative attitudes among people, although some scholars are sceptical of this generalizing opinion (Stolle 1998).

I understand associations to be groupings that people enter into willingly and that are based around broad ideas of social capital that create social ties of kinship and friendship, trust, and cooperation within a group of people (Adler and Kwon 2002); they bring people together who share common interests and goals. However, I also feel that recognizing this defining feature of “associations” should not lead us to overlook the fact that the individuals who make up any “association” are quite diverse in themselves.

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As a way to better understand how complicated associations can be, Alette and I conducted a series of interviews with members of KOFAMA, as well as with other individuals in surrounding communities who are not part of KOFAMA. These interviews suggest that KOFAMA struggles on two different levels. Not only are members trying to implement the broader CBC goals of the association, they are also struggling to manage the diversity of member expectations. Just because people joined this association for similar reasons does not necessarily mean that members view its objectives in the same way.

During interviews with members of KOFAMA about their association and Tsingy Mahaloka, Alette and I asked the question, “What does success mean to you?” We hoped to find out what people wanted KOFAMA to be and what benefits they hoped it would bring to them. Would success be figured in terms of the number of tourists that visited the site? Or was it from the amount of profit made from the site? Is success linked to member participation, or to what KOFAMA has contributed to village development? One of the founding members of KOFAMA replied to our question with reflections that clearly indicated his commitment to the association’s goal of educating people about the value of conservation, “Ecotourism is a relationship between human beings and nature”, he answered,

Vazaha (foreigners) come here to learn about plants and animals. After, the vazaha will write a book and from their book our children will learn things. [Our children] will take part in conservation more than we do” (Jao, KOFAMA guide, June 10, 2010).

Obviously, this member of KOFAMA feels that Tsingy Mahaloka should be more than just a place for people, or foreigners, to visit and experience. This man wanted to increase and encourage environmental education and awareness not only so that his

children could learn about, and benefit in sustainable ways from, their environment, but so that people in other areas of the world would become aware of KOFAMA's efforts. Perhaps because his experience with foreigners was largely with researchers (such as our field course) and Peace Corps volunteers, he believed that foreigners could and would broadcast local efforts to wider audiences outside of Madagascar<sup>12</sup>.

Other respondents proposed a wide array of benefits that they hoped would come from Tsingy Mahaloka including increasing development in surrounding villages (in the form of schools and clinics), as well as continued efforts to increase environmental protection in the region. Significantly, these benefits were never discussed as something that would benefit only members of the association. Instead they were things that all people living in the region would benefit from. As the president of KOFAMA explained,

“...We do not only protect the environment, but also give advice to each other and teach culture to young people and members...they can get two things...protecting their environment and protecting their culture. If the environment is good we can have tourists and make money as well as saving and protecting the environment and preserving culture” (John, KOFAMA president, June 10, 2010).

To this man, being a part of KOFAMA was not just about receiving monetary benefits. He believed that people should be a part of the association because, as he stated, they “love the association,” and not just for the desire for financial gain. He also believed that if KOFAMA's goals of environmental protection and cultural preservation were to be met, KOFAMA members needed to actively participate with the association and Tsingy Mahaloka by attending regular meetings and assisting in the upkeep up the project's campsite even when they are not hosting tourists. But is simply caring about being a part of an association enough to sustain it and maintain membership? For some members, the

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<sup>12</sup> Something we are attempting to do.

work required to upkeep Tsingy Mahaloka took too much time away from their daily work that brought money and food into a household. For these members, the decision to participate with KOFAMA was largely based on whether or not they would receive monetary benefits. In addition to this, although this man discusses his desire to preserve “their” culture (meaning the Antankarana culture) this was never really discussed by other members.

Sitting under one of the few available shade trees at Tsingy Mahaloka one afternoon, Alette and I spoke with five members of KOFAMA about their participation in the association. We asked them questions about what changes they have noticed since the association’s inception and about their expectations for the association and the ecotourist site. We wanted to know how they defined KOFAMA’s success and what benefits they hoped the ecotourist site would bring. One member replied that “Having tourists’ com[e] is a measure of success”. Another said, “It depends on tourists...when lots of tourists come here [we will be successful] because [hosting tourists] is KOFAMA’s purpose.” Yet another member responded quite simply, “When many tourists come, KOFAMA gets money. If KOFAMA gets money there will be many members that come back. That is success to me” (Paul, Josephine, Marie, members of KOFAMA, July 3, 2010). This last response was especially interesting because although this member saw KOFAMA’s success as contingent on its ability to attract and host tourists, earn money, and support development in surrounding villages, she also believed that KOFAMA would be truly successful only when all members worked together, and members who had left would come back to participate in the association again.

As seen through these interviews, some members hoped KOFAMA’s creation could help protect “local culture” and the environment (a concern discussed widely in the



proposal for KOFAMA), while others hoped that KOFAMA and Tsingy Mahaloka could bring financial benefits through tourism to the region. One of the founding members even suggested that KOFAMA may be more successful if the association was not based around receiving money at all – meaning people should join KOFAMA without any expectation of financial gain. As he saw it, members could receive gifts (in the form of money) for their efforts at the ecotourist site, but should not imagine that working here could become a source of steady income. This idea is quite different from the original intentions of KOFAMA, which was to provide an alternative source of income for members, as well as benefits for people living in the surrounding area who could participate alongside the ecotourist site in various capacities (such as through handicraft associations), and furthermore, these ideas have never been discussed with the membership.

When Tsingy Mahaloka began to accept tourists in 2008, KOFAMA's list of participating members held steady at approximately forty, consisting fairly equally of women and men. On my return to the ecotourist site in 2010, I learned that some of the women and men I had come to know as key players in KOFAMA's development were no longer participating with the association or the ecotourist site. Although the decline in tourism from the 2009 political crisis impacted many members' participation with the association – i.e. since there were no tourists coming to the site and therefore no money to be made, many members had to return their attention to their own daily chores and activities – another reason for this decline had to do with the tense relationships and questions of trust and misunderstandings that began to develop among members over how the site should be run. To put it delicately, in terms introduced above, the social capital

that is so important to keeping up productive relations among association members was not as free-flowing as it could, or should, have been (Adler and Kwon 2002).

As part of our research, Alette and I interviewed members of associations other than KOFAMA to get a better understanding of why KOFAMA has been struggling to keep its membership. We spoke with members of women's associations (some of the most common and most successful associations in the region), footballer's associations, farmer's associations, parenting associations, banking associations, religious associations, handicraft associations and ethnic associations. All of these associations had different purposes and goals, yet they each faced similar issues when it came to member participation and the ties and bonds developed between members. In the next section, I discuss some of the findings that came out of these interviews.

### **Membership and Participation**

As noted in the introduction, my research in Ankarana in 2008 focused primarily on a handicraft association that had been developed with the support of the local PCV. This group sold their merchandise (handmade jewellery made from coconut shell) in the Madagascar National Parks (MNP) office located beside the main entrance to the Ankarana National Park, at a nearby ecolodge, at KOFAMA's office at Tsingy Mahaloka, and at a shop in the provincial capital of Antsiranana. In 2008, this association was quite successful. It was legally established, had a list of *dina* or rules for members to follow, and they had been successful in obtaining supplies (with the help of the PCV) for their crafting, including coconut shells, earring clips, pliers, etc. The membership was also kept small (between 12-16 members), which not only made it easier to find the resources necessary for making the handicrafts, but also made their production easier to manage (fewer people meant fewer disputes between members over whose products were being

sold more, how money was being distributed, etc). They were successfully selling their handicrafts to tourists, and they even had connections (through the PCV) with a small shop in the United States that sold their work. But by 2010, after the political crisis, the evacuation of the PCV, as well as internal disputes and misunderstandings, this association had changed quite drastically.

Although the association still existed when Alette and I returned to the region in 2010, only three people still considered themselves to be members. The political crisis was discussed as one of the main reasons why the association disintegrated. Some members found making handicrafts too time consuming and costly when there were no tourists to buy them. As the ex-president of the association stated,

“When the association was strong I received lots of money. I could live off of the money I earned from selling handicrafts because my husband and brother also made handicrafts. We could sell many” (Eva May 27, 2010).

Her husband then added,

“Making handicrafts is a hobby, and a kind of job. So in our case, because now we cannot sell handicrafts there is no reason to continue because it will be a waste of time and money for buying the materials such as babakom-banio (coconut shell). And Malagasy do not like wearing handicrafts made by babako” (Paul May 27, 2010).

But there were other problems in the association that went beyond the impact of external influences. An ex-member noted that,

“The problem is that the members would like to develop the village but the members of this association do not have the same point of view and do not trust each other. When they wanted to put money together not all members participated. Members complained a lot about this and didn't trust each other” (Jeanette May 27, 2010)

When we asked if these issues of trust were present when the PCV was there she responded,

“Yes, but [the PCV] was always there to help us solve the problem. When [the PCV] left, the association was not dynamic. It was mandrimandry (lying down). Also, after [the PCV] left there was a political problem, and that is when I left the association.”

Despite some internal disputes between members and the political crisis which negatively impacted membership, this association continues to function. Although some members left the association it was largely because the time it took to make handicrafts was greater than the money they received from them. And although feelings of mistrust became an issue for some members, it was not the main reason for members leaving. In fact, some members expressed interest in rejoining if the demand for handicrafts ever increased. As the last respondent stated, “If one day the association starts again [meaning becomes dynamic again] I would be happy to join because I really liked it” (Jeanette May 27, 2010).

Looking at other associations, a common response we heard from various authority figures we interviewed, including the mayor of Antsaravibe, MNP officers, independent business owners, and female members of KOFAMA is that women’s associations are successful because they are dynamic, and are managed well. More generally, respondents stated that women know how to work well together. The fact that these associations were present in almost every village we visited suggests that there is some meaning behind these responses. In fact, one member of KOFAMA, an older woman who also belongs to a women’s association in the area, indicated that this latter association was successful because members were not worried about issues related to the

collection and distribution of money – i.e., some of the issues that KOFAMA’s members are most concerned with (Marie, July 3, 2010).

Alette and I had the opportunity to interview the president of a women’s association, in Matsaborimanga, a village in the Antsaravibe rural commune. We asked general questions such as why she thinks some associations are more successful than others, as well as how she manages her own association. She explained,

“There are, you know, some presidents that when they get money they keep it for themselves. There are other presidents who know how to manage the associations which makes the association last longer. Their efforts and plans encourage their members to participate. All members need to know how much money they receive and how much money is spent. Money needs to be clear to every member, everyone should know. That makes the *fikambana* (association) successful.”

She continued,

“I find it difficult to manage the association and members, but I don’t give up. That’s why we’re still here. If I do not persevere, we won’t even last one year. What makes it difficult is we all have different points of view”. (Pauline, June 14, 2010).

This woman understood the problems that can and do arise between members in associations. They are to be expected. But she was also aware of how difficult and unexpected rural life can be for people and that a good president should understand this. “Forgiveness is very important”, she noted, “...you have to be an easy-going person.”

Another kind of association where transparency and trust seems to be less of an issue is in ethnic associations. These associations are made up of people who come from the same region of Madagascar but who generally live elsewhere, away from family and friends (Walsh, personal communication). Ethnic associations are important because of the social networks they build among members. For example, if someone is ill, members contribute to pay medical fees, provide food, help around the house, etc. Similarly, if a

member needs to go home (to another region in Madagascar) but cannot afford the transportation fare, members will try to gather money to help cover some of the cost (Tanya, June 24, 2010). Such associations also help to enable members to send the bodies of deceased relatives back to the “ancestral lands” (*tanindrazana*) where they are meant to be entombed, an expensive but important act for many people in the island (Walsh, personal communication). Ethnic associations act as a sort of substitute family, so honesty and trust are what keep them going. They also only ever collect money for particular and immediate purposes, and not in pursuit of long-term general goals. As one member stated, “Ethnic associations never fall apart because it is your life!” (Tanya, June 24, 2010).

In addition to these interviews, information we gathered from our surveys has also been useful in helping us understand reasons why people join associations. For example, when we asked respondents to explain reasons for why they joined an association some of the responses included: “To be with other people with similar goals”, “I am poor and need help from other members”, “To grow sugarcane, it is difficult to get donations from the government if you are not part of an association”, “Financial support, it is the only way to get funding from abroad”, and “It is good socially to be a member, to gather with people, to earn money and to help other members in need”. Based on these comments, it seems that people feel like associations are important because they allow people to help each other during difficult times, or to participate in the development of the local economy. Others, however, see associations as more strategic, stating that by being a part of an association, it was easier to receive funding, such as from Malagasy government organizations like the MNP (which annually contributes 50% of park entrance fees to

various associations in the region) (Interview with MNP office administrator May 24, 2010).

Understanding some of the problems that occur in other associations helps shed light on why KOFAMA has been struggling with its membership. As in other associations, the management of money has also been a recurrent problem with KOFAMA. Currently, KOFAMA has as no system in place to manage money it has received from visitors to Tsingy Mahaloka. As a result, many members are suspicious of how much money the association has earned, where it is being kept and how it is being spent. When the PCVs were working in the area, they tended to hold onto KOFAMA's earnings. When they left, however, money was given to the association's leadership to manage. Because most of the members do not know how much money KOFAMA has made since it first began to accept tourists, there has been much speculation over what has happened to the money, and whether or not the president of KOFAMA should be in charge of it alone. Some members commented on this matter specifically during our conversations, stating that KOFAMA is different from other associations in this way. As one member stated, in her women's association the money is kept in a bank and at least three members must be present to withdraw funds from the account (Jacqueline, member of KOFAMA, July 2, 2010). She stated that internal arguments between members are less prevalent because members know how much money the association has and trust each other.

As should be clear by now, the idea that associations in Ankarana consist of groups of homogenous and harmonious people is far from the truth. As one man noted,

“As I see it, people in the north are not used to being in an association. They are used to working individually, so they are not really interested in associations.

There are many different kinds of associations here such as women's associations, sugar cane associations, but none of them are developed" (Dom, May 28, 2010).

When we asked why he thinks people are not interested in working together, he responded that,

"As I see it, people do not trust each other. This is due to bad mentality."

This response was uncommon, however. In fact, many local individuals who had been members of associations that had failed because of problematic social dynamics still expressed an interest in joining other associations. And although the man quoted above believed that women's associations and agricultural associations in this region were not very developed we found, with the former at least, the opposite to be the case. Women's associations in particular were among the more stable, longstanding and motivated associations we came across.

In discussing KOFAMA and other associations as I have here, I hope to have illustrated not just the complexities involved in associational membership, but also how, like with "community" the term "association" should never be used unthinkingly. Hierarchies exist in associations as much as they do in the "communities" of CBC and CBET projects. Associations are fragile, and are composed of a wide range of individuals who, although they may join them for a common reason, have their own ideas on how goals and objectives should be accomplished (Marcus 2008, Stolle and Rochon 1998). Although adversities within the association as well as other factors that influence membership can influence people's participation in them, it has never been a reason for people not to join them. In fact, people's participation in Ankarana is quite high. Our survey results indicated that over half of our respondents were members of at least one association. This is interesting because it runs counter to Marcus' argument that sees a



decline in associational life in Madagascar, which I will now discuss in the final section of this chapter.

### **Are Associations in Decline?**

Marcus (2008) argues that although associations have long been present in Madagascar, in times of economic hardship people's participation in them is likely to decline because people place a greater emphasis on individual needs rather than the communal ones. As Marcus puts it, under such difficult circumstances "people do not associate with one another because they are too busy trying to eat" (Marcus 2008:86). Marcus' research took place in the Amboasary district of southern Madagascar where economic decline and ecological changes have not only caused economic hardships for local people living there, but have also negatively impacted the way people participate in activities with each other<sup>13</sup>. As he sees it, the decline in Malagasy community life in this region has been influenced by both internal and external factors, including the decrease in people's investment into social capital, the increase in power structures, and the fact that people are struggling to live day-to-day. The effect of this decline has been largely negative in that he sees people's participation in voluntary associations as "critical to maintaining the community fabric" and building social trust (2008: 91).

Marcus indicates that people's participation in associations is likely to increase as economic conditions improve (Eastis 1998, Marcus 2008, Putnam 1995, Stolle and Rochon 1998). Results from my own research indicate that this may be at play in northern Madagascar. For example, in the Antsaravibe rural commune a sugar plantation

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<sup>13</sup> An important point to keep in mind is that Marcus' paper examines associational participation in southern Madagascar. Geographically, economically, and politically, conditions in the southern Madagascar are different than in the north. Although Madagascar is among the poorest countries in the world, there are significant disparities between the north and the south which could, and most likely do, affect people's participation in associations and community life.

that had once provided employment to hundreds of people in the region has recently reopened following years of inactivity. As a result, the region has seen a re-emergence of active agricultural associations in the region, specifically an association of sugar cane growers interested in sharing access to tractors and other equipment necessary for their work (Joel, Mayor of Antsaravibe, May 28, 2010). With very positive advance reports of the coming (2011) tourist season in Madagascar, the conditions may well be right for KOFAMA to experience a similar resurgence. While no associations in the region are perfect, it is clear that there remains a great deal of interest in them and in the benefits they can offer. Although KOFAMA has seen its fair share of struggles (and continues to struggle), has had trouble maintaining consistent member participation, as well as gaining local support and attracting tourists to its ecotourist site, there is something to be said for the fact that it is still functioning (as of this writing) and has for the last two years accommodated the UWO/UA field school successfully.

This chapter introduced the reader not only to the region in which I conducted field research, but to the existing and possible effects that the multiple interests of diverse groups of individuals living here can have on a project like Tsingy Mahaloka. Whether members of large communities or small associations, the people discussed here should never be understood as anything but diverse. My concern with diversity continues in the next chapter where I discuss how the diverse interests of tourists also play a role in how CBC/CBET projects, and the associations responsible for them, can develop.

#### Chapter IV: Managing Tourist Expectations at Tsingy Mahaloka

Between my first visit to Tsingy Mahaloka in 2008 and my second visit in 2010, KOFAMA had added a number of new structures and features to the campsite. Some of these additions were necessary, like a new working kitchen and additional sleeping areas. Others were more questionable. One new structure built in 2010 was a covered eating area featuring a mismatch of handcrafted long tables and benches. During my previous experience researching and volunteering at Tsingy Mahaloka in 2008, meals were always eaten sitting on a woven straw mat on the ground. During my stays in people's homes in the region, meals were also always eaten sitting on the ground with members of the family. This is how most people in rural Madagascar eat their meals. In 2008 not one of us in the field course seemed to mind this; in fact, we loved it. No, the creation of this eating area was about more than just development. This structure was developed with a very clear purpose related to a larger concern for the site's success: If KOFAMA wanted to establish their ecotourist site on the map of viable ecotourist destinations in the region they would have to do more than just provide food to eat and mats for people to sit on. They would have to cater to tourist expectations, needs, and desires. They would have to accommodate and foresee to the best of their ability what would make tourists happy and comfortable during their stays at Tsingy Mahaloka.

In the previous two chapters I have discussed reasons for the implementation of CBC and CBET projects, the history of KOFAMA and the formation of its ecotourist site, as well as the social and political reasons for why this site is struggling to establish itself as a tourist destination. But there is another side to KOFAMA's struggles that has not yet been discussed. KOFAMA's ecotourism project was created not simply to increase local development and encourage conservation practices. It was also created to serve tourists.

The success of KOFAMA's ecotourist site, then, depends on more than just local participation, involvement, and acceptance. Its success depends on tourist participation.

With this in mind, the first section of this chapter will examine how although CBET projects are well-intentioned in their goals to ensure a local role in conservation and development programs, they continue to be problematic because their success is still reliant on the support of external actors, such as tourists. Keeping in mind that, as with the term "community," the term "tourist" includes an extremely heterogeneous group of individuals, a discussion of different tourist expectations and perceptions will follow.

The second section of this chapter will take this analysis further by discussing a case study, involving a small, but revealing, dispute between some of KOFAMA's members, exemplifying not only how difficult accommodating tourist expectations can be, but also how difficult setting up a project like KOFAMA's is in reality.

Finally the last section of this chapter will examine how a lack of both infrastructure and easy access to the site are significant to KOFAMA's fate. In sum, I hope to highlight how the success or failure of a CBET project cannot only be attributed to trends in associational life, or the local, social and political dynamics and people's investment (or lack thereof) of social capital, but that more often than not it is determined by factors outside of local control.

### **The Heterogeneity of Tourists**

The term "tourist" can be homogenizing in the same way that the previously discussed terms "community" and "association" can be. By classifying visitors generally as "tourists," we ignore the fact that people who fall under this category have very different ideas about what tourism is and how they see their role as participants in this industry. Recognizing this heterogeneity, the tourist industry itself offers a plethora of

different terms and categories that help to distinguish very different groups of people. For example, tourism can be broken down into various categories such as general tourism, ecotourism, cultural/heritage tourism, adventure tourism, geotourism, pro-poor tourism, sustainable tourism, responsible tourism, and traveler's philanthropy (Honey 1999, Honey and Gilpin 2009). Although each one of these categories is defined differently, many overlap in their associated goals and values (Honey and Gilpin 2009)<sup>14</sup>.

If we think of these alternative forms of tourism as phenomena that people have developed to help negotiate their place in this industry, the increase in different kinds of tourism makes sense, especially when we correlate it with the sheer size and impact that tourism has in the world today (Clarke 1997). Tourism has been around since before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and has undergone significant changes over this time (Duffy 2006a, Honey 1999). Before the 1950s travel for pleasure was viewed as a prestigious activity, something available only to the wealthy. However, the transition of many societies into industrialized ones, advances in technology and infrastructure, and an overall improvement in standards of living (in some parts of the world) has meant that more people can now afford to indulge in tourism and travel than ever before (Duffy 2002, McLaren 2003, Munt 1994a 1994b). Today, tourism is the fourth largest industry in the world, generating an estimated \$919 billion in 2010, up from \$851 billion in 2009, in international tourism receipts (UNWTO).

The tourist industry has not just provided tourists with opportunities, however. It is also an industry that can provide host countries with substantial benefits in the form of

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<sup>14</sup> It should be noted, however, that tourism revenues do not necessarily reflect this distinction. Instead revenue calculated tends to fall under the general category of tourism. As a result, it is difficult to get hard numbers that tell just how effective alternative forms of tourism, like ecotourism, are contributing to the industry (Medina 2005, Honey 1999).

economic revenue as well as a means for achieving conservation and development goals (Jamal and Stronza 2009). In the last forty years, tourism has grown especially quickly in developing countries where the low cost of living helps to keep travel affordable for a greater number of foreigners from wealthier countries. In tropical developing countries, especially, tourists are able to fulfill their desires to visit warm environments, beaches, exotic wildlife and experience different “cultures” (Honey and Gilpin 2008, West and Carrier 2004).

As the tourist industry continues to adapt and expand to include alternative types of tourism, especially those aimed at assisting in local development, national governments, international financial institutions, as well as local communities have begun to adopt these new kinds of tourism models. This is because they offer the potential for increased benefits not only for a country’s economic revenue, but for local people as well (Duffy 2002).

Community-based ecotourism (CBET) is one of the more recent approaches to come out of ecotourism rhetoric. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) defines community-based ecotourism as “a form of ecotourism where the local community has substantial control over, and involvement in, its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remain with the community” (WWF 2001: 4). Although CBET encourages sustainable environmental practices and the “collective responsibility” of community members, it also supports and encourages individuals to create their own initiatives and activities that work alongside CBET objectives (WWF 2001: 4).

As noted in Chapter 2, this approach has been commended by many in the international community because it passes the development of conservation and tourism projects from the hands of the state to the hands of local people. However, critics note

that while attempts at implementing this approach are well-intentioned and apparently progressive, such efforts still encounter similar kinds of problems as other non-community based ventures, as well as new obstacles to overcome. In particular, CBET projects are still quite heavily reliant on and influenced by external actors and organizations, many of whom play an important role determining the success of an enterprise (Duffy 2006a, Jamal and Stronza 2009, Kiss 2004, Medina 2005). As noted in Chapter 2, particularly influential are the tourists themselves, and the, sometimes “generic”, images of what the places they are visiting are meant to look like (Cater 2006).

Examining KOFAMA’s ecotourist site through some of these critiques can draw out parallels that may help us understand why KOFAMA has been struggling to sustain their ecotourist site. Through their collaboration with the PCV, KOFAMA was able to obtain access to funds and resources that allowed them to build various structures including simple bungalows, a working kitchen, washrooms and an eating area. In addition, KOFAMA needed to legally acquire the land on which Tsingy Mahaloka was to be built in order for their site to be considered legitimate. But this too was not an easy process. The infrastructure, regulations and paperwork KOFAMA had to complete were extensive (as discussed in Chapter 1). And to navigate this independently would have been difficult. I do not mean to imply here that KOFAMA members could not have done this on their own. However, there are real factors, such as the cost of transportation to get to the city to process paperwork and claims, as well as the time it takes to do this, that can become significant obstacles when people also have to worry about keeping up with the responsibilities of daily life. In this sense, although CBET projects have been promoted as ventures that can be implemented and managed at the local level, the processes required to make them legal and legitimate are difficult, time consuming, and costly.

That projects such as KOFAMA are classified as community-based or grassroots, then, fails to convey that although local people may be in control of these projects, they are still very much reliant on the support of external actors who can help them guide their way through the various legislative and administrative processes required to make their enterprise legitimate (Kiss 2004). And even once a CBET venture is established, its success is ultimately determined by whether or not it can attract tourists to invest their time and interest in it.

Once KOFAMA officially established Tsingy Mahaloka, the next big question was how to get tourists to come to the site. As most of the members had never had contact with tourists before, this was an area where outside expertise and knowledge of the tourist industry was helpful, and the PCV volunteer played a key role in trying to establish connections with tourism businesses and guides working in the region. But establishing connections with other business owners and guides is only one part of the picture. The other part is based around the attitudes of tourists, their preconceived notions of a place, and their relationship to it as a result of these preconceptions.

### **People Defining Ecotourism**

As discussed above, there are recognized distinctions between different kinds of tourism (Cater 2006, Honey 1999, Medina 2005), the most relevant of them for the purposes of this thesis separating what might broadly be defined as “mass tourism” and “ecotourism” (although some observers are critical of whether or not there is actually a distinction at all, see: Campbell 1999, Duffy 2002, Munt 1994, Walpole and Thouless 2005). As a reaction to environmental movements in the 1970s, ecotourism, as we know it today, emerged into Western consciousness in the 1980s. This emergence can be attributed to a number of different reasons two of which I will briefly touch on here.



First, as levels of education, urbanization and standards of living increased in industrial societies, people's perceptions of their place in the world began to change (Duffy 2002). A growing concern over environmental issues sparked the creation of alternative social groups, many based around the ideals of an emerging environmental movement that questioned not only the effects that industrialization was having on the natural world, but the values that blinded people in industrialized societies to these effects (Honey 1999, Duffy 2002, Cotgrove and Duff 1980 as found in Duffy 2002). As people's investments in education and jobs that afforded a greater disposable income began to increase, people wanted to and could afford to invest in alternative forms of tourism that incorporated these environmental principles (Duffy 2002, Munt 1994a).

Second, as international tourism became more accessible to more people once remote destinations became inundated with tourists, making them overcrowded, over-used and increasingly polluted areas. As a result, environmentally motivated travellers began to seek out even more remote, "off-the-beaten-track" places that were untouched, unseen, and unspoilt by mass tourism (May 1996). These ecotourists were looking for places that would let them experience an "authentic" and undisturbed environment free from people and the stresses of their everyday lives. They wanted to learn about and conserve these environments. They wanted an experience that was unlike any they had had before, and one that they could call their own (Honey 1999, Munt 1994, Duffy 2002). Ecotourism could offer this.

When ecotourism first emerged, it was not a form of tourism that was available to all people. And like in the beginnings of mass tourism, it became a new kind of status symbol available to a select group of people who could afford to do it, were adventurous enough to do it, and who considered themselves environmentally responsible enough to

do it (McLaren 2003). Today, ecotourism is not held in quite the same esteem (Weaver 2001). Its increasing popularity has made it available and accessible to the masses, and it arguably has just as much potential to impact the environment in negative ways (Clarke 1997), even though people who define themselves as ecotourists are quick to point out how they are different from other sorts of tourists (Weaver 2001). Ecotourists range in age and financial standing, in occupation and profession, but they all still seemingly carry with them the ideals and hopes that through travel they will make positive environmental and social differences in the places they are visiting (Duffy 2002, Munt 1994). They consider themselves to be a distinct group of what Duffy calls “self-denying” individuals because they are more concerned with promoting environmental protection and conservation than with comfort, while also being more socially and culturally aware (Duffy 2002). But how do these ecotourists view their own participation in ecotourism?

Researching ecotourists’ practices in Belize, Duffy (2002) examines the idea of the “self-denying” ecotourist who engages in touristic practices that place the needs of the environment before their own comforts. Viewed as a feature of a selfless form of travel, she suggests that this “self-denial” is in fact an act of self-indulgence because “[the ecotourists] enjoy the rustic and basic nature of their travel experience, which provides a complete contrast to their home lifestyle” (Duffy 2002: 21). In other words, although they choose to travel in what they perceive to be more rustic, environmentally sustainable ways, such as camping in tents instead of staying in five star hotels, their “self-denial” is tolerable because it is for short periods of time and not something they have to sustain.

In this sense, Duffy sees ecotourism as something more than just a supposedly “sustainable” way to travel. She also believes that ecotourism is an “expression of consumer culture” and a social marker (Duffy 2002: 41). The decision to travel is not an

innate impulse, Krippendorf notes in a passage cited by Duffy, “but is developed under the influence of the social environment. As such, it is a social ‘position marker,’ like a second car or home, and indicates a person’s social standing” (Krippendorf, 1987, pp17-19 as cited in Duffy 2002:41).

During interviews with ecotourists in Belize, Duffy found that many of them failed to recognize their travel as being connected to a larger, more organized, industry and that, like mass tourism, their ecotourism is also highly structured, managed, and organized. In fact, many ecotourists failed to connect their tourism with any kind of destructive consumption patterns at all (Duffy 2002). This research was conducted during the 1990s however, when ecotourism was just starting to find solid ground and making notable waves among travelers. Are ecotourist’s perceptions different in the 2010s? More relevant to this thesis, how are they different among ecotourists in Madagascar in the 2010s? The next section addresses these questions with reference to research conducted with ecotourists visiting Madagascar.

### **“What Does Ecotourism Even Mean?”**

In order to better understand how tourists in Madagascar define themselves and whether or not their self-definitions are reflected in their tourist practices – the places they visit, for example, or the modes of transportation they use there – Alette and I constructed a tourist survey that aimed to answer some of these questions. These surveys were distributed at three separate locations: a locally managed eco-lodge located at the entrance to the Ankarana National Park, the touristic port city Diego-Suarez, and the islands of Nosy Be and Nosy Komba, located off the northwest coast of Madagascar. In total, 38 surveys were completed by tourists. Through these surveys we gathered basic demographic information about these tourists as well as information about how they

defined themselves, what they did for a living, where they were travelling to and how long they planned on staying at each destination. In addition, we asked them what they thought some of the costs and benefits of ecotourism are for Madagascar.

Although almost half (47%) of the respondents to this survey classified themselves as general tourists, the other half (52%) classified their travel as ecotourism, volunteer tourism, adventure tourism, and cultural tourism with six respondents seeing ecotourism as synonymous with adventure, cultural, and volunteer tourism. Over half of the tourists surveyed had never been to Madagascar before, and 74% of them classified their travel as “independent,” or travel without the assistance of an organized tour company. The respondents ranged in age from 18 years to 70 years with the highest number of participants in the age categories 18-29 years and 30-39 years. Although this basic demographic information has been useful in helping to determine who exactly these “tourists” are on a superficial level, their answers to why they think ecotourism is beneficial or not for Madagascar were much more revealing.

In the survey, tourists were asked, “What benefits and/or costs do you believe ecotourism can offer to a region, its local community, and biodiversity?” Although many of the respondents shared similar views about the benefits of ecotourism, seeing it as a way to provide local communities with financial benefits, environmental protection and village development, their opinions concerning the costs of ecotourism were much more diverse. For example, some tourists were concerned with how relationships among local people, as well as local people’s relationships with tourists would change as they came to benefit monetarily from tourism. As one respondent stated,

“...[ecotourism] encourages local people to preserve these sites and respect the environment...[it] gives advantages to local people who live around tourist sites...Local populations should inform the world about the sites so people

globally will know. Disadvantages...some people only think about money. Vazaha (foreigners) means money” (Survey 24).

Although this tourist saw ecotourism as a way for local people to make money, she was concerned about how this could lead such people to view ecotourists as just any “*vazaha*”, or foreigners – that is, as people with money. But how inaccurate is this? Ecotourists, after all, can afford to travel to Madagascar. The perception of this respondent is interesting because it overlooks the fact that the tourist industry, including all of its different forms, caters to Western and European travellers, and as such it is not unreasonable that they might be viewed as people with money. It is largely people coming from places like North America and Europe who travel to places like Madagascar, not the other way around<sup>15</sup>.

Another concern tourists expressed in this survey involved money allocation. Although most respondents believed that ecotourism was a responsible way to travel and one that could provide benefits to local communities, some indicated their scepticism over how much money local people actually received from ecotourism ventures, and how much this actually benefited them in their daily lives. One respondent stated,

“What does ecotourism even mean? For me, ecotourism is tourism which helps developing local areas. [There is] cultural exchange, enriching both foreigners and local people. There is no guarantee that money will get to the people it’s supposed to help” (Survey 28).

Another respondent stated,

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<sup>15</sup> In his discussion on the perceptions of some people in the Ankarana region towards tourists visiting the region, Walsh (2005) notes that while park administrators, tour guides, and local residents believe that the concerns that ecotourists display regarding environmental conservation are admirable, they are concerns that they can afford to have. Unlike sapphire miners or local farmers in search of firewood, ecotourists do not have to worry about park restrictions interrupting and altering their daily lives (2005: 662). This very real fact is something that is easily overlooked by tourists visiting the country, as demonstrated by some of their responses.

“I don’t know all of the issues. I’d be worried that traditional or important other work (farming, etc.) might be dropped to work for tourists. Worried too that unless properly managed some natural areas might get damaged with too many tourists... Seeing tourists appreciate nature and the environment might also tell the locals that nature and its animals are important and worth preserving” (Survey 33).

In another response, a respondent compared the costs and benefits of tourism and ecotourism with one another, laying out what she saw as the main differences. Where benefits of tourism included developing the economy, improving infrastructure and education, cultural exchange and job creation, she saw the benefits of ecotourism being that they promote local awareness of environmental issues (for example, less litter, protection of plant and animal species, and responsible behaviour), and increase preservation of the environment and local culture. In the same response, however, she stated that mass tourism eroded local culture and values, increased sex-tourism, destroyed the environment, exploited workers and made the economy over-dependent on tourism, and that ecotourism is problematic because it is expensive to start up and operate and less desirable by tourists because it requires more effort on their part and is more costly (Survey 34).

As noted above, some respondents to the surveys saw ecotourism as a positive tool for teaching local people about their environment, as a way of providing them with agency, in how they “responsibly” manage and live alongside their environment, and as a means to preserve their culture. Others saw it as a way for local people to benefit economically, although they were worried about tourism eroding traditional cultural practices and way of life. But not one respondent indicated an awareness that cultural practices or local “ways of life” have long been influenced by global political and economic processes, or that Malagasy people have long responded actively, and with

agency to these processes just as they are responding to the country's growing ecotourism industry.

So, what effects have the perspectives of ecotourists in Madagascar had on Tsingy Mahaloka and KOFAMA's efforts at managing and promoting the site? We do not yet know. The fact that none of the interviews or surveys we conducted with tourists took place at Tsingy Mahaloka is because during our time in the region in 2010, no tourists visited the site. That noted, during the time we did spend at the site by ourselves and with participants in the UWO/UA field course, we were able to observe signs of things to come. In the next section, I will examine a case study from this period that involved differing opinions between some male and female members of KOFAMA and a local guide working with our field course.

#### **Do Ecotourists like Children?**

Women members of KOFAMA who work at Tsingy Mahaloka take on many of the roles that women in local Malagasy households do: cooking food, washing dishes, collecting water, watering plants, and helping with the general upkeep of the site. Since tourists (or Field Course participants) who visit are provided with three meals a day, women are often required to stay all day at the site to prepare these meals. As such, women who have young children in need of care must bring them to the site as well. In 2008 this was not a problem. In 2010, however, some members became concerned with having children on site after a guide visiting the area with our field course – a man with years of experience leading ecotourists through this region – told them that the presence of children might disturb foreigners who come to stay at the site. If KOFAMA really wanted their ecotourist site to appeal to ecotourists, he informed them, they would have to adapt to their needs, desires, and expectations, and this meant not having so many

children around the site. He noted that tourists may be bothered by children wandering around the site and, touching plates, cups, and utensils that they use to eat from. More importantly, tourists who would be coming to the site to see and hear lemurs and birds would likely be put off by the noise that children, very young children especially, are prone to making. Following this guide's advice, some of the founding male members of KOFAMA decided that it would be better for the association and Tsingy Mahaloka if children no longer came to the site. With that, women working at the site were asked not to bring their children with them anymore.

This did not sit well with many of the female members of KOFAMA. It was especially hurtful to some of these women because they had been such crucial players in the initial creation of the association and the site. As a result, several of them stopped participating with the association, some to take a stand against this new "rule," others because they had no other option. Having no one to look after their children, they simply could not come. Not only did new tensions between members emerge at this time, but there was also a feeling of betrayal among some. In contradiction with their understanding of what this association was meant to be about, a number of them felt that their needs were being seen as secondary to the perceived desires of tourists. Indeed, here we see a dynamic quite like that described by West and Carrier (2004) in the case studies discussed in Chapter 2. Ecotourism, they argued, can lend itself to practices that "lead not to the preservation of valued ecosystems but to the creation of landscapes that conform to important Westernized idealizations of nature through a market-oriented nature politics" (West and Carrier 2004: 485, see also Cater 2006, Li and Wall 2009). What the guide seems to have been suggesting, based on years of experience, was that ecotourists' idealizations of Madagascar's nature did *not* include noisy children.



Although a small incident, this case exemplifies how views from “outsiders,” the guide in this case, have the potential to influence the social relations between members as well as their willingness to participate in the project. It also hints at what is likely to come as KOFAMA tries to work alongside dominant structures of the ecotourist industry. This particular guide has years of experience working with tourists, and because of this he was seen as an expert on tourists and what they want. It is understandable why some members took his advice and opinions on the matter of having children at the site. However, this advice was not necessarily coming from a community-based mindset. Tsingy Mahaloka is a CBET initiative and as such it is going to be different than other kinds of ecotourism ventures in Madagascar. It was designed to be manageable alongside members’ daily lives, not in spite of them.

Based on interviews, it seems clear that members of KOFAMA understood that their vision of a CBET site is different from the mainstream and that there is value in this vision. And yet some members felt that this may not be enough for success, and that conforming to tourist ideals might be more beneficial. By doing this, however, they risk losing membership. Simply put, adopting a model that may work better for tourists may not work as well for members. But what if instead of KOFAMA trying to accommodate tourist expectations, tourists accommodated KOFAMA? Understanding that this ecotourist site is special because it has been developed at the local level, it is community-based, as well as a work in progress, might take some of the pressure off KOFAMA to have a flawless functioning site. Moreover, if tourists are aware of this upfront and know that their money is going towards a CBET project that is in its early stages of becoming established, visitors may be even more inclined to show their support, and come with different expectations. Salafsky notes that it can take years before community-based

enterprises become fully self sufficient, if ever, and that in many cases these kinds of enterprises are only successful when there is consistent monetary support from an external source (2001: 1593). It is important then to also keep a realistic perspective on KOFAMA's situation, and to embrace this reality and work within it.

### **Off the Beaten Path**

So far this chapter has examined the heterogeneity of tourists to get a better understanding of how they view their participation in the tourism industry, and more specifically what they think of ecotourism. It has also examined internal conflicts that have arisen among members of KOFAMA to illustrate some of the difficulties and issues that can arise in projects like Tsingy Mahaloka. But the desires, expectations and actions of association members and tourists are just one side of the story. The other side, although perhaps not as complicated, is just as influential in determining the success of an enterprise. The final section of this chapter will look at ecotourism planning and the role that infrastructure, location, and access play in the success of an enterprise. I argue that even if an ecotourist site possesses various environmental and cultural attractions that are of interest to tourists, if such a site is not easily accessible, tourists are unlikely to come.

Earlier this year I happened to stumble upon a travel television show called "Departures" broadcast on Outdoor Life Network. This show documents the travels of two young Canadian men as they wander across the globe, looking for new adventures, meanings and perspectives on life (OLN). They leave no stone unturned as they travel to some of what they call the most "difficult and unexplored" places on earth. The episode I happened to catch was about their explorations in Madagascar. These two young men present themselves as adventurous, laid back, and eager for new experiences, and based on their three seasons of televised travel, I have no reason to doubt they are. I was a bit

surprised to see then how much these very experienced world travellers were put off by Madagascar's poor road conditions and general lack of infrastructure. I should note that they were travelling in air conditioned 4X4s. As I watched their adventures in Madagascar, my attention was drawn to their comments about how difficult it is to get around, how the bumpy dirt roads are exhausting, and how long it takes to get from one place to another. If so-called experienced travellers are having a difficult time manoeuvring around a country like Madagascar, how are tourists who cannot or choose not to hire their own 4X4s and personal drivers managing? How are they getting around and does this *how* influence *where* they are going? Although the adventures of these two young men are edited, scripted, rehearsed, well thought out and most likely not very spontaneous, their complaint about the difficulty of travelling around Madagascar was similar to what tourists we surveyed and interviewed were experiencing, and something I can attest to myself. There is something else going on with KOFAMA's site that must be considered quite apart from these factors already discussed: its location.

In a publication entitled "Sustainable Tourism Development: A Guide for Local Planning", the World Tourism Organization (McIntyre 1993) states that there are six elements necessary for tourism planning at the local level. These include: attractions and activities for tourists, hospitality facilities and services, transport facilities, basic community infrastructure, travel arrangements, and promotion and tourist information services (McIntyre 1993: 4-5). Although KOFAMA is struggling with more than one of these elements, I cannot help but wonder whether they would still be struggling to attract a consistent clientele of tourists if they did have access to such resources. Simply put, traveling to Tsingy Mahaloka is incredibly difficult.

In order to reach Tsingy Mahaloka from the nearest airport in the city Diego-Suarez/Antsiranana in a taxi-brousse (or a bush taxi, Madagascar's main form of transportation) in one day would require that a tourist leave no later than six in the morning in order to catch the transfer for a second taxi-brousse in the town of Ambilobe (this takes approximately 6-8 hours). This second taxi-brousse, which usually stops operating by mid afternoon, would bring a tourist to the village of Antsaravibe, after which they would have to take a two and a half kilometre walk (for which they would need an experienced guide) in order to reach the Tsingy Mahaloka site. If the tourist is lucky and all taxi-brousses arrive on time (and it should be noted that they do not run on regular schedules) she/he could make it in one day, although it would be well past dinner by the time they arrive. But even this is optimistic. Madagascar's poor road conditions make it difficult for even the most experienced drivers to manoeuvre, and during the rainy season, when dirt roads quickly turn to mud, any road transportation becomes still more difficult.

The issue of location becomes even more important when we consider that tourists may only be travelling for a few short weeks. In the surveys conducted with tourists, approximately half (52%) were travelling around Madagascar for three weeks or less. This is not a significant length of time considering how much trouble it is get from one place to another. And to get to Tsingy Mahaloka alone would be at least a three day investment for a tourist. Because of this, tourists may not find it worth their while to invest their time into a venture that is so far out of the way. But there is a way for KOFAMA to overcome these issues of location and access.

CBETs are generally more successful when external support is available. For example, Kiss (2004), Stronza (2005, 2008), and Vivanco (2006) all touch on the

potential for stable and increased benefits that can come to a community-based project by establishing relationships with external private enterprises. These “joint venture” enterprises provide the local community with things like access to resources, such as marketing and managing tools, and connections, such as with guides and tourists that may not have been available to them before. This is especially important in the early stages of development. Kiss discusses three factors she sees as important in order for CBETs to be effective and sustainable: first, there must be ongoing conservation incentives (such as in the form of income), second, income must maintain the business and protect biodiversity, and third there should be a transition of these enterprises to the private sector, meaning control and management of a project needs to occur at the local level and possibly alongside a joint venture (2004: 235). These points, however, assume a stable, running operation that is generating income from which people can be paid the recommended income.

In 2008, around the same time KOFAMA began implementing their own ecotourist site, two foreign investors, business partners from France and Cuba, who work out of Madagascar’s capital city, Antananarivo, had begun developing a luxury ecolodge in the region. This ecolodge, called Iharana Lodge, is located approximately 2km from Tsingy Mahaloka. Despite the lull in tourism in 2009, Iharana Lodge managed to be quite successful through its first year of operation. This is most likely due to the fact that the owners of this ecolodge have worked in Madagascar for years, operating a travel business in Antananarivo that provides packaged excursion for tourists. They offer their tourists personal guides, comfortable transportation (such as 4X4s), and one of the owners of this lodge recently built a restaurant in the nearby town of Ambilobe. As such, they have established their Lodge and restaurant around various tourist excursions in the north

of the island, ensuring that tourists who arrange travel through their tourism company also eat and sleep at their places of business.

When the development of Iharana Lodge began in 2008, the PCV working in the region hoped that KOFAMA might benefit from its connections. But more than that, the PCV and KOFAMA also hoped that the Lodge could benefit from their ecotourist site as well. Because the land on which Tsingy Mahaloka is built contains the attractions that tourists may want to see (such as caves, limestone massifs, and lemurs), members hoped they could offer guided tours to tourists staying at the Lodge (Turner 2007a,b). In addition to this, KOFAMA also wanted to develop a garden for growing food that they could sell to the Lodge (a cheaper alternative than going into town to buy food). In 2008, the owners of the ecolodge, KOFAMA and the PCV had high hopes for a planned collaboration. Not only would it provide KOFAMA with direct access to tourists, but the ecolodge could also claim that they were participating in supporting local initiatives. But as of last summer, the partnership had stalled. With such optimism in 2008, what had changed in 2010?

If we recall Stronza's (2005) case study from Chapter 2, the joint venture between local communities in the Peruvian Amazon and Rainforest Expeditions was successful because it was a CBET site that included local people in the management, design and execution of the project's plans. It could also be argued, however, that this collaboration was so successful, especially in the initial stages of development, because during her fieldwork, Stronza was able to act as a mediator between these two groups of people when misunderstandings arose. In the case of KOFAMA and Iharana Lodge, the PCV became the mediator between the owners of this ecolodge and members of KOFAMA. Following the evacuation of all PCVs from Madagascar in 2009, however, a formal

partnership between members of KOFAMA and owners of Iharana Lodge was never fully realized. Since the most recent PCV with connections to Iharana Lodge left the region, KOFAMA members have been wary about approaching the ecolodge owners on their own.

Other examples of ecotourism ventures in the region also demonstrate the importance of location to a project's success. One such venture is an eco-lodge in the village of Mahamasina, located on the well-paved national highway and right next to the main entrance of the Ankarana National Park. The local man who started this business was inspired to do so, he said, when a tourist passing through needed a place to stay for the night. At that time, in the late 1990s, there were no taxi-brousses travelling to Diego-Suarez at nightfall, so he let this tourist stay in his home. This tourist encouraged him to build a simple bungalow that visitors passing through could use – so this is what he did. As more tourists began to visit the region, the demand for additional bungalows increased. This is how he started his business. Since beginning his venture, he has used additional support from tour agencies to build fourteen bungalows, many of which now have electricity. His site provides tourists with things like traditional Malagasy food to eat, European style bathrooms and showers, and easy access to the Ankarana National Park. Generally speaking, this site gives tourists what they want: the experience of living like the “local people” without all of the inconveniences that accompany it, while also providing them with easy access to surrounding attractions (Peter, owner of ecolodge, July 6, 2010).

The location of this site is ideal for tourists as the national highway connects most of the major attractions that tourists are coming for. This is an inspiring story that would seem to have lessons to teach to the members of KOFAMA and the managers of Tsingy

Mahaloka. But there is also no doubt that a significant part of what has made this venture work is the fact that it is located right beside the national highway, the road tourists travel most, as well as beside the main entrance to the Ankarana National Park.

In another example demonstrating the importance of infrastructure, the nearby islands Nosy Be and Nosy Komba are very well serviced by existing infrastructure and as such are popular tourist destinations. In fact, tourists coming from France and Italy can fly directly into Nosy Be without ever having to go to the mainland. Foreign business owners tend to dominate tourism ventures on these two islands, many offering packaged tours that include visits to various destinations both on the island and the Malagasy mainland. They have become popular because they can offer tourists the chance to see many different attractions in a short period of time. Although they tend to be more expensive, for many tourists the convenience of such packages makes up for the cost.

Obviously, KOFAMA has had trouble offering tourists the convenience they can find elsewhere. Because Tsingy Mahaloka is so far “off the beaten track”, it becomes a fairly big investment for tourists to visit the site, especially when they are constrained by time. It seems likely that the contradiction at the heart of this case is also apparent in other CBET projects around the world. Such projects are often likely to be developed by and for people who live off the beaten track, that is, people like the Papua New Guinea highlanders described by West and Carrier (2004), who live in communities surrounding environmentally sensitive areas and who are likely to have limited experience with ecotourism and ecotourists. Although being off the beaten track is clearly a feature of these sites that visitors are likely to value about them (May 1996), the lack of infrastructure or easy access that comes with being off the beaten track is also an obstacle that such projects are likely to face and may well be an important factor in why so many



of them struggle to succeed without the support of large tour operators who have the capacity to overcome the limitations of a hard-to-reach location. This obvious point is important to keep in mind when considering the neoliberal ideal, promoted by many advocates of CBC and CBET that community conservation and development through ecotourism should and will work. When such projects do not work, as in the case of the Crater Mountain project discussed in Chapter 2 (West and Carrier 2004), the blame generally falls back onto the community, and not the poor planning of the site, or the general lack of infrastructure needed to make a project like this work (McIntyre 1993).

KOFAMA has attempted to make its ecotourism site different by developing it as an association run project, where all members have input into site development. However, the choice of some members to change the way KOFAMA operates its site in order to accommodate tourist needs before member needs is indicative of how complicated projects like this can become when trying to account for factors (such as tourist desires) over which they have little knowledge and no control.

The fact is that no matter how grassroots a tourism project is, it is still influenced by the dominant power structures of the tourist industry.

## Chapter V - Conclusion

What I have attempted to present in my thesis is an overview of the complexities of community-based conservation and community-based ecotourism project implemented at the local level in Madagascar. Where local and global domains were once thought of and discussed as separate, global conservation trends that lead to local initiatives like Tsingy Mahaloka reveal that this is anything but true (Paulson and Gezon 2005, Gezon 2006). In broad terms, what I have hoped to show through the reviews, case studies, and anecdotal accounts discussed in this thesis is that the global is intrinsically located in the local in Madagascar, and, as Paulson and Gezon (2005) argue, and is true more generally, that the social-political and economic forces that influence international, national, and local institutions, as well as the people who make them up, are heterogeneous and constantly shifting (Tsing 2000).

This thesis began with a review of some of the literature that examines the implementation of CBC initiatives around the globe, focusing first on why many in the international community believed that such initiatives are suitable and sustainable ways of encouraging conservation and development and then on how and why Madagascar has increasingly promoted such initiatives (up until the coup, anyways).

In Chapter 3, I looked more closely at the case of KOFAMA. Concerned with how the terms “community” and “association” both tend to promote the assumption of homogenous groups of actors involved, I examined the heterogeneity that characterizes both KOFAMA as an association and, what some might term, the broader local “community” of people it is trying to reach. I also considered other associations in the region to better understand how and why local people are participating in them and why some associations are, essentially, more successful than others. Because KOFAMA is an

association that has struggled with keeping its membership, this comparison was particularly useful. KOFAMA is complex because of its attempts to achieve community conservation and development through the creation of a protected ecotourist site, which leads it to seek to influence non-member residents living in surrounding areas. As I have shown, the heterogeneity of these non-members complicates even further the issue of what the “community” in community-based conservation actually means.

Finally, Chapter 4 examined the motives of tourists and why they may or may not want to visit a site like KOFAMA’s. Tourists are a diverse group of individuals who have different ideas and perceptions of travel as is apparent in the many different forms of alternative tourism they have chosen to engage in. Many of those surveyed equated ecotourism with local benefits, environmental protection and conservation, as well as increased local development. Others saw it as potentially harmful because increased ecotourism could erode local culture, increase sex tourism, and impact local perceptions of foreigners negatively. Even more problematic for KOFAMA than differences in what foreigners thought ecotourism should be about, however, were differences in what members themselves thought should and should not be done for the ecotourists coming to stay at Tsingy Mahaloka. Through one simple case it became very clear that, regardless of what ecotourists themselves thought, differing perspectives within KOFAMA’s membership, regarding tourist perceptions and expectations, could have an influence on the association’s operation, revealing the extent to which even alternative forms of tourism that promote community development and consensus can also lead to disagreements. I concluded the chapter by extending the focus beyond tourist perceptions to other factors that may influence their participation at Tsingy Mahaloka, in particular the location of the site. In addition to the contradictory behaviour of tourists and the

disunity and disagreements that have appeared in KOFAMA's membership, the location of the Tsingy Mahaloka site is quite clearly a factor contributing to the association's struggles. Although efforts made at working with a nearby eco-lodge have yielded some benefits for the association, it is too soon to tell whether this collaboration can be sustained over the long term.

I began this thesis by referring to a national political crisis that has had dramatic effects not just on Madagascar, but also on KOFAMA's efforts at developing Tsingy Mahaloka. Obviously, there are other trends and events – everything from the global financial crisis of 2008 to the recent grounding of Air Madagascar planes – that stand to impact KOFAMA's efforts at promoting local conservation and development. By acknowledging such impacts, I hoped to demonstrate the complexities found within these kinds of projects, and that in fact many of the obstacles KOFAMA has been struggling to overcome have been well out of their control.

### **Complexities of Collaboration**

On another note, I want to acknowledge that the complexities of collaborations and circumstances I have discussed in this thesis regarding KOFAMA are also evident in the collaboration and circumstances that made my research possible. Alette and I had just met briefly before we were dropped off at our home-stay for our first round of research in the village of Anasatrana, and I feel I can safely say that we were both a little nervous. Not only would we be together every day and night for the next week and a half, but we were also both new and inexperienced researchers attempting to navigate our way through the concepts and methods of “semi-structured interviews” and “translations” that left us feeling a little bit lost on more than one occasion. We had different academic and cultural backgrounds, and values, which sometimes led to misunderstandings in research, and

other times led to eye-opening experiences that lessened our differences and helped us to establish relationships of trust – an important feature for lasting collaboration. Indeed, the trust we developed in Madagascar made it possible for me to act as a “cultural liaison” for Alette as she pursued her own research interests in Canada.

Collaboration is beneficial in a field like anthropology where transcending cultural boundaries, understanding cultural norms, and grasping a language can be difficult. But it is just as important to note the difficulties involved in collaborative work. To say that I never experienced feelings of frustration (although the frustration largely came from my own inability to talk with interviewees) would be misleading. Obstacles Alette and I encountered during this research were generally always worked through, but this required flexibility and a willingness to adapt to new situations that arose (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007). In a sense, then, our research collaboration is an example of how obstacles to success do not necessarily guarantee failure. Successful collaboration takes persistence, perseverance, and the willingness of those involved to keep trying even through difficult times. This last point in mind, I will finish this thesis with some final, positive thoughts on KOFAMA and the future of Tsingy Mahaloka.

### **KOFAMA’s future?**

KOFAMA has faced its fair share of struggles, and continues to do so. But despite these struggles KOFAMA is still a functioning association with members who are interested in pursuing the general goals with which it has always been concerned. In March 2011, a new PCV began working in the region. Interested in helping KOFAMA re-establish Tsingy Mahaloka, in May 2011 (only weeks ago as I write this) this PCV emailed some of the key players involved with KOFAMA’s continued development – including the three previous PCV who worked in the region, Dr. Walsh, Dr. Colquhoun,

Alex Totomovario and the director of the Peace Corps in Madagascar – in search of some advice and insight on the association and its future.

Although the email sent by this PCV indicated that KOFAMA's facilities are in very poor condition, (a brush fire in December 2010 had destroyed the former PCV hut as well as several of the "bungalows" intended for visitors at KOFAMA's site), he remained hopeful that these issues could be overcome and that Tsingy Mahaloka could become functional again. In the ensuing weeks there has been a steady flow of email correspondence among these key players (Dr. Walsh and Dr. Colquhoun have cced me on much of it), each responding to the original message offering their own insights on and knowledge of what they see as the important issues that need to be addressed for KOFAMA and Tsingy Mahaloka. As the director of Peace Corps Madagascar stated,

"I would not get too discouraged that things aren't booming with the Kofama facilities or their operations. In fact, I would have been very surprised to hear that all was well. In fact, it highlights the challenges of sustainable community development but also the difficulty of getting a successful enterprise up and running. How many new "businesses" fail in their first year or two? I'm sure there is a nice statistic out on the web somewhere, but you get the point."

This positive message is an important one to remember. Just because KOFAMA has not yet achieved a consistent clientele, or because their goals for conservation and development have not yet been fully realized, or even because the stability of their association and its membership is precarious, does not mean that KOFAMA cannot keep trying to achieve their ambitions. The arrival of a new PCV in the region is sure to spark interest among association members again, and the fact that he has already reached out for support and advice from others who have extensive experience in the region is a positive sign.

In May 2011, I contributed to a document outlining some recommendations for KOFAMA and Tsingy Mahaloka (see Appendix A). These recommendations were based on the findings that came out of our collaborative research at and around Tsingy Mahaloka in 2010. In writing these recommendations we were aware that some of what we were proposing had, in fact, been attempted before. In compiling them together in such a report, however, we hoped that they would be useful not only for KOFAMA members who are well aware of some of the concerns we raised, but also for the new PCV working in the region, someone with limited knowledge of what has come before.

As I write this, some participants involved in the 2010 collaborative research project, including Tahosy Radaniarison (who worked with Emma Hunter during her research), Bryan Wilson (a current MA student who was a part of the field course last year), Louis Phillipe D'Arivisenet (a local guide who helped us a great deal during our time at the site), and Alex Totomarovario (head of the program at the UA with which UWO students affiliated with during our time in Madagascar) are travelling to Tsingy Mahaloka to deliver these recommendations to KOFAMA members and the PCV. We hope that members will find these recommendations useful, and if nothing else we hope they understand that without their support and endless discussions with us about their association and site, our work would not have been possible.

Although KOFAMA has been struggling to maintain its membership there is something to be said for the fact that they now have successfully hosted the UWO/UA Field Course twice, for three days in 2008 and for several weeks in 2010. And despite all of the external and internal factors that have worked against this association, members are still very much dedicated and have the desire to see Tsingy Mahaloka develop into an ecotourist site that might help to increase community awareness of conservation issues in

the region and while providing some of the funds necessary for local development projects.



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**Table 1:**

## Fokontany in the Antsaravibe Rural Commune

| Fokontany<br>(Village) | Malagasy Residents | Foreigners | Total  |
|------------------------|--------------------|------------|--------|
| Antsaravibe            | 2.131              | N/A        | 2.131  |
| Antsamalahy            | 1.070              | N/A        | 1.070  |
| Mahatsara              | 910                | N/A        | 910    |
| Andranomamy            | 815                | N/A        | 815    |
| Analasatrana           | 752                | 01         | 753    |
| Ankobahoba             | 630                | N/A        | 630    |
| Ampanasina             | 1.010              | N/A        | 1.010  |
| Andranofotsy           | 911                | N/A        | 911    |
| Ambatoharanana         | 1.050              | N/A        | 1.050  |
| Andrafiabe             | 520                | N/A        | 520    |
| Antsatrabonko          | 455                | N/A        | 455    |
| Matsaborimanga         | 451                | N/A        | 451    |
| Ampotsehy              | 1.100              | 03         | 1.103  |
| Ampampamena            | 1.296              | 02         | 1.298  |
| Total                  | 13.101             | 06         | 13.107 |

Courtesy of the Mayor's Office, Antsaravibe, Northern Madagascar

## **Appendix A:**

### **Interim Report regarding KOFAMA (prepared May/June 2011)**

*Ian Colquhoun, Alex Totomarovario, Andrew Walsh, Ben Freed, Emma Hunter, Ashley Patterson and Bryan Wilson.*

#### ***Introduction***

From May to August 2010, we conducted research in and around the *Tsingy Mahaloka* ecotourist site (located near Ansaravibe, Antsiranana, Madagascar). Our research team consisted of students and faculty from the University of Western Ontario (Canada), Université d'Antsiranana (Madagascar), the University of West Georgia (USA), Eastern Kentucky University (USA) and the musée du quai Branly (France). Our research was carried out with the cooperation of the leaders and members of KOFAMA (*Koperativa Fikambanana Ankarabe Mitsinjo Arivo*), the association that developed and currently manages the *Tsingy Mahaloka* site.

Funding for this project was supplied by an International Opportunities Fund Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (file 861-2009-1012, project title: "An anthropological study of a community-managed conservation and ecotourism project in northern Madagascar"). The purpose of this grant was to promote international collaboration.

Our collaborative research efforts focused broadly on addressing the following question: *How, and to what extent, do the diverse interests and perspectives of KOFAMA's various stakeholders precipitate miscommunication, misunderstandings and other hindrances to the achievement of this project's stated goals of encouraging local social and economic development, preserving local cultural heritage, and conserving local biodiversity?*

In our efforts at addressing this broad question, we concentrated on three topics in particular. First, we examined the broad social and economic effects that KOFAMA and the *Tsingy Mahaloka* project are having in the region. Second, we investigated the efforts being made at promoting and preserving local cultural heritage and sacred sites. Third, we studied the effects of this project on the region's endangered lemur populations and lemur habitats.

The following report offers a brief synopsis of some of the key findings of our research that are especially relevant to the recommendations we will be providing to the membership of

KOFAMA. More in-depth discussions of many of these issues will be forthcoming in the MA Theses of Hunter and Patterson (at the University of Western Ontario) and in the forthcoming work of Soameva and Radaniarison (Université d'Antsiranana).

Research was conducted between May and August 2010 in two phases. During the first phase (May-June), the research team consisted of a large number of Malagasy and Canadian undergraduate and MA students, as well as team leaders Colquhoun, Totomarovario and Walsh, and visiting collaborators Berger, Freed, and Gezon. During the second phase (July-August), MA students Hunter, Patterson, Radaniarison and Soameva continued their research.

### ***Key Findings and Recommendations***

#### **1. Concerning the existing and potential impacts of *Tsingy Mahaloka***

Since its establishment in 2006-7, the *Tsingy Mahaloka* site has seen a great deal of development. As of July 2010, the site featured a main office structure, a kitchen structure, several huts, several sand tenting pits, a well-built toilet and shower area, a covered dining structure and a nearby water-well. This development has come as a result of a great deal of work by the membership of KOFAMA and thanks to the assistance of three Peace Corps Volunteers who have played key roles in securing funding for, organizing and managing the campsite. The campsite has also benefited from the support and cooperation of the owners of the nearby ecotourist lodge, Iharana Lodge.

One key finding of our research is that awareness of the campsite and of KOFAMA's existence and goals remains limited among two key groups: first, among tour operators who are in a position to bring or send visitors to *Tsingy Mahaloka*, and, second, among inhabitants of the region in which the campsite is located.

Interviews conducted with tour operators in Antsiranana indicated that few knew of the existence of *Tsingy Mahaloka* at all. This is partly due to the relative newness of the site – it accepted its first paying visitors only in 2008. That those interviewed were very interested to hear more about the project, however, indicates that it would be advisable to continue efforts at spreading news of this venture. This means not only targeting

large tour operators in the cities of Antsiranana and Nosy Be, but also the people responsible for various conservation, educational or “voluntourism” projects that operate in the region. Some examples of these latter groups are: Blue Ventures (<http://blueventures.org/expeditions/madagascar-expeditions.html>), Madaclinics (<http://madaclinics.org/>), the School for International Training, Frontier, etc. It seems likely that organizers of such programs might be especially interested in the opportunities that *Tsingy Mahaloka* can provide for involving visitors in the research, cultural events and service learning opportunities that have been a part of the University of Western Ontario (UWO)/University of Antsiranana (UA) Field Courses (held partly at Tsingy Mahaloka) in 2008 and 2010. Participants in such programs are also likely to be more understanding of the fact that the *Tsingy Mahaloka* project is a work-in-progress – indeed, they may find this feature of the project, and the fact that they might be able to participate in its development, to be very appealing.

*Recommendation: Communicate the existence of Tsingy Mahaloka and the attractions offered there to tour operators and to people responsible for organizing participatory conservation, educational or “voluntourism” projects in Antsiranana and Nosy Be.*

Interviews and surveys conducted with residents of communities surrounding the *Tsingy Mahaloka* campsite indicated that relatively few local people knew of KOFAMA or its goals. Less than 50% of survey respondents (who were not members of KOFAMA) indicated that they knew of the association. This is especially concerning in that increasing tourist traffic created by the project may lead some local observers to speculate, incorrectly, about the nature and goals of this association and the *Tsingy Mahaloka* site. Interviews with several people unconnected with the project suggested that rumors were already circulating about the possibility that foreigners and Malagasy people were looking to extract sapphires, mercury or bones from the caves near the campsite. As the project grows, it will be important to continue efforts at communicating correct information regarding KOFAMA and *Tsingy Mahaloka* to residents of the region.

*Recommendation: Communicate the existence and goals of Tsingy Mahaloka and KOFAMA to inhabitants of the region through various media including public meetings, radio broadcasts, and visits to schools.*



A key point to keep in mind when formulating a plan for communicating with local people is that the region's population is extremely heterogeneous. Among the 71 residents surveyed, for example, no single answer to the question "What is your kind (*karazana/firazana*)?" predominated (12 replied Antaimoro, 10 Antankarana, 8 Tsimihety, 6 Sakalava, 5 Antandroy, 4 Betsileo, 4 Anjoaty, 3 Makoa, etc.). Religious affiliation is similarly diverse. Since there is no single ethnic or religious "community" in the region, efforts made at reaching out to the local population through presentations at regular meetings of associations and religious groups must be broad.

Another way in which information about the existence and goals of KOFAMA and *Tsingy Mahaloka* might be communicated to local people is through presentations at schools in the region. This could be carried out by KOFAMA members, whose own children/grandchildren may attend these schools, or by visitor-volunteers (working with translators if unable to speak Malagasy) who are familiar with the association, its history and its aspirations. Malagasy and Canadian students participating in the UWO/UA field course made very well received presentations at schools in Ansaravibe in 2010. Although their presentations did not focus on KOFAMA, there is no reason why future presentations of this sort couldn't do so. Another possibility would be to have students at local schools make field trips to the *Tsingy Mahaloka* site. If relevant to the plans of teachers leading such trips, visits could be timed to coincide with the presence of Malagasy or foreign researchers working at the site.

Obviously, the success of this project depends on more than just communicating news of its existence and goals to outsiders. To succeed over the long term, the project also requires a stable organizational foundation. This foundation is currently provided by KOFAMA, the association that manages the campsite. Through research with the membership of KOFAMA, and on voluntary associations in the region more generally, we identified a number of issues worth considering as the project goes forward.

First, it is important to note that, based on interviews and survey results, it is clear that people in this region find value in membership in voluntary associations of various kinds. 67% of survey respondents indicated that they are currently members of at least one voluntary association. Such associations take different forms and have very different goals, however, and it is important to keep in mind that people joining such associations

are most likely to continue participating in them when the communal goals sought by the group match up with their own personal goals.

Interviews conducted with a broad array of association members (i.e., members of KOFAMA and of other voluntary organizations) indicate that some of the organizational problems that KOFAMA has encountered during its short existence are similar to those encountered by other associations in the region. For example, many respondents were concerned about how the finances of the associations with which they affiliated were managed. We also found, however, that KOFAMA presents some unique problems, the greatest among them being a lack of coherent and commonly held understandings of what the ultimate goals of the association are, and what role the *Tsingy Mahaloka* project will play in helping to achieve these goals. Through interviews conducted with KOFAMA's membership, it became clear that, despite a common commitment to broad goals, not all agree on just what, specifically, the association is meant to accomplish nor on what role the *Tsingy Mahaloka* site is meant to play in the pursuit of these goals. Although this is to be expected since KOFAMA is the first association of its kind in the region, it is also something that must be addressed if the association and its projects are to be sustained. In 2010, it was clear that some of the original members of the association had become, or were becoming, disaffected.

*Recommendation: That the goals and regulations of KOFAMA and Tsingy Mahaloka be discussed and clarified, and that these goals be clearly indicated in written and oral form for the sake of the membership. It is also recommended that regular meetings of the association occur to ensure that the membership is kept informed of progress towards meeting these goals.*

Keeping the membership informed about the goals of the association and the role of *Tsingy Mahaloka* should be understood as an ongoing process. Thus, meetings should be regular – at least once per year. One possibility would be to plan a general meeting of the membership that would coincide with an event scheduled for the beginning of the tourist season – an annual “door opening” ceremony, for example, to which traditional authorities responsible for local land and cave tombs (*tompontany* and *tompo'ny fasana*), representatives of MNP and local government, and tourists could also be invited. In the past, such events occurred annually at SIRAMA (the nearby sugar

plantation, as it was then known) to mark the beginning of “la coupe” or the cane-harvest.

Of particular concern to a number of members of KOFAMA were questions surrounding the handling and distribution of the money generated by the *Tsingy Mahaloka* campsite. Although the site has been visited by relatively few paying visitors (for reasons to be discussed below) since 2008, there have been enough of them to generate a significant amount of revenue for the project. In interviews conducted in 2010, several members expressed uncertainty regarding how this money had been or was to be dealt with: would it be reinvested in the campground? Would it be redistributed among the membership? Would it be saved for later use in a development project?

*Recommendation: Discuss and develop a clear plan for the management of money generated by the project, with clear guidelines for how this money is to be reinvested, redistributed and saved.*

Based on interviews conducted with members of other successful associations in the region, there appear to be a number of ways of dealing with some of the problems that seem inherent to managing the finances of voluntary, collective organizations such as this one. Some associations have well regulated systems for managing collective bank accounts – systems that require that multiple members of an association be present for any withdrawals, for example – that might be imitated here. The membership will know of other systems that might work for them if imitated.

To avoid confusion among the membership, it may also make sense to set realistic *annual* goals at the beginning of a given tourist season. For example, in any given year, funds not devoted to paying the salaries/stipends of campsite staff (cooks, guards, guides, etc.) or the costs of campsite maintenance could be devoted to particular, achievable, projects in participating communities.

Among the most important lessons learned through our research is that the fate of the *Tsingy Mahaloka* project is tied to a number of factors over which KOFAMA’s

membership has no control. For example, after a relatively successful start during the tourist season of 2008, the campsite saw no visitors at all in 2009 following a national political crisis that caused many foreigners to stay away from Madagascar. During this crisis, the Peace Corps Volunteer who had been an essential member of the project's management team was also withdrawn. That the project managed to continue through this period of upheaval, despite an absence of clients and revenue, is a very positive sign of the commitment of its core members and supporters.

Local residents also have no control over the poor state of the infrastructure that services the site, meaning that strategies must be developed for overcoming associated limitations. Better and more frequent permanent signage on roads leading to the site, for example, could facilitate travel by car or bicycle. Similarly, an outpost or information kiosk/billboard might be placed at the Analasatrana crossroads. In order to facilitate frequent contact with tour operators, effective lines of communication must also be developed. Rather than just one cellular phone dedicated to the project, it might make sense to have two or three in service during peak tourist season.

Local residents also have no control over the tastes and demands of tourists themselves. That noted, a survey conducted with tourists in Antsiranana, Nosy Komba and Mahamasina suggests that the attractions, services and experiences on offer at *Tsingy Mahaloka* are in high demand among the project's target clientele. Significantly, both long- and short-stay tourists (i.e., tourists staying for more or less than 15 days) indicated strong support for the idea that ecotourism should benefit local populations. This bodes well for the project. Obviously, however, there is an important distinction to be made between tourists' professed desires regarding the impact of their activities, and these activities themselves. For example, tourists interested in this sort of project but travelling on short, seven-day, tours of Madagascar may not be able to afford the time it would take to organize and effect a visit to *Tsingy Mahaloka*. Serving such tourists will require partnering with tour operators and the nearby Iharana Lodge to ensure that *Tsingy Mahaloka* is included on organized tours of the region. Another previously noted possibility is to reach out to organizers of participatory conservation, educational and voluntourism programs. Participants in such programs generally have more time to spend in Madagascar, and are generally eager for opportunities to participate in the research opportunities and cultural experiences available at a site like this one.

There is good reason to be optimistic regarding the future of KOFAMA and *Tsingy Mahaloka*. Since it is the first project of its kind in this region, the market for the sorts of services and experiences it offers to visitors is wide open. That it is the first of its kind in the region also means, however, that there are no nearby models for effectively managing a project like this one. This last point in mind, there may be some value in considering, promoting and seeking support for *Tsingy Mahaloka* as a potential *model* for how projects like this one might operate in the region and elsewhere in Madagascar. Doing so might have the added benefit of making it clear to all involved – KOFAMA’s membership, other local residents, tour operators, conservation workers, tourists and others – that *Tsingy Mahaloka* is a work in progress, and, as such, is in need of considerable support and frequent reevaluation as it gets off the ground. Promoting *Tsingy Mahaloka* as a pioneering, innovative venture may also help in attracting researchers, field course organizers, study abroad instructors and others interested in on-the-ground examples of community based conservation in action.

## 2. Concerning KOFAMA’s efforts at promoting and preserving local cultural heritage

As noted in the introduction, among the topics on which we focused research efforts in 2010 was the effort being made to promote and preserve local cultural heritage. We focused in particular on the existing and potential impacts of the use of a cave tomb-site near *Tsingy Mahaloka* as a tourist attraction. The cave in question features coffins, skeletal material and a wide range of artifacts associated with traditional mortuary practice in the region. KOFAMA has been promoting this site as an attraction at which visitors might get a glimpse of certain aspects of local traditional culture.

Beginning in 2007, efforts had been made by members of KOFAMA to locate the local descendents of the ancestors entombed in these caves. No descendents could be found, however, leading KOFAMA’s leaders to conclude that these tomb sites had been abandoned. Tomb abandonment is not an uncommon occurrence in the region (descendents may have left the region, converted to a different religion and mortuary tradition, or have chosen to begin entombing their dead in different cave-tombs for one reason or another).

Following further inquiries in 2010, we located an elder (known politely as Ada'ny Soa) in the nearby community of Ansaravibe who claimed "ownership" or "responsibility" for this site – that is, to be *tompo'ny fasana* – meaning that he considered the ancestors entombed in these caves to be his own. This man was concerned to hear reports that the site was being visited by visitors and KOFAMA guides without his permission. In a recorded interview, he insisted that this was not proper practice, and wondered aloud whether the people visiting might be stealing his ancestors' bones (a commonly voiced concern in the region and in Madagascar more generally).

Past research and experiences in the region suggest that cave-tombs are important sites at which the traditional authority of elders and ancestors is manifested in a number of different ways – through the imposition and observance of taboos related to behavior and dress, through rituals intended to provide descendents and other participants with ancestral blessing, and, most relevant to this report, through controlling access to these sites themselves. As Ada'ny Soa remarked in an interview, people seeking access to a place like this must go to the people responsible for it – i.e., to the *tompo'ny fasana*. We took this remark as an indication of his insistence that KOFAMA should be consulting with him if they are to go on using this site as an attraction.

In an effort at mediating a resolution to this situation, we proposed a meeting at which KOFAMA's leaders could discuss their intentions for this site with Ada'ny Soa. This meeting took place at *Tsingy Mahaloka* in early June 2010. It was followed by a ceremony at the entrance to the cave in question at which Ada'ny Soa invoked the ancestors entombed here to request permission to enter. Following this invocation, a large group of us (members of the research team as well as members of KOFAMA) followed him into the caves and visited a number of different tomb-sites. Further invocations were made at different tomb-sites and Ada'ny Soa was able to provide clarification on certain aspects of traditional mortuary practice about which KOFAMA's guides had been uncertain. Upon leaving the cave, Ada'ny Soa performed a final invocation, requesting blessing for all involved, and indicating that more visitors would be coming in the future.

The successful conclusion of this event leads us to our first recommendation.

*Recommendation: Maintain regular communication with Ada'ny Soa and other tompo'ny fasana/responsibles for the Mandresibe Cave in order to develop and regularly evaluate policies regarding use of this site as an attraction.*

Maintaining this regular communication through planned meetings and events will serve a number of important functions. First, it will ensure that policies and practices involving this site remain in accordance with the wishes of local traditional authorities. Second, it will help to counter concerns and rumors regarding how this site is being used by KOFAMA and visitors to the *Tsingy Mahaloka* site. Finally, under the circumstances suggested below, it could provide KOFAMA's members, visitors to the site and local traditional authorities with opportunities to gather in ways that could benefit all.

One previously mentioned possibility would be to plan an annual "door-opening" ceremony – that is, a ceremony at which permission to enter the caves is requested – at the start of each tourist season. Such a ceremony could include traditional authorities like Ada'ny Soa (and others in the region), members of KOFAMA, and even visitors (whether tourists, volunteers, students, or others). It would provide traditional authorities with a recurring occasion for indicating their authority over the site, members of KOFAMA with an occasion for meeting and planning at the beginning of the tourist season, and visitors to the site with a unique opportunity for participating in both local traditions and the project itself. It is not unusual in this region for outsiders (whether KOFAMA's members or visitors) to become involved in events like the one proposed here. Indeed, ceremonies involving the invocation of ancestors at tomb-sites have long been among the most important ways in which relationships among unrelated people have been created and fostered in this region – whether relationships between local people and foreigners, or among different Malagasy descent/ethnic groups (among *lohateny* partners, for example). Obviously, such ceremonies would have to be planned by KOFAMA's leaders through consultation with Ada'ny Soa and other traditional authorities.

In an interview conducted several weeks after the ceremony described above, Ada'ny Soa indicated that he would never request money for giving another person access to the cave-tomb site. Doing so, he noted, would be akin to selling one's ancestors. He also said, however, that he would accept the offer of a *gift* of money from someone who had requested access to this site. Gifts of money suggest reciprocity and newly created

or ongoing relationships among people, and as such are not perceived to be as threatening to traditional norms of relating with ancestors in the way that a one-time transaction of money for access might. Simply put, although the end result may be the same, there is a significant difference to be drawn between demanding a fee for access to a tomb-site and being offered a gift by someone who had received access to this same site.

Interviews with tourists visiting the region indicated that many of them have their own concerns about the potential impacts that the money they bring into Malagasy communities may have. Some respondents to a survey regarding community based ecotourism in Madagascar were particularly worried that the money they bring into the communities they visit may have negative effects, not just on local people but on traditional systems of exchange that do not involve money. We expect that such tourists might be especially concerned that in paying money in exchange for a visit to a sacred location like a tomb-site, they may be encouraging local people to value such sites in potentially problematic ways.

*Recommendation: Discuss, develop and make known clear policies related to the collection, distribution and management of money generated by tours of the cave tombs.*

Money collected from visitors taking tours of nearby cave-tombs presents a particularly problematic array of issues. Given the possibility that exchanges of money for access to tomb-sites might be construed as “selling ancestors” by some local people and as undesirable by some visitors, it may make more sense to conceive of these exchanges in a more culturally appropriate way – that is, as “gifts” offered by visitors rather than “fees” demanded by project managers. This subtle distinction will likely make more sense to local people than to visitors, and thus, if the proposal is implemented, the difference between giving gifts of money and paying fees must be well explained to visitors. Another step that might be taken in an effort to avoid problems associated with collecting money from visitors to the tomb-sites would be to ensure that a portion of the money collected be set aside and devoted to projects intended to honor or remember ancestors entombed here. For example, some of this money might be used to sponsor the annual “door opening” ceremony suggested above. Another option would be to use some of this money to sponsor events at which ancestral remains at this site could be tended to in appropriate ways (through the construction of new coffins for exposed



bones, for example). As with an annual “door opening” ceremony, not only would such events likely be of interest to visitors, the presence of visitors/outsideers at such events would not be out of the ordinary. In all cases, advice regarding the planning of such events should always be sought from local traditional authorities.

Several weeks after the ceremony described above, we learned through an interview that although the tomb-sites of Ada’ny Soa’s ancestors were accessible through the cave entrance that KOFAMA’s guides were using to lead visitors on their tours, there were many tomb-sites in these caves for which he was not responsible. KOFAMA’s guides must therefore be careful not to take the permission granted by Ada’ny Soa as a blanket permission for visiting any and all tomb-sites accessible by means of this entrance. In order to avoid problems arising from visiting tomb sites to which access has not been granted by traditional authorities, it is recommended that a set visit-circuit be developed and clearly marked inside the cave.

*Recommendation: Through consultation with Ada’ny Soa and others responsible for this site, develop a clear, safe and respectful circuit that tourists and guides can consistently follow through the cave. Such a circuit should be designed to ensure the well-being of visitors, entombed ancestors and local descendants, and to maintain the integrity of the human remains and cultural material found on site.*

In addition to ensuring that visitors and guides will not disturb tomb-sites to which they have not been given access, such a circuit can also be planned in such a way as to ensure the safety of visitors inside the caves. It will be important to communicate to visitors the fact that straying from the pre-determined visit-circuit is potentially disrespectful. Based on interviews conducted with tourists, we expect that they will be amenable to this justification. Obviously, this circuit should be mapped out through consultation with Ada’ny Soa and other local traditional authorities.

The use of a local cave-tomb site as an attraction for visitors presents certain problems that must be addressed if the site is to go on being used in this way. Of particular importance is that responsibility for the care and tending of this site be recognized as

something that is shared by local traditional authorities, KOFAMA's membership and all visitors.

### 3. Concerning Conservation Measures

In July 2007, during a brief trip to the town of Antsiravibe to visit Christi Turner, the Peace Corps volunteer then stationed there, Colquhoun accompanied Turner to the Tsingy Mahaloka site and the Mandrasibe Cave. At that point, KOFAMA was a relatively new organization and people living in the vicinity of Tsingy Mahaloka were only just beginning work toward establishing an ecotourist camping area at the site. Despite the infrastructure for ecotourist camping being in its formative stages, however, there was obvious potential for the Tsingy Mahaloka site to be a destination for an undergraduate field course that, at the time, was being planned by Walsh and Colquhoun. Further, the Tsingy Mahaloka site also held great potential for Master's students who were interested in conducting thesis research concerning the establishment of the KOFAMA collective, its functioning as an agent for community-managed conservation of the Tsingy Mahaloka site, and the effects/impacts on the local stakeholders of the activities of the ecotourists who would be visiting the site.

During this 2007 visit, Colquhoun was at Tsingy Mahaloka (and the adjacent Ambatomilaloha massif) for only a few hours, but he was able to confirm that crowned lemurs (*Eulemur coronatus*) occurred on both massifs. This was important on several levels:

- it provided KOFAMA with a "flagship" species around which (some) local conservation efforts for the Tsingy Mahaloka site could be organized;
- it established the presence of a crowned lemur population *outside* the boundaries of the Ankarana Special Reserve (now National Park) just to the north of the Tsingy Mahaloka site;
- this meant that future graduate research in primatology and locally-managed conservation was also possible at the Tsingy Mahaloka site; and,
- in the larger scope of things, it meant that the crowned lemurs on the Tsingy Mahaloka and Ambatomilaloha massifs represented the southwestern geographic extent of the distribution of this species (the Mahavavy Nord river immediately to the south of the Ambatomilaloha massif formed the southern limit in the geographic distribution of crowned lemurs) – in other words, this was a biologically significant population of crowned lemurs.

Monitoring of the crowned lemur population at Tsingy Mahaloka and Ambatomilaloha began in 2008, initially during the Environmental Anthropology undergraduate field course run by Walsh and Colquhoun in May and June of that year, and then in a more concerted manner following completion of the field course with Master's thesis research conducted by Shauna Solomon from mid-June through late August. Solomon's field work, and subsequent thesis, on *E. coronatus* at Tsingy Mahaloka and Ambatomilaloha provides a valuable baseline set of data for monitoring the crowned lemurs. She also established that, based on interviews with local people, the related Sanford's brown lemur (*Eulemur sanfordi*) had previously also been found at Tsingy Mahaloka, but had apparently been extirpated by around the turn of this century due to hunting.

One of Solomon's primary conclusions in her thesis was that, for KOFAMA, it is crucial to address issues of biological conservation and monitoring relating to the Tsingy Mahaloka site. In line with this, we had part of our research team (Colquhoun and Freed, along with students Bryan Wilson and Mamy Harisoa, and guides Louis-Philippe d'Arvisenet and Felix) conduct follow-up monitoring of the crowned lemurs on the Tsingy Mahaloka and Ambatomilaloha massifs in May and June 2010. Our aim was to gain complementary and comparative data to the group census transect data Solomon had obtained in 2008. In walking the same transects in 2010 that Solomon had used in 2008, we found evidence to suggest that the number of crowned lemur groups on the two massifs had increased in that time (e.g., in addition to finding lemur groups in the same areas that Solomon had encountered them, we also encountered other lemur groups in areas that Solomon had not seen lemurs); interviews with members of KOFAMA were consistent with this assessment (e.g., people told us that lemurs were easier to see than in 2008, and that there were more of them). At the very least, the crowned lemur population on the Tsingy Mahaloka and Ambatomilaloha massifs is holding its own. We also had, apparently, a single encounter with Sanford's brown lemur in June 2010, but this was to the north of Tsingy Mahaloka, although still outside the Ankarana National Park (we heard calls that were certainly not those of crowned lemurs, but were attributable to *E. sanfordi*). Thus, we feel that we have established, in effect, what the southwestern limits in geographic distribution are for both the crowned lemur and Sanford's brown lemur.

While Solomon felt that monitoring of the Tsingy Mahaloka (and Ambatomilaloha) crowned lemurs was a worthwhile long-term goal, she felt there were perhaps greater gains to be had if KOFAMA's limited resources were directed primarily towards

minimizing habitat destructions (e.g., forest loss, in particular), and fostering site remediation. She also felt that it would be productive to undertake a botanic inventory of the tree species in the KOFAMA community-protected area (including the documenting of native vs. non-native species). Such botanic work could be elaborated through the inclusion of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) in the data that were recorded. Solomon noted in her thesis that not only can a research approach incorporating TEK produce quantitative data, such an approach also fosters conservation through feed-back learning by incorporating both ecological and social dimensions into an integrative research effort.

With that background to our 2010 fieldwork at KOFAMA, we offer the following recommendations relating to conservation measures at the Tsingy Mahaloka site:

*Recommendation: With the assistance of visiting researchers and students, continue to document, monitor and publicize the diversity of flora and fauna in and around the managed forest.*

Documentation and monitoring (e.g., as mentioned above, documenting the botanic diversity at the site; monitoring the lemur groups; etc.) could be a conservation aim that would be of interest to Malagasy and foreign university students and volunteers. Having a "Sightings" book at the Tsingy Mahaloka camp in which ecotourists could record species (e.g., birds) that they have observed and/or photographed could be an easy way to begin to accumulate useful longitudinal data on the biodiversity of the KOFAMA community-managed conservation area. Linking with tour operators to advertise this documented diversity of species could attract ecotourism "specialty clients" (in particular, birdwatching enthusiasts).

*Recommendation: Promote conservation of local biodiversity in the managed area and in surrounding communities.*

This should include measures against lemur hunting. Indeed, in speaking with leading members of KOFAMA, there has already been significant progress in communicating about putting an end to lemur hunting, as well as in actually curbing instances of hunting. This early success for the KOFAMA community-managed conservation efforts

should be followed-up with a consistent conservation message to ensure that ground is not lost on this front.

*Recommendation: Promote the conservation and growth of the managed forest by limiting the felling of trees, encouraging fuel wood collection from elsewhere, and planting tree saplings (including native tree species) on forest edges.*

Should replanting of trees be undertaken, we suggest that it would be productive to consult with botanists and primatologists concerning the best, or most appropriate, tree species to plant. Possible candidate species would include, among others, mango (*Mangifera indica*), tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), and Harungana (*Harungana madagascariensis*). Note that all of these tree species are both food species for lemurs, but are also economically useful for humans as well. Any tree-planting that is undertaken by KOFAMA could involve visitors to the Tsingy Mahaloka site (e.g., students, volunteers-ecotourists, etc.), as well as KOFAMA members. In addition to planting trees on the forest edges in the community-managed conservation area, trees (of non-economically valuable species) that could provide fuel wood might be planted away from the forest edges and closer to where people are living.

Finally, in closing, we note that both our approach to conducting research at the KOFAMA community-managed conservation area, and the recommendations we have made concerning conservation efforts there, are concordant with the recently established Position Statement and Guidelines of the International Primatological Society (IPS) concerning "Conservation through Community Involvement" (see:

<http://www.internationalprimatologicalsociety.org/ImprovingPrimateConservationThroughCommunityInvolvement.cfm>).

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