Standardization as Language Loss : Potentially Endangered Malagasy Languages and Their Llinguistic Features

Standardization as Language Loss: Potentially Endangered Malagasy Languages and Their Linguistic Features

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The goal of this paper is to draw attention to the loss of linguistic features found in regional varieties, a major cause of which is standardization. Data from some Malagasy languages—representing just a small portion of their linguistic features—reveal diversity at both micro- and macro-levels. I will present these data with comments on their relevance to the reconstruction of linguistic features in their earlier stages, showing that their loss due to standardization would not only detract from the richness of the languages, the main aspect associated with language loss, but also deprive us of information vital to reconstructing the languages' earlier stages.

Keywords: Madagascar, standardization, regional varieties, edible aroids, pronouns

1. Introduction

One factor often overlooked in discussions of language endangerment is the type of language loss that results from standardization. Many languages with an officially recognized standard variety, such as Japanese (of which I am a native speaker), Fijian, and Malagasy (on some varieties of which I have conducted fieldwork), also have many regional varieties, or "dialects."[1] These dialects do not escape influence from the standard variety, and although the degree of such influence varies with various factors, features unique to a regional dialect can be lost forever when they are replaced by standard equivalents.

Languages with standard varieties typically have many speakers, especially compared to languages usually discussed in the context of language loss and/or endangerment. No one considers Japanese, with its 122 million speakers, to be endangered; the same is true for Fijian,

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1   Standard Fijian is (along with English and Hindi) an official language of the Republic of the Fiji Is-
      lands, and Standard Malagasy is (along with French) an official language of the Republic of Mada-
      gascar. Descriptions of regional varieties of the three languages mentioned in the text include: Ger-
      aghty (1983), Pawley and Sayaba (1971), Schütz (1963) (Fijian), Andriamanantsilavo and Ratrema
      (1982), Beaujard (1998), Gueunier (1988), Vérin et al. (1969) (Malagasy), and Shibatani (1990:
      185–214) (Japanese).

with about 330,000 speakers, and Malagasy, with about 15 million speakers (Lewis, 2009). Many if not all regional varieties of Japanese, however, are apparently undergoing changes resulting from the strong influence of Standard Japanese, and the situation seems to be more or less similar with Fijian.

Standardization may affect any of the linguistic features of a regional language variety, including its lexical items, morphosyntactic features, and phonological system. In Japanese, for example, various lexical items are being lost among young speakers, many of them having been replaced with their standard equivalents. In one of the varieties spoken in Kansai, a western part of Japan, words such as *higakure-goro* 'around sunset (SJ. *yuugata*),' *ojami* 'beanbags (SJ. *otedama*),' *onagoshi-san* 'maids (SJ. *jyochuu-san*),' which my grandmother (born in 1908) uses daily and my mother (born in 1945) understands and once used herself, are neither used nor understood by my youngest brother (born in 1975). Some verb conjugations and clause endings have been assimilated by those of the standard system, and some phonological characteristics (such as the voicing of intervocalic /t/ in words such as /tataku/ 'to hit,' which is pronounced [tadakɯ]) in the area where I grew up) disappear as children learn how to write at school.

The loss of linguistic features found in the regional varieties of a particular language can be immediately related to the depletion of the richness of the language and the regional culture of the speakers. However, what I would like to emphasize here is that the loss of such features can result in the loss of knowledge regarding a people's prehistory. This is particularly true of languages that did not have writing systems until recently. In such situations, linguistic subgrouping hypotheses based on systematic comparisons of forms in currently spoken languages become the keys to discovering prehistory, and reconstructing terms for social systems and other cultural institutions is often the only way to understand aspects of culture that do not leave any physical trace.

To demonstrate as much, this paper will first provide a brief summary of the background of Malagasy, including its genetic affiliation (Section 2). A set of examples indicating some aroids, or "taro" plants, will show how linguistic data can be used to make inferences about people's lives in the past (Section 3). I will then discuss pronominal forms found in some regional varieties of Malagasy (Section 4). In this paper, rather than detailing the processes of comparing and reconstructing pronominal forms, which are illustrated elsewhere, I will point out some historical facts reflected in the data, taking third person pronouns as an example.

Linguistic features described in this paper are no more "unusual" or "uncommon" than those found in Standard Malagasy or in many other languages. However, I will show that the variety found in a small group of genetically closely-related languages (which is what regional varieties usually are) has the potential to provide important information about the historical development of the language. The extent of language loss due to standardization, which affects a group of

closely related languages, should not be underestimated. What we will be looking at in this paper are the kinds of linguistic features that can be lost relatively quickly once certain social factors emerge in the speakers' communities.

2. The Malagasy Languages: Background

2.1. Position of Malagasy in the Austronesian Language Family

It is well accepted that Malagasy belongs to the Austronesian language family, members of which (except for Malagasy) are spoken in Pacific and Pacific Rim countries.[2] It has been claimed that Malagasy split off from the Southeast Barito language group in Borneo around the seventh or eighth century A.D., long after the initial dispersal of Austronesian languages southward from what is now Taiwan, which occurred around 2500 B.C. (Adelaar, 1991, 1995; Dahl, 1991).

After Austronesian-speaking peoples spread and settled in the Pacific (Bellwood et al., 2011), some who lived in the west began participating in the Indian Ocean trade network. Eventually, a group of people from south Borneo crossed the Indian Ocean to not only visit but also settle in Madagascar, so that Madagascar became an enclave of Austronesian languages.

2.2. Varieties of the Malagasy Language

Since the initial (permanent) settlement of Austronesian speakers, both people and language have diversified considerably in Madagascar. The presence and influence of non-Austronesian languages such as Swahili, Arabic, and Sanskrit has been a popular topic in Malagasy linguistics (Dahl, 1988; Dez, 1994 [1967]; Ferrand, 1905; Razafintsalama, 1928; and many others). The influence of other Austronesian languages on Malagasy and the sources of loans that may have entered the language spoken by the initial settlers even prior to their arrival in the country have also been the subjects of some more recent linguistic work (e.g. Adelaar, 1989, 2009, 2010; Blust, 2006; Dahl, 1991).

In the *Ethnologue* (Lewis, 2009), Malagasy is treated as a macrolanguage with ten member languages. Considering that Madagascar extends more than 1,000 km from north to south, this number seems neither too large nor even sufficient. There is no linguistic atlas for Madagascar either. It is a common practice in Madagascar to refer to regional varieties of the language using the names of ethnic groups, which are said to number 18. The names of these ethnic groups appear in Figure 1. Standard Malagasy is based on one of the varieties spoken by people in Merina, the area where Antananarivo, the capital, is located.[3]

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[2]   Adelaar (1995: 325–331) provides an excellent summary of the history of comparative linguistic research on the position of Malagasy.

As for how diverse these regional varieties are, two seemingly opposite statements are found in the literature. Deschamps (1936) states that the difference between the Merina dialect and others is such that mutual comprehension is difficult.

Figure 1. Ethnic Groups in Madagascar

"Le dialecte merina, assez différent des autres et qui n'est parlé que par une minorité, a bénéficié de la primauté de Tananarive et accapare l'attention des chercheurs... C'est lui qu'on apprend et qu'on présente comme «la langue malgache,» alors qu'il reste mal compris de la majorité des populations."

(The Merina dialect, which is very different from the others and is spoken only by a minority, has benefited from the leadership of Tananarive to monopolize researchers' attention... It is this dialect that is introduced as and taught as "the Malagasy language," although it is not well understood by the majority of the Malagasy people.) (Deschamps, 1936: préface, my translation)

Dyen (1971), on the other hand, citing van der Tuuk (1865), states:

"There seems to be no question in regard to mutual intelligibility. Van der Tuuk... says that 'varieties of dialect exist... but are not so numerous that people residing in different parts cannot understand each other, some practice enabling them to sustain a conversation.'" (Dyen, 1971: 211)

Based on my own experience staying in a non-Merina region, I can attest that people typically have trouble communicating with those from distant regions if they use only their own speech varieties. When necessary, however, such speakers can negotiate with what words and expressions they know in other varieties, eventually establishing a form of communication. This
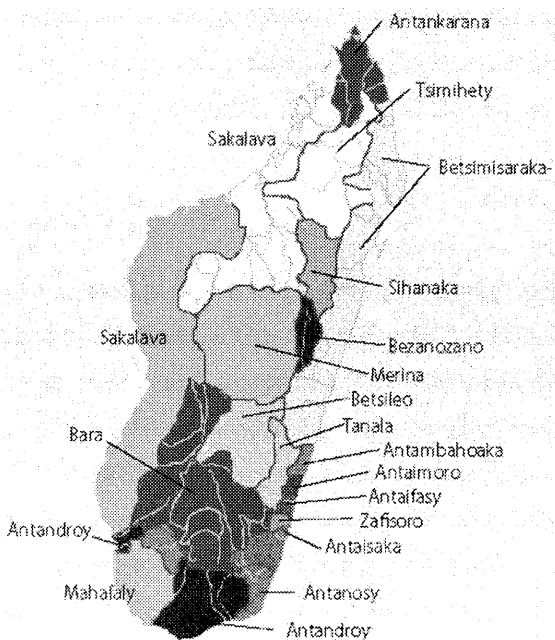
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[3] Standard varieties usually have certain linguistic features that differ from those found in the region-al varieties upon which they were originally based. However, the standardized variety is not always carefully distinguished from its source dialect, so that in descriptions of Malagasy, "Merina dialect" (or "Plateau Malagasy") is sometimes used to refer to Standard Malagasy, when the two should be kept distinct.

actually fits what Dyen says about practice enabling people from different areas to sustain a conversation. The spread of the language's standard variety, which is now taught at schools and used for broadcasting, is making it easier to communicate across broader areas in Madagascar.

When speakers share a standard dialect, it is possible to communicate through it. This is true of Japanese or Fijian, in which people from any parts of their respective countries can communicate using the standard variety of their language, though they would have difficulty understanding one another if each spoke only her own variety. Any Malagasy speaker who has lived in a region outside his native language area for an extended period is aware of the linguistic differences that exist between regions. They are at the same time aware that they can communicate widely through the standard language, often suggesting that foreigners (such as a researcher like myself) learn the "Merina" language so they can communicate "anywhere in Madagascar."

Though the languages spoken in Madagascar exhibit considerable diversity, research on Malagasy has typically focused on its standard variety, particularly in formal approaches. There has been insufficient documentation of the other varieties and little examination of their internal relationships.

3. An Example of Prehistoric Events Inferable from Dialectal Data (I): Names of Aroids

Although little systematic comparative-historical work has been done on regional varieties of Malagasy, data from different regional varieties have sometimes been compared to draw some conclusions. In this section, I will present one such set of data and show how it allows us to infer an interesting prehistoric event. This is a story found in a set of words for edible aroids, which is outlined by Beaujard (2004: 61–62) and Sakiyama (2009) but restated here with additional data.

There is a type of plant found in Madagascar but nowhere else in the Austronesian-speaking world. Its scientific name is *Typhonodorum lindleyanum* (Figure 2) and its shape is more or less similar to that of a plant called "elephant-ear taro" or *Alocasia* sp. (Figure 3), although the native habitats of the two species are different.[4]

While the former is commonly found in Tanzania, the Comoros, and Madagascar and its surrounding islands (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, 28 January, 2012), the latter is commonly found in the Pacific, and the term for it is reconstructible for Proto-Austronesian (1), with reflexes occurring in languages throughout the Pacific. We can assume therefore that this particular kind of aroid, *Alocasia* taro, was already relevant to people's lives at the Proto-Austronesian stage.

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[4] There is no common name for this plant in English, though "elephant-ear taro" is sometimes used.
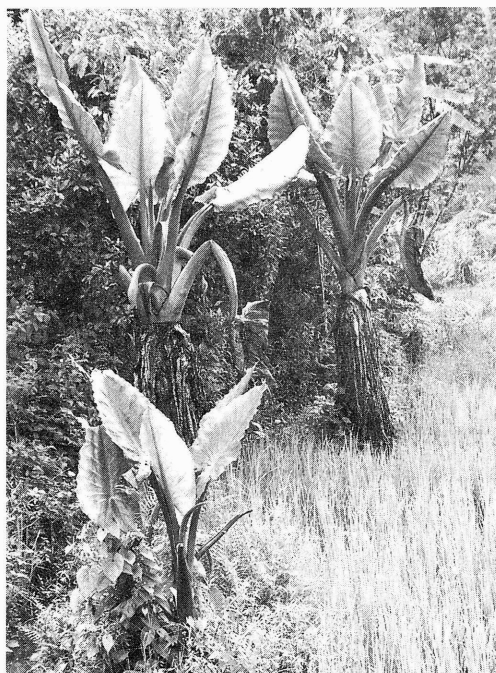
Figure 2. *Typhonodorum lindleyanum*   **Figure 3.** *Alocasia* **sp.**

(1) Reconstructed forms for *Alocasia* sp. (Blust and Trussell, 2011)

      PAN   *biRaq '*Alocasia* sp.'

      POC   *piRaq

Interestingly, though, Malagasy reflexes of PAN *biRaq seem to indicate the *Typhonodorum* plant, as can be seen in (2). That reflexes of the word for *Alocasia* taro are found in Madagascar but refer to a different plant there tells us several things about the prehistory of Malagasy speakers. First, when Austronesians migrated to Madagascar, they must have known about *Alocasia* because they had words for it; second, *Alocasia* taro was not available in Madagascar. Apparently, when Austronesian-speaking people arrived in Madagascar, they found this new *Typhonodorum* plant that was similar in appearance and uses to *Alocasia*, and they began calling it with the name they knew.

(2) Names for *Typhonodorum lindleyanum* in Malagasy languages[5]

và	BSK	(my fieldnotes)
viha~vihana	SKL, SHN, BSK, TNL, BTL	(BB & AB, 1997)
ambia	BSK (< *an-* + *via*)	(BB & AB, 1997)

Figure 4. *Colocasia* **sp.**

Alocasia taro is widespread in Madagascar today, raising the question of when it was first introduced to the country. An examination of words for *Alocasia* and *Colocasia* taro (Figure 4) in Malagasy languages is revealing.

(3) Names for *Alocasia macrorrhizos* (elephant-ear taro or giant taro) in Malagasy languages

saonjobia	'BSK, lit. *via*-like taro'	(BB & AB, 1997)
saombia	'BSK, lit. *via*-like taro'	(BB & AB, 1997)
sôña bè, ômbè	'BSK, lit. big taro	(my fieldnotes)
sôña flèra	'BSK, lit. flower taro'	(my fieldnotes)
saonjo kira	'SM, lit. *kira*-like taro'	(Beaujard, 2004: 62)

(4) Names for *Colocasia esculenta* (taro, true taro, dasheen, cocoyam, etc.) in Malagasy languages[6]

saonjo	'SM, *Colocasia* taro'	(Richardson, 1885)
sôña	'BSK, *Colocasia* taro'	(my fieldnotes)
sauña, sahoña	'BSK, *Colocasia* taro'	(BB & AB, 1997)

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[5] Other forms listed in BB & AB (1997) for *Typhonodorum lindleyanum* are: *horiridrano* (definition 'k.o. water lily' in Richardson, 1885), *mangaoka, mangoka, mangibo,* and *mangilo.* The form *horo-rodrano* is a compound of *horirika* 'the leaf of the *Colocasia* taro' (Richardson, 1885) and *(d)rano* '(of) water.' The other forms all appear to have developed locally as descriptive terms. For example, BB & AB suggest that *mangoka* probably comes from *hohoka* 'famine, food shortage' (BB & AB, 1997), which is when the *Typhonodorum* plant is said to have been consumed by local people.

[6] According to Beaujard (2004: 62 footnote), the term *saonjo* and its related forms are of East African origin and derive ultimately from Yemeni Arabic. The Austronesian terms for *Colocasia* taro are reconstructed as PAN *taleS (Wolff, 1994), and POC *talo (French-Wright, 1983). BB & AB (1999: 29) notes that the form *taloe* used in Tañala is "of Malayo-Polynesian origin," while in other areas of Madagascar the more "recently introduced form" *saonjo* (or a similar form) is used.

The words indicating *Alocasia* taro listed in (3) are all compound forms, with *soanjo, saon,* or *sóña* followed by a modifier. These three forms, as can be seen in (4), indicate *Colocasia* taro, or 'true taro,' which is the most commonly eaten aroid. Thus the Malagasy terms for *Alocasia* taro literally mean '*via*-like taro,' 'big taro,' or 'flower taro.' The fact that all terms for Alocasia taro exist as compounds of the names of two other aroids reveals that the two plants, *Typhonodorum* and *Colocasia* taro, existed before the introduction of *Alocasia* taro. The way the names are composed differs depending on the language variety and supports the conclusion that the plant was introduced after the initial dispersal of Austronesian-speakers in each region. One name, for instance, is *saonjo kira*. Beaujard (2004) argues that the form *kira* (with *k* replacing *v*, an unusual sound change observed in some dialects) is a borrowing from one of the Malay languages rather than a directly inherited form because of its irregular reflex of medial *R. Both consonants in the form *kira* involve sporadic change, however (Adelaar, pers. comm.), and the origin of this form requires further examination. If the word is in fact a Malay borrowing, one possible hypothesis would be that *Alocasia* taro was introduced by Malay traders visiting Madagascar sometime after the island's initial settlement.

4. An Example of Prehistoric Events Inferable from Dialectal Data (II): Pronouns

It was mentioned earlier that regional varieties of Malagasy exhibit many features different from those of Standard Malagasy, and pronominal systems are no exception. Both forms and functions of pronouns vary by dialect. In 4.1, I will describe two Malagasy pronominal systems—the standard one and that of Betsimisaraka—to highlight the differences between them. In 4.2, I will present part of a reconstruction of the Proto-Malagasy pronominal system presented in Kikusawa (2005) to show how forms found in regional varieties are crucial in reconstructing the earlier system.

4.1. Two Malagasy Pronominal Systems

Tables 1 and 2 show sets of pronouns in Standard Malagasy and Betsimisaraka Malagasy respectively. In each variety, there is a three-person contrast with an inclusive/exclusive distinction in the first person and a singular/plural contrast.[7]

Many differences between the two systems exist, including (1) phonetic/phonological, (2) morphophonemic, and (3) morphological (paradigmatic) differences, the details of which are summarized below.

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[7]   A high front vowel at the end of a word in Malagasy is written as *y*, while it is written as *i* elsewhere in the standard orthography. In this paper, both will be represented as *i* for consistency. Other orthographic symbols and their sounds are as follows: *o* [u], *ô* [o], *è* [ɛ], *é* [e], *ñ* [ŋ]. The symbol " ` " indicates primary stress and is used as it is found in the source from which the example was taken.

Table 1. Pronouns in Standard Malagasy (Based on Rajaobelina 2001: 77, Rasoloson and Rubino 2005: 467–468, Rajaonarimanana 2001: 45–47)

	Independent (Nominative)	Oblique[*]	Genitive (I)	Genitive (II)[**]	Possessor	Comitative
1SG	izàho/àho	àhi	=ko	=C_1o		
2SG	ianào	anào	=nào	=C_1ào		
3	ìzi	àzi	=ni	=ni	ni+OBL	ami+GEN(I)[***]
1PLEX	izahài	anài	=nài	=C_1ài		
1PLIN	isìka	antsìka	=ntsìka	=tsìka		
2PL	ianarèo	anarèo	=narèo	=C_1arèo		
(3PL)	ìzi irèo	àzi irèo	=n'izi irèo	=ni		

[*] Referred to as "accusative" in Rasoloson (2001), "dative" in Rasoloson and Rubino (2005), and "*complement direct* (direct object)" in Rajaobelina (2001).

[**] Forms in Set II occur only following a word ending in *-tra* or *-ka*. C_1 stands for either /tr/ or /k/, depending on the consonant in the final syllable of the preceding word.

[***] In Rajaobelina (2001: 77) an identical form, *amintsika*, is listed for both 1PLIN and 1PLEX; however, in the wordlist in the same volume, the form *aminay* appears for 1PLIN (which follows the pattern indicated in Table 1).

Table 2. Pronouns in Betsimisaraka Malagasy (Kikusawa fieldnotes)

	Independent (Nominative)	Oblique	Genitive	Possessor	Comitative
1SG	zàhu~zà:	anàhi[*]	=ko, =ki	annàhi	aminàhi
2SG	anô	annô	=nô	annô	aminô
3SG	ìzi	anànji[*]	=ni	aninànji	aminànji
1PLEX	zehè	annè	=nè	annè	aminè
1PLIN	atsìk^{j}a	antsìk^{j}a	=ntsìk^{j}a	anintsìk^{j}a	ami(n)tsìk^{j}a
2PL	anaré	annaré	=naré	annaré	aminaré
3PL	zaré	anjaré	=njaré	aninjaré	aminjaré

[*] The first person singular and third person singular forms *anàhy* and *anànjy* may also occur after nouns indicating 'of me' and 'of him/her/it' respectively, replacing the corresponding genitive form.

4.1.1 Sound Correspondences

Some sound correspondences between Standard and Betsimisaraka Malagasy can be identified in the given pronominal data. These, shown as (5), (6), and (7), are not necessarily limited to pronouns. The same correspondences are often found between other lexical items in the two varieties.[8]

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[8] Adelaar (pers. comm.) points out that "the Betsimisaraka peculiarities assumed in (5) (monophthongization) and (6) (palatalization of *k* adjacent to *i*) also apply to the phonetics of Standard Malagasy, but this is not orthographically expressed." I did not observe this myself, probably because my experience with Malagasy speakers in Merina was rather limited. Considering the fact that people from various areas live in Merina, the capital city, it is possible that the pronunciation of some people reflects that of the Betsimisaraka dialect with which I am familiar.

(5) Correspondence between diphthongs and vowels

Standard	*ai*	[ai]	*eo*	[eu]	*ao*	[au]
Betsimisaraka	*è*	[ɛ]	*é*	[e]	*ô*	[o:]

(6) Palatalization of velar stops in syllables following vowels /i/ and /e/ in Betsimisaraka (phonetic)

Standard	*antsìka*	'1PLIN, oblique'
Betsimisaraka	*antsìkʲa*	'1PLIN, oblique'

(7) Correspondence of consonants (sporadic)

Standard	*s*	[s]	*isìka*	'1PLIN, independent'
Betsimisaraka	*ts*	[ts]	*atsìkʲa*	'1PLIN, independent'

4.1.2 Morphophonemic Differences

Both Standard and Betsimisaraka Malagasy have two distinctive genitive pronoun sets. However, morphophonemic differences exist as described below.

i)   In Standard Malagasy, genitive forms alternate between (I) and (II). Genitive Set (I) is used when the preceding word does *not* carry any of the endings *-ka*, *-tra*, or *-na*, as in (8)a. When the preceding word ends with *-na*, the final syllable (*na*) is replaced by the appropriate pronominal form from Set (I), as in (8)b. When the preceding word ends with *-ka* or *-tra*, the final vowel *-a* is replaced by the appropriate pronominal form from Set (II), as in (8)c. This kind of alternation is not found in Betsimisaraka Malagasy, which has only one genitive set, as in (9)a–c.

(8) Standard Malagasy

    a.   *vola=ko*   (< *vola*)

        money=1SG.GEN

        'my money'   (Rajaonarimanana, 2001: 46)

        hita=ko...   (< *hita*)

        see=1SG.GEN

        'I saw (it)'   (Rasoloson, 2001: 14)

    b.   *tana=ko*   (< *tanana*)

        hand=1SG.GEN

        'my hand'   (Rajaonarimanana, 2001: 46)

kàvi=ko   (< *kàvina*)

earring=1SG.GEN

'my earring'   (Rasoloson and Rubino, 2005: 468)

c.   *fàntatr=o*   (< *fantatra*)

know=1SG.GEN

'I know about (it)'   (Rajaonarimanana, 2001: 46)

pèratr=ào   (< *pèratra*)

ring=2SG.GEN

'your ring'   (Rasoloson and Rubino, 2005: 468)

(9) Betsimisaraka Malagasy (Kikusawa, fieldnotes)

a.   *vôla=ko*   (< *vôla*)

money=1SG.GEN

'my money'

ìta=ko   (< *(na)ìta*)

see=1SG.GEN

'I will see (it)'

b.   *tànana=ko*   (< *tànana*)

hand=1SG.GEN

'my hand'

c.   *fànta=ko*   (< *fantatra*)

know=1SG.GEN

'I know about (it)'

ii) In Betsimisaraka Malagasy, the first person genitive form alternates between =*ko* and =*ki*, depending on the vowel in the preceding syllable, as in (10).[9] This vowel alternation is not found in Standard Malagasy.

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9   This is related to the phenomenon shown in (6) above; see Kikusawa (2005: 13–14) for a description.

(10) Betsimisaraka Malagasy

    a.   *ìta=ko*

        FUT.see=1SG.GEN   'I will see (it).'

    b.   *iènti=ki*

        FUT.carry=1SG.GEN 'I will carry (it).'

4.1.3 Morphological (Paradigmatic) Differences

i)   In both Betsimisaraka Malagasy and Standard Malagasy, enclitic genitive forms occur with two functions: to express the actors of transitive sentences and as post-nominal possessors. Unlike Standard Malagasy, however, Betsimisaraka Malagasy has additional forms, *anàhi* and *anànji*, for first person singular and third person singular nominal possessors. These are formally identical with those of the corresponding oblique pronouns (Table 2), and do not express the actors of transitive sentences (as shown in the ungrammatical example (11)b).

(11) Betsimisaraka Malagasy

    a.   *èntaña*   *anàhi*

        baggage   1SG.GEN   'my baggage'

    b.   **ienti*   *anàhi*

        FUT.carry   *anàhi*   'I.M. I will carry (it)'

ii) In Standard Malagasy, all independent pronouns start with the form *i-*, while in Betsimisaraka Malagasy, it is only the third person singular form that carries *i-*.

iii) In addition to the genitive pronoun sets referred to in i) above, which express 'my,' 'your,' etc., on the noun, both varieties have a set of possessor pronouns expressing 'mine,' 'yours,' etc. In Standard Malagasy, possessor pronouns consist of a sequence of *ni* and *an* oblique pronoun, while in Betsimisaraka, possessor pronouns have an initial formative *an(i)-* as in (12).

(12) A comparison of some possessor pronouns

	'mine'	'his'	'theirs'
Standard	*ni àhi*	*ni àzi*	*ni àzi (irèu)*
Betsimisaraka	*annàhi*	*aninànji*	*aninjarè*

iv) The comitative sets in Standard Malagasy and Betsimisaraka differ in minor ways. In the former, a comitative pronominal phrase is expressed by a sequence of a preposition *ami* followed by a Set (I) clitic genitive pronoun. In the latter, a comitative pronominal phrase is composed on the same principle; however, for 1SG and 3SG, forms similar to the nominal possessors, namely *anàhi* and *anànji*, occur (13).

(13) A comparison of some comitative forms

	'1SG.COM'	'3SG.COM'	'1PLEX.COM'
Standard	*ami=ko*	*ami=ni*	*ami=nài*
Betsimisaraka	*ami=nàhi*	*ami=nànji*	*ami=nè*

v) Finally, the third person pronouns differ in the following ways. First, some of the forms are different between the two sets. Second, there is a difference between their number distinctions. In Standard Malagasy, the third person form basically covers both singular and plural, while plurality can be specified by adding a plural morpheme *irèo*. In Betsimisaraka, the distinction between singular and plural is normally expressed, although the singular form can also be used when the referent is a non-animate plural.

From the above, it can be seen that considerable differences exist even between two varieties within Malagasy. Differences, both of the kind described above and of other kinds, are also observed when other regional varieties are considered (e.g., Kikusawa, 2005; Adelaar and Kikusawa, in prep.).

4.2. Towards a Reconstruction Based on Regional Pronominal Systems

Section 4.1 illustrated differences between the Standard and Betsimisaraka Malagasy pronominal paradigms. Far more extensive differences would be noted if we were to include other regional varieties as well. These differences reflect changes that occurred in each dialect after Malagasy people settled in Madagascar, and it is this diversity that can provide the data from which inferences can be drawn about prehistory. In this section, I will introduce part of a comparison and reconstruction of the Malagasy pronominal systems, the results of which will then be related to prehistoric events.

The languages to be looked at are listed in (14), with the major source(s) of each language indicated in parentheses. The approximate area where each language is spoken appears in Figure 5.[10]

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[10]   A list of major dictionaries and grammatical descriptions of various Malagasy languages appears in Rasoloson and Rubino (2005: 458–459).

(14) Languages referred to in this Section

    a.   Standard Malagasy   (varies)

    b.   Tañala   (Beaujard, 1998)

    c.   Bara   (Rabenilaina, 1983)

    d.   Antaisaka   (Deschamps, 1936)

    e.   North Betsimisaraka   (my fieldnotes)

    f.   Antandroy   (Rajaonarimanana and Fee, 1996)

    g.   Sakalava (1)   (Dahl, 1968)
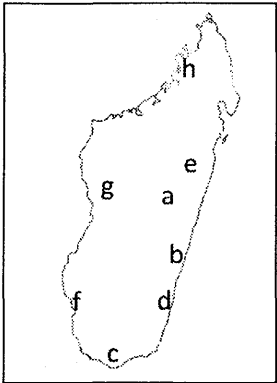
    h.   Sakalava (2)   (Thomas-Fattier, 1982)

Figure 5. Locations of the Regional Varieties Discussed in this Paper

4.2.1 A Comparative Study of Third Person Pronouns

This section will focus on third person pronouns in an attempt to reconstruct their Proto-Malagasy forms. The pronominal forms of the eight regional varieties are shown in Table 3.

It has been mentioned (4.1) that Standard and Betsimisaraka Malagasy differ in terms of number distinctions. In Standard Malagasy, the third person form basically covers both singular and plural, while in Betsimisaraka, the distinction between singular and plural is normally expressed. As can be seen in Table 3, Tañala has a system similar to Standard Malagasy, while Bara and Antaisaka do not distinguish number in the third person. Antandroy and the two varieties of Sakalava use systems similar to that of Betsimisaraka, with singular and plural third person pronouns distinguished.

Differences exist between the forms of the pronouns as well. There are eight different forms

Table 3. Third Person Pronouns in Some Regional Varieties of Malagasy

		3SG.NOM	3PL.NOM	3SG.OBL	3PL.OBL	3SG.GEN	3PL.GEN
a)	Standard Malagasy	*izi*	*izi ireo*	*azi*	*azi (ireo)*	*=ni*	*=n* + 3PL.NOM
b)	Tañala	*izi* *i*	*izi ireo* *rizareo*	*anazi*		*=ni*	
c)	Bara	*i* *ii*		*àzi* *(anazi)* *(andri)*		*=ni*	
d)	Antaisaka	*izi*		*azi* *anazi* *enazi*		*=ni*	
e)	North Betsimisaraka	*izi*	*zaré*	*ananji*	*njaré*	*=ni*	*=njaré*
f)	Antandroy	*ie* *reke*	*iareo*	*aze*	*iareo*	*=ʔe*	*=ʔiereo*
g)	Sakalava (1)	*ire* *ri* *rike*	*reo* *roze*	*aze* *andrì* *andìke*	*androze* *andreo*	*=ne* *=ndì* *=drike*	*=droze* *=dreo*
h)	Sakalava (2)	*izi* *azi*	*iro*				

cf. Proto-Malayo Polynesian *si-ia '3SG', *si-ida '3PL'

of the independent/nominative third person singular pronoun: *i, ii, ie, ri, ìzi, àzi, rike, reke*, etc. Similarly, there are seven different forms of the nominative third person plural pronoun. The situation is similar for other persons and numbers and for other functions.

Some sound correspondences among the pronominal forms can be noted, such as those described in 4.1 above between Standard and Betsimisaraka Malagasy. Likewise word-final /e/ in Antandroy and one variety of Sakalava appears to correspond to /i/ in the other variety of Sakalava. There is some evidence to suggest that in some varieties, the sequence *ia is reflected as **za. In Antandroy, genitive forms that in other varieties begin with /n/ begin instead with a glottal stop /ʔ/, suggesting that Antandroy underwent a morphophonemic change from =ni to =ʔi (then to =ʔe). By comparing forms in other person and numbers, we can classify the nominative forms into two groups: those with an initial *i formative and those without. The oblique forms can likewise be classified into two categories: those with an initial *an formative and those without.

Based on observations such as these, the pronominal forms can be rearranged according to their possible cognacy for the purpose of historical comparison. A rearranged table of third person singular independent forms is given in Table 4, and a reconstruction of the third person independent forms appears in Table 5. Explanations follow.

In Table 4, possible cognates are arranged in the same line. For example, the forms *ii* (in Bara) and *ie* (in Antandroy) appearing in the second line must have developed from the same source, with the final vowel /i/ changed to /e/ in Antandroy. It is similarly likely that the forms *rike* (in Sakalava (1)) and *rèke* (in Antandroy) developed from the same source, and thus they appear in the same line in the table. Based on this chart and on morphological information obtained by comparing forms across the person and number systems in Malagasy, reconstruction is possible for third person singular pronouns.

In Table 5, reconstructed forms, their direct reflexes, and indirect forms are listed according

Table 4. 3SG Independent/Nominative Pronouns Arranged According to Cognacy

SAKALAVA (1)	SAKALAVA (2)	TAÑALA	TAISAKA	BÀRA	STANDARD MALAGASY	BETSIMISARAKA	TANDROY
		i		*i*			
				ii			*ie*
	izi	*izi*	*izi*		*izi*	*izi*	
	(*àzi* < OBL)						
ire, ri							
rike							*reke*

*ia "3SG, nominative" (TANDROY *ie* < *ia)

Notes: The form *izi* appears to be an independent innovation probably in Merina (possibly from a sequence *i + *ia), which has spread to other languages. The sources of the forms *rike, reke, ri,* and *ire* are not known, however, it is worth noting that the alternation between /z/ and /r/ is found in some personal nouns.

Table 5. Reconstructed Proto-Malagasy Forms and Their Subsequent Changes (3SG)

	NOMINATIVE		OBLIQUE/LOCATIVE		GENITIVE
3SG FORMS	*ia		**azi	**an-azi	*=ni
REGULAR REFLEXES	i (TNL, BAR) ii (BAR) ie (TDR)		azi (SKL, TSK, BAR, MRN) aze (TDR)	anazi (TNL, TSK, BAR) ananji (BSK)	=ni (all) =?e (TDR)
IRREGULAR FORMS	azi (SKL) izi (< i + azi?) (MRN+)				ananji (BSK)
	ire, ri (< ra + i, ie) (SKL) rike (SKL) reke (TDR)			andri (< an + ri) (SKL, BAR) andrike (< an + rike) (SKL)	=ndi (< =n + ri?) (SKL) =ndrike (< =n + rike) (SKL)

to etymology. This is not a place to discuss reconstruction methods, so I will restrict this section to a simple description of the reconstructed facts.

All forms found today appear in Table 5, with each form's region of use indicated in parentheses. For example, the form *i* expressing the third person nominative is found in Tañala and Bara. The dotted box indicates the irregular innovated forms that developed in limited areas. An internal and external comparison reveals that the forms *i, ii, ie* are the older forms, with *ri, rèke, rike* replacing reflexes of the reconstructed form. Interestingly, these introduced forms acquired the already existing marking of the three cases (with *an-* for oblique, and *=n* for genitive), to regularly yield *andrì, andrìke* for oblique and *ndrì, ndrìke* for genitive.

Arrows indicate semantic extension or change that took place across different functions. For example, the form *àzi*, used as an independent pronoun in Sakalava, must result from the extension of the reconstructed oblique form *azi* to express an additional grammatical function.[11] Two different forms, *azi* and *an-azi*, need to be reconstructed for the oblique third person singular to account for the forms in the daughter languages. The new form *anànji*, the oblique form in Betsimisaraka, spread to mark possessor as well as oblique. This appears to be a local innovation.

The form *izi* seems to have developed in Merina, on which Standard Malagasy is based, and spread to other dialects as Standard Malagasy influenced them.

4.2.2. Historical Implications of the Proposed Reconstruction

What has been discussed about the development of the pronominal forms in Table 5 is shown on maps (Figure 6a–d).

First, reflexes of the more conservative forms, *i, ii*, and *ie*, are located in Sakalava, Bara, and Andandroy (Figure 6a). Second, the distribution of the newly introduced forms overlaps with

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[11] The reconstruction of Malagasy pronominal forms is an ongoing project with seven tables such as this: one for each person and number. The spread of forms between different persons and numbers can be also identified, considerably complicating the picture.
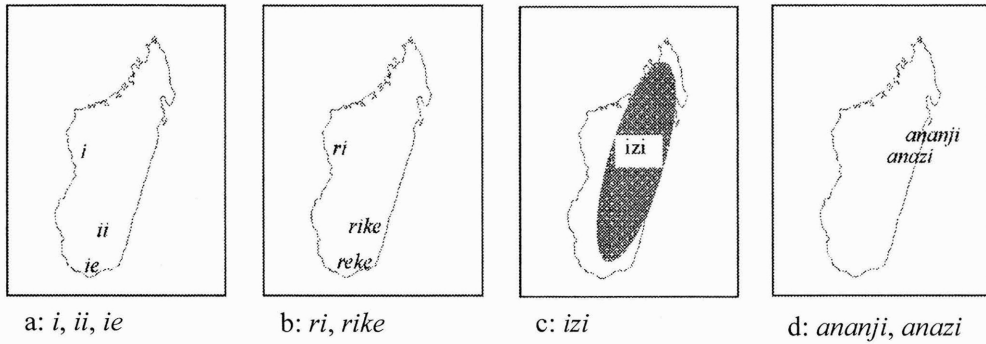
a: *i, ii, ie*   b: *ri, rike*   c: *izi*   d: *ananji, anazi*

Figure 6. Development of the Pronominal Forms

the earlier forms (Figure 6b). Subsequently, the form *izi* developed in Merina and spread to the surrounding area (Figure 6c); finally, the distribution of the forms *nànji* and *nànzi* is limited to the east coast (Figure 6d).

Considering the geographic distribution of the third person pronouns, it is possible to relate their various dialectal forms to known and hypothesized events in the prehistory of Madagascar.

The Proto-Malagasy nominative third person pronoun *ia, directly inherited from earlier stages of Austronesian, probably spread throughout Madagascar as people dispersed. Local phonological changes resulted in the forms occurring today in several varieties, *i, ii,* and *ie*. In Tandroy, however, an alternate nominative third person pronoun *rèke* occurs. This appears to be cognate with the Sakalava form *rike*, which in Sakalava became the base for third person forms with other functions as well. It is known that Sakalava formed a kingdom in the west in the late 16th century and exerted strong influence over other areas in Madagascar for over a century. The assumption then is that *rike* developed in Sakalava and spread as the Sakalava Kingdom gained power and influence over other areas (Figure 7a)—which influence is manifest in a number of lexical items that appear to have spread from Sakalava to other areas. However, it is *izi* and its oblique form *àzi* that currently exhibit the most widespread geographical distribution, leaving some peripheral areas. The fact that these forms show little if any formal variation implies that they have spread only relatively recently in the country. They are, moreover, the third person singular forms that are found in Merina and the Standard language. The most likely explanation is that these forms developed in Merina and spread elsewhere as the Merina people gained political power (Figure 7b). Finally, the oblique forms *anànji* and *anàzi*, found only on the east coast, appear to be local developments following the adoption of *àzi* from Merina (Figure 7c).
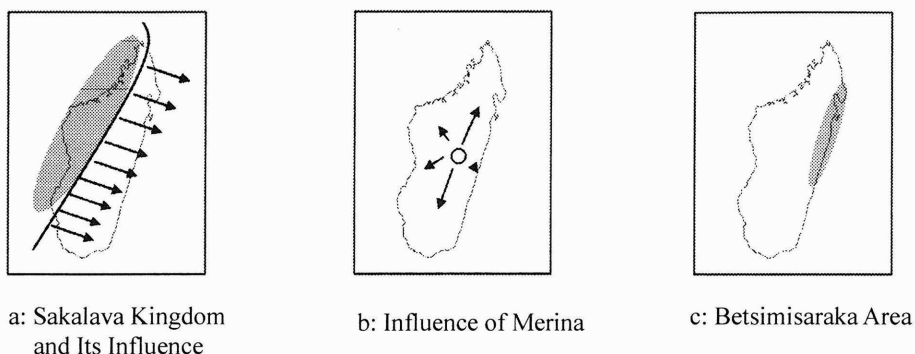
a: Sakalava Kingdom   b: Influence of Merina   c: Betsimisaraka Area
and Its Influence

Figure 7. Directions of Influence

5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I have tried to illustrate the following three points.

First, considerable diversity often exists in a language that traditionally goes by a single name and has become standardized during its development as a national language. This paper has focused on Malagasy, the national language of Madagascar. Although only limited examples have been shown, it needs to be emphasized that the dialectal diversity found in such languages covers the complete range of linguistic features, from phonetics to pragmatics, all of which may be lost as the standardized variety spreads. Klöter (2005: 895) has stated that "one widespread misconception about Chinese is the claim that there is 'a Chinese language,'" and this also applies to many other languages, including Malagasy, that have reasonably large numbers of speakers and are generally not a part of conversations about endangered languages.

Second, I have tried to demonstrate with two unrelated sets of data that the variety existing in Malagasy is a potential gold mine for studies in historical linguistics. These data included the dialectal names of certain aroids, the comparison and reconstruction of which prompted a number of inferences about the plants available to initial Austronesian immigrants, as well as about plants subsequently introduced to the island. Similarly, a comparison and reconstruction of pronominal forms revealed the richness of detail found in regional dialects and provided insights into prehistory that can be accessed only by examining such linguistic data.

Third, it is likely that as infrastructure in Madagascar improves, with the spread of good roads and electrification of remote areas, the influence of Standard Malagasy—already considerable in certain areas—will increase and existing varieties of the language will rapidly be lost. This rush to homogenization will result in the replacement of distinct lexical items by standard vocabulary; replacement or change in morphosyntactic features, typically due to the introduction of the writing system; the introduction of fixed expressions to replace local

expressions, especially in formal contexts; and changes in phonemic systems.

My intention is not to claim that endangered non-standard regional varieties tend to exhibit linguistic features less common than those of standard varieties. However, non-standard regional varieties do have features not observed in the standard variety, features that often play important roles in historical analyses. Unfortunately, such linguistic features are being lost at an ever-increasing rate. The only appropriate response to this situation is to recognize that regional varieties of major languages require at least as much documentation as standard dialects and endangered languages.[12]

Abbreviations

BAR	Bara (region, language)
BB&AB 1997	Boiteau, Boiteau, and Allorge-Boiteau, 1997
BTL	Betsileo (region, language)
BSK	Betsimisaraka (region, language)
COM	comitative
GEN	genitive
I.M.	intended meaning
IND	independent (pronoun)
lit.	literally
NOM	nominative
OBL	oblique
PAN	Proto-Austronesian
PL	plural
PLIN	plural, inclusive
PLEX	plural, exclusive
POC	Proto-Oceanic
SG	singular
SKL	Sakalava (region, language)
SM	Standard Malagasy
SHN	Sihanaka (region, language)
SJ	Standard Japanese
TNL	Tañala (region, language)
TSK	Antaisaka (region, language)

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