Madagascar Essay, Research Paper

Madagascar

Madagascar, formally called the Malagasy Republic, is an island nation in the Indian Ocean. It is located about 250 miles across the Mozambique Channel from the southeastern coast of Africa. About the same size as Texas, Madagascar is the fourth- largest island in the world, including its five small offshore island territories. Antananarivo is the capitol and principal city of Madagascar. The basic racial type of the people is Malayo-Polynesian. The Malagasy are divided into 18 different ethnic groups. The largest is the Merina. About 98% of the population are Malagasy, but there are small minorities from the nearby Comoros, as well as some French, Indians, and Chinese (4). Like the people, the Malagasy language is of Malayo-Polynesian origin. It has also borrowed from the Bantu languages of southern Africa and from Arabic and French. Both Malagasy and French are official languages. Madagascar is 51% Christian, 47% African religions, and 2% Islam (4). Madagascar is a heterogeneous nation, due to the number of religions and ethnic groups.

It is believed that Madagascar was inhabited about the 1st century AD, when the Indonesian seafarers arrived. By the 7th century, Arabs established trading posts in coastal areas (2). The French arrived in 1643 and established a trading post at Fort Dauphin. During the late 16th century, the Merina kingdom was founded, with it’s capitol at Antananarivo. Britain gave its interests to France in 1890, and Madagascar became a French colony. During this time, Madagascar benefitted from the colonial experience because it was influenced by these countries.

During World War II, however, a series of events occurred, and leadership changed hands many times. After the war, Madagascar was turned over to the Free French in 1943. In 1947, there was a revolt against the French, and an estimated 11,000 to 80,000 were killed (3). Then, in 1960, the Malagasy Republic became independent from France on June 26. Philibert Tsiranana became the president. Army officers seized the power in 1972 and General Gabriel Ranamantsoa became the new president. In 1975, Didier Ratsiraka became president and a new constitution changed the name of the country from Malagasy Republic to Democratic Republic of Madagascar (4). As demands for Ratsiraka’s resignation increased, the resistance formed a rival government headed by prime minister Albert Zafy in 1991. A multiparty constitution was introduced, and was approved by voters in August 1992. Zafy defeated Ratsiraka in the presidential election of 1993. Zafy was forced to resign in September 1996, and prime minister Norbert Ratsirahoana became president as well as prime minister. France and Madagascar have a decent relationship after all the switching hands of power. This off-shore island has had many difficulties in getting to where it is now, and there will surely be more. In time, Madagascar might become an independent nation, separate from bad leaders and corrupt political systems.

Works Cited

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