Madagascar Essay, Research Paper

?Great Red Island?

Background Information

Government

Formal Name: Republic of Madagascar

DTA code: MA

Government Type: Republic

Legal System: based on French civil law system and traditional Malagasy

law; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction.

Foreign Relations: Good relations with many countries, especially France, and

the western countries of Africa.

Holidays:

Jan. 1 – New Year?s Day

May 1 – Workers Day

May 24- OAU Day

June 26- Independence Day

Nov 1 – All Saints Day

Dec 25- Christmas

Dec 30- Republic Day

History

The Malagasy are of mixed Malayo-Indonesian and African-Arab ancestry.

Indonesians are believed to have migrated to the island about B.C.E. 700.

Archaeologists have found human remains dating back 2000 years.

Madagascar was a favorite base for sea pirates in the 1600?s and 1700?s,

including the famous Captain Kidd.

The French made the island a protectorate in 1885, and then in 1894-95

ended the monarchy.

In 1908 a colonial administration was set up, to which the Comoro Islands

were attached. In World War II the British occupied Madagascar, which retained

its ties to France. Madagascar became an independent member of the

community in 1960.

Economy

Rated 10th poorest country in the world. Madagascar faces problems of

chronic malnutrition and severe loss of forest cover accompanied by erosion.

Agriculture

Provides almost 80% of exports, 16% of cultivated land is irrigated. Major

crops include, coffee, vanilla, sugar cane, cloves, rice, bananas, peanuts; wide

spread cattle raising; also extensive fishing.

Exports and Imports

Major exports are coffee, vanilla, cloves, and sugar. Main markets are

France, USA, Germany, and Japan.

Major Imports are capital goods, oil, and consumer goods. Main suppliers

are France, Japan, and Germany.

Culture

Society

There are some 20 ethnic groups of which principal ones are the Central

Highlanders of mixed Arab, African, MalayoIndonsian ancestry. Other groups

include, Comorans, French, and IndoPakistanis.

The estimated population as of July 2000 was 15,506,472

Language

Languages are Malagasy and French.

Religion

About 55% hold indigenous beliefs, 40% Christian, and 5% Muslim

Currency

One Malagasy Franc equals one US dollar

Geography

Location: Southern Africa, island in the Indian Ocean

Area: Slightly less than double the size of Arizona

Climate: Tropical along coast, arid in the south

Natural Resources: Graphite, Coal, Tar, Stones.

Natural Hazards : Periodic Cyclones

Ports: 15 major ports

Airports: 105

Major Cities and Points of Interest

Capital: Antananarivo

The city is built on a Y shaped granite mountain surrounded by rice fields. The

rova (royal fort) sits atop the highest point and has a historical museum of the

ancient Malagasy kings and queens. The center of town has the largest open air

market in the world. It is also home to a botanical and zoological garden with

many specimens of flora, lemurs, chameleons, insects, and birds.

Nosy Be

This is Madagascar?s premier resort island.

Parc National de Montagne d? Ambre

This is one of the most visited attractions. It was created in 1958 to preserve the

area?s biological treasures. It is 45,000 acres of rainforest.

Mahajanha

This is Madagascar?s 2nd port on the northwest coast. There are many churches

there, and it host?s the largest Muslim community. The beaches are blood red

from the highland because of the soil being washed out to sea.

Wildlife

Most kinds of animals and plants do not exist anywhere else in the world.

The best known wild animal is the lemur. It is also home to reptiles, monkeys,

insects, and many unusual birds. The humpback whales can be seen in the

coastal waters. Madagascar was once described as ?Noah?s Ark adrift in the

Indian Ocean.?