



PEOPLE GROUPS: ANTANALA OF MADAGASCAR

The Antanala people live in and near the forests of southeastern Madagascar. They are divided into two subgroups: the Tanala Menabe in the mountainous north and the Tanala Ikongo in the more accessible south.

Tanala Menabe villages are isolated on mountain tops and hidden in the dense forest. During the French occupation, the Tanala Ikongo continued in independent kingdoms, but the Tanala Menabe were dominated by another local tribe.

Between 600 and 1300 AD, peoples from Borneo colonised this island, which is 1600 kilometers long. East Africans arrived later. Madagascar's population of 26 million includes more than 20 people groups and is less than 25 per cent Christian. The Antanala hold deeply to traditional religious

practices, based on animism and ancestor worship. They believe spirits are all around us in nature and that people must please them. Animists usually live with fear that a spirit will be unhappy with them.

Practices such as *'famadihana'* or 'turning the bones' continue. This occurs every few years when a family exhumes the remains of their ancestors, wraps them in fine silk, sprays them with wine or perfume, and brings them out for a festival. This is a way to both revere and appease their ancestors.

Few Antanala are Christians and even fewer are evangelicals. The churches among them tend to focus on attendance rather than discipleship. There has been some church planting among them in the past two years.

At a Glance

- The Antanala are skilled woodsmen, food gatherers and hunters. They trade beeswax, honey and other forest products. They also grow rice, yams and coffee.
- The Antanala often live in large compounds consisting of a father and his sons or a group of brothers.
- Homes are often built on stilts. Their traditional dance (*dombolo*) has become widely recognised.
- There are 41 Bible stories available in the Antanala dialect.

Pray

- Encourage and protect the one Malagasy evangelist working among more than one million Antanala. He is seeing fruit but is also experiencing spiritual warfare.
- Move forward the translation work and the JESUS Film despite closed borders.
- Train up leaders to fearlessly proclaim the power of Jesus over spirits.
- For missionaries to return despite COVID-19.



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