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MIC

MISSION NEWS

MADAGASCAR

Our Lady of Ambodiakatra

as told by Charline Zafisoa, M.I.C.

Every year, on the Sunday closest to the full moon of May, the Christians organize a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Ambodiakatra. Large groups set out early in the morning. Up to about three kilometres from the village those who have conveyances may ride but from here onwards, all walk in procession devoutly singing hymns and praying the rosary. A first halt is called at the village church where a concelebrated Mass is offered.

Afterwards, a cortege makes its way up the hill where the shrine stands. The statue is visible from quite a distance. At night, three luminous inscriptions mark the way: "Do not forget to greet your Mother. She is waiting for you."

An old tradition is attached to the fountain that flows beside the shrine. At a time when the country had been made desolate by a severe drought, the priest in charge of the area told Peter, one of his helpers, to dig the ground close by, hoping to discover a spring. The man dug for two solid hours. Exhausted by his efforts and parched with thirst, he then made up his mind to give up. But the priest coaxed him to keep on; he felt sure that water would be found. No sooner had Peter started digging again than a steady stream of water started to flow. It is still flowing today. No wonder the people consider it miraculous.

Peter is still a living witness to the "miracle". He cannot praise enough the faith of his pastor who had such unwavering faith in the bounties of our Lady. Pilgrims fill bottles with this blessed water and carry it back to their homes. They pour some over their rice fields to ensure plentiful crops, and give it to



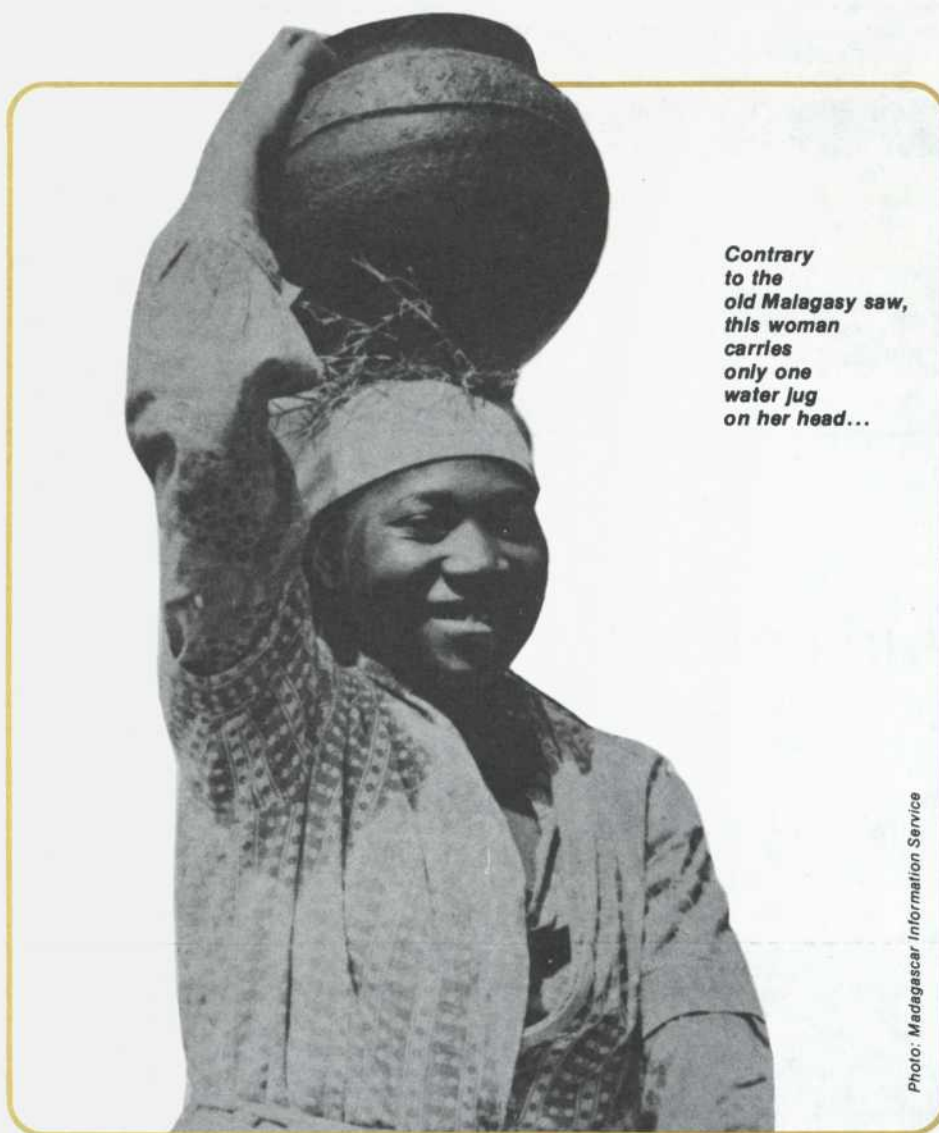
Left to right: Sister Charline and a Malagasy companion, on a short study trip to Canada brave the winter season with a smile.

drink to their sick, hoping to bring them relief if not complete recovery.

Since the 1947 rebellion, the statue of Our Lady of Ambodiakatra has been revered as "miraculous". Agitators of this period resolved to destroy it as they had destroyed other Christian shrines. Resolutely, they set out in the direction of the grotto. They glimpsed the statue from a considerable distance, and walked straight ahead, intent on their evil design. What really happened? Nobody could afterwards explain the fact, but as the malefactors climbed the statue seemed to vanish from their sight.

After several futile attempts, they finally gave up.

Upon request of the bishop of Mananjory, each Christian family in the diocese daily prays a decade of the rosary for three intentions: the nation, the diocese, the family. Moreover, in Antsenavolo, chief town of the district, the rosary is prayed every day at 4:00 p.m. The church bell rings and the pastor gives out the prayers in Malagasy, on a loudspeaker. From every Christian home rises the melody of the Aves. Of course Antsenavolo is not a huge city like Montreal!



Contrary to the old Malagasy saw, this woman carries only one water jug on her head...

Photo: Madagascar Information Service

MADAGASCAR

WOMEN OF MADAGASCAR

by Agathe Durand, M.I.C.

Women of the Great Isle have been designated under such poetic appellations as "celestial princesses", "dainty furnishings", "wellsprings of the nation". Be that as it may. An ancient saw describes them as those who carry two jugs on their head, that is those who achieve the impossible. In urban centres, Malagasy women have become deeply integrated in the national, social, economic, religious, and artistic life.

In centuries past, women in Madagascar were considered socially inferior to men. An old Merina term implied that the elevation of women could only be effected through marriage. Their principal role and their glory was to bear children. Within the family circle, the mother

was looked up to with pride and admiration. Marriage which was formerly arranged by two familial clans is, nowadays, left to the initiative of the young people, especially in the cities.

The advantageous juridical situation enjoyed by the married Malagasy woman partly explains her important role in everyday life. As a rule, husband and wife are considered equals. This is borne out in certain regions by a custom attending the cutting of the wedding cake. The groom cuts a piece saying, "I am the one who cuts the cake," and the bride repeats the selfsame words as she cuts her own piece.

Once married, the Malagasy women desire nothing more than to bear chil-

dren. No greater misfortune could befall them, than to remain childless. Sterility is feared to such an extent that a young girl who has borne children while still unmarried and thus given proof of her fecundity is sure to make a good match. Such customs still form part of Malagasy life. They survive even among Christians as well as among people with a thoroughly modern outlook.

Inside the home, the woman is queen. She sees to the education of her children, and to the maintenance of ancestral and religious customs. Household expenses are under her control. More particularly in industrialized areas, she can now work outside the home, choosing the kind of employment she wants, even without consulting her husband. Although it is improbable that the system of matriarchy ever existed in the Great Isle, Malagasy women enjoy, as educators and guardians of tradition, a role which other women in newly developed countries might well envy.

In an essentially agricultural country, it is not surprising to find women engaged in farming activities. The farmer's wife shares her husband's laborious tasks. She transplants rice, takes part in the harvest, threshes grain. Her people can be deeply grateful to her for the productive rice fields and the markets stocked with vegetables and fruits of all kinds.

The introduction of the Christian faith in the Great Isle met with a cordial welcome from the inhabitants of the upper plateaux. When in 1835, Ranavalona I banned Christianity from the Island, Malagasy women put up a stubborn resistance, undismayed by the prospect of martyrdom. The first Christian martyr was Rasalama, speared to death at Ambohipotsy in 1837. Historic records further mention the martyrdom of Razaby and of Flora Famihany beheaded in 1840. Another remarkable Christian woman was Victoire Rasomanarivo whose cause of beatification has been introduced in Rome. Malagasy women continue to manifest a vigorous spirit of faith. Many have dedicated their lives to the service of the Church.

An attempt to define subtle Malagasy womanhood would be like an attempt to define the secret nature of a flower. The truest definition might be found in the expression, "She is the soul of *fiavanana*." This untranslatable term conveys ideas of obligingness and friendship, of mutual trust and forbearance, of graciousness and sociability. For the Malagasy, the soul of *fiavanana* signifies the soul of the nation. Such is the high regard in which womanhood and motherhood are held in Madagascar, that a common synonym of the word "nation" is *firenana*, a term derived from the root word *reny* which means mother.

AFRICA Personal Names in Africa

by Irene Champagne, M.I.C.

The author of this article has laboured on our African missions for 25 years.



Names are the badge of individuality. As long as the person is nameless, he is characterless. Only by acquiring the names of objects, animals, and people around him does he acquire a determined consciousness.

Among some African peoples, the name given to a child may recall a circumstance which marked his birth. For instance, if it happened to rain on that particular day, the baby will perhaps be called "Rain" or "Water" or "Rainy". Should the mother be on a journey when the happy event occurs, she or her husband may call the child "Traveller", "Stranger", "Road", "Wanderer". If the birth coincides with a locust invasion, the unlucky one might be named "Locust", or "Famine" or "Pain" since such an invasion invites both misfortunes.

If, in looks or behaviour, the child resembles a relative who has died, he is often believed to embody the spirit of this particular person, and so is given his name. An infant who cries day and night or who is restless is supposed to be an object of displeasure to deceased grand-parents. On these occasions, a diviner is called to find out which ancestor it is. The infant is then given his or her name in the hope that quiet will return.

Some names appear to be given at random. Mother or Father may have taken a fancy to the sound of such and such an English word. No matter what the meaning, they will give it as name to their newborn offspring. Thus, among many others, we have "Gladness", "Kingdom", "Goodbye", "Tremolo", "Salad", "Holysmoke", "Happy"...

Among certain tribes, it is customary to incorporate God's name into their children's name as was done among the Hebrews. (The "EL" appearing in such Hebrew names as GabriEL, DaniEL, MichaEL, EmmanuEL, etc., means "of God".) In Africa, such God-related names are given in a spirit of praise and worship. As an African once remarked, "The Lord has willed that our child be born at that particular time or place. If his will is not acknowledged in the child's name, someone in the clan may be made to suffer." Hence, we hear such names as "God loves me", "Child of God", "Look at God".

Discovering an Identity

by Colette Soucy, M.I.C.

*Youth
of Hong Kong,
your charm
is unique
and
irresistible.*



Chinese of Hong Kong, who are you?

Grasping the true spirit of a nation is not an easy task, and attempting to describe the complex physiognomy of the Chinese of Hong Kong is not a commonplace challenge. These people themselves find difficulty in establishing their own identity and in defining their specific character. Youth of Hong Kong what have you to tell us about yourselves and what can you tell us about your people?

I asked a group of students between 17 and 20 years of age, who attend our Tak Oi School, "How would you define your personal identity?" Out of a number of answers I quote a few:

Even if I live in Hong Kong, a British Colony, I am Chinese. My father and mother are Chinese, and I was born in Canton. China is my country and my patriotic feelings are for China. China would perhaps refuse to recognize me as a Chinese. I nonetheless look upon it as my homeland. I couldn't bear to see China defeated. I am proud of its civilization.

I am Chinese but I wasn't born in China and I have never been there. When I realize that I don't even know the people of my country, a feeling of sadness overcomes me, and I feel as one who has no deep roots anywhere and who has no country of her own.

My nationality is British, but the blood that flows in my veins is Chinese. My

Nan Ao, TAIWAN

Visiting the S...

On one of my regular rounds of the sick, I met a young man suffering from tuberculosis of the bones. He could no longer lie down because of acute pain from an open sore at the base of his spine and from his swollen feet. I found him sitting on the edge of his bed, his elbows propped up on the open drawers of a crude chest, filled with old blankets. This was the only position he found bearable.

As he was in constant pain, he had unfortunately taken refuge in drink, and

he refused all food. On my first visit, I gently reproached him for leaving our hospital where he had been treated with utmost kindness and given expert medical care. One afternoon, he had left furtively, because he was not allowed to drink strong liquor. He now looked up at me, a haunted expression in his blood-shot eyes. "Sister," he pleaded, "I want to pray again. Help me..." Together we said a few Hail Marys. Before I left, he promised that he would eat wholesome meals instead of drinking himself to death.

A few days later, I called again and was pleasantly surprised to find him more cheerful. He greeted me with a warm smile. "Sister," he exclaimed, "I

papers state that I am a British subject but the truth is that I am Chinese. I know very little about England, and I do not feel attached to that country. To be honest, I really do not know how to define my personal identity.

I have no identity. I don't even know if I should or should not consider myself Chinese. All that I know is that I am a human being and that my ancestors were Chinese.

I would like to identify myself as Chinese but I wonder what the people of continental China would have to say about that... Nevertheless, I insist that I belong to the Chinese nation and am proud of it. The Chinese race is a great race. I nourish the hope that we, Chinese of Hong Kong, will be worthy of our forebears.

It is evident that many of our young people are uneasy when asked to state their personal identity; all their answers stress racial and national traits. They do not know how to introduce themselves.

When I asked them to describe the people of Hong Kong, what did they say? Here again the national and racial aspects dominated in the answers, though other characteristics were mentioned. The following answers seem to summarize the ideas of the young:

The Chinese are a hard-working nation. They are courageous, practical, and indomitable workers.

People here have the "group" mentality. They think in groups and dislike giving their personal opinion, being wary of compromise. I think they are too strongly influenced by the West. They

are still Chinese, true, but to what extent, I wonder...

Hong Kong is a British Colony but 98 per cent of the inhabitants are Chinese. We, the young, suffer from our cultural uprooting. We do not belong to China. Our culture is neither Chinese nor English... This situation is very painful to us. Our parents do not seem to realize our predicament.

Who You Are for Me...

In my eyes, you are a Western-Eastern community — sociable, friendly, and peaceable. While anxious to save face, you know how to conciliate and compromise... There is nothing you would not do to safeguard harmony. You are very hard-working, industrious, and persevering. Notwithstanding your broadmindedness, as far as Westerners are concerned, you have not rejected your cultural heritage and you teach your children to cherish and observe ancestral customs and traditions.

In a certain way, you enjoy this extraordinary adaptation and benefit by it. You are very ambitious and pragmatic. You are a positive, matter-of-fact people who waste nothing. Is it any wonder that everything you do prospers? If we judge you according to the tempo of your life, it is not surprising that you should have had little time to speculate on your identity. You had to start from scratch here. Your tenacity

and your courage are amazing. Your personal identity exists and your youth will eventually define it.

In my eyes, your country is a country of the present, but also, despite the unstable political situation, a country of the future. At the risk of being judged naive I daresay that your country is a promising one and that you are the ones who will ensure its future.

Youth of Hong Kong, during the three years I have been here, I have discovered how dynamic, industrious, and determined you are. While conversing with you, how often have I detected your suffering, hidden under a certain exuberance! Of course you are not Chinese like the other Chinese and you bear traits of the West... However, this Western style flaunts an Eastern touch. No, you are not an uprooted people. You are Chinese to the marrow. You are Chinese "à la Hong Kong"!

This Western-Eastern characteristic constitutes your typicality. It is yours, it belongs to you alone. You have invented it. Your charm is unique and irresistible. A new nation has arisen, a new race, the race of Chinese "à la Hong Kong"!

People of Hong Kong, I do not pretend to have fully revealed your complex identity. This is the reason why I wish to continue listening and searching without respite until I discover your true image.

Sick

Antoinette Foisy, M.I.C.

I feel much better in my heart. My pals came to offer me drinks but I told them off, saying I would not join in their drinking bouts any more." I encouraged him in his good resolutions. Again we prayed together. I suggested he might ask to be cured physically if such were God's will. "We will make a novena together, and who knows? You may be made whole again, if only you have faith." He smiled indulgently. "Sister," he replied. "My faith is still like a tiny seed. But, patience, it may grow stronger..." I left him a few booklets on religion which Sr. Celia Chua had given me for this purpose.

On another visit, I inquired about his family, only to learn that all his relatives were dead. He was alone in the world,

except for a brother born of his dead father's second wife. This woman was kind and cared for him as if he were her own child. He also had a very good friend, a former classmate, crippled in a car accident. This man, a fervent Catholic, enjoyed visiting his friend and saying part of the Rosary with him. Both have become missionaries. They told me of other bedridden patients in their village, six of whom are Catholics. "Sister," they pleaded, "do visit them. All are bedridden or so badly crippled they can't leave their homes."

During the following week, I did visit them one by one. There were some really pitiful cases. One of these was a man who had lain on his pallet for ten

years, completely paralysed. A friend of his, a blind man, sat close by, teaching him some kind of handicraft to help while away the long, tedious hours. After inquiring about his health, I asked if he would like me to pray with him. "Sister," he replied, I'd like to do so, but I've forgotten all my prayers." I left him a booklet on the Rosary and promised to call again soon.

I have found deepfelt joys and many subjects of edification visiting the sick and the aged. They are always happy to welcome me. I only wish I had more time to devote to this fruitful apostolate. They have taught me many precious lessons in dignity, courage, and patience in the face of adversity.

MISSION BRIEFS

Mzimbazi, Malawi, C.A.

The church bell rang out merrily... What was going on? The Maternity Centre was filled with laughter and rejoicing at the birth of the 1000th baby at the clinic during 1979. Father Superior had warned the midwives beforehand: "Whoever is on duty when the lucky one arrives must go and ring the bell, even if it happens during the night." Fortunately, the 1000th baby timed his arrival for 1:00 p.m. Everybody rejoiced at this "first" in our Mzimbazi clinic. Sr. Yvette Caron offered a gift to the midwife on duty and presented the newcomer with a complete new layette.

San Bruno, San Francisco, U.S.A.

I am fast adapting to my work as Mission Awareness Coordinator for the Archdiocese. This takes in 105 Elementary Schools, 26 High Schools, and approximately 165 CCD groups. Lately, I succeeded in getting a group of about 16 missionaries from various congregations to form a mission team. We go especially to High Schools to give Global Awareness Sessions — a five-day package. I love the work.

Madeleine Delorme, M.I.C.

Koriyama, Japan

Childish hearts were filled with joy. With the smallest tots in the lead, each group presented to assembled parents, plays, sketches, songs, drills, etc. Some 15 pupils of the third and fourth grades presented "Little Red Riding Hood" under the direction of Sr. Michelle Paquette. The Children's Choir ren-

dered many songs of which the Gloria of Mozart in Latin. Pupils of the fifth grade played a beautiful biblical sketch about Noah, in coloured silhouettes, the whole accompanied by appropriate music. Finally the sixth grade, under the direction of Mrs. Kimura, a Christian teacher, performed a mime representing Joan of Arc in her prison cell. The mime showed how deep was her faith, and how unswerving her fidelity. Those who viewed the sketch were surprised to see how, in a non-Christian country, the Message of Christ could be so freely transmitted and how non-Christians could so aptly convey evangelical values.

Balconcillo, Lima

The *Señor de los Milagros* (Lord of Miracles) is a popular devotion of the Peruvian people. All through the month of October, a good number of women and young girls go about dressed in purple gowns held up with a white sash. For their part, the men wear purple neckties to stress their deep attachment to the *Señor de los Milagros*. The origin of this devotion goes back to the year 1650, when a black slave painted an inspiring figure of our crucified Lord on a blank wall. Little by little, the number of people who came to pray before the image increased. Fearing some lurking superstition in this popular devotion, the Bishop ordered the painting to be washed out. Reports of that period have it that the three workers assigned to this task were so terrified, that they fainted upon approaching the painting. In the year 1655, a disastrous earthquake des-

troyed part of the city of Lima. To the surprise of all, the picture of the *Señor de los Milagros* was found intact. The image suffered no damage during two subsequent earthquakes in 1687 and 1749. At present, the authentic painting is carefully preserved and honoured in El Nazareno church in Lima.

Manila, Philippines

In December last, Manila was the seat of the Church's vital activities. The Manila Synod of Bishops preceded the first International Congress on Mission Evangelization. Held under the auspices of the Holy See, its main theme was *Good News of God's Kingdom to the Peoples of Asia*, in connection with the fourth centennial of the foundation of the Archdiocese of Manila. This event is of great significance in the history of Christian missions in Asia. The climax of the Congress was the Mission Send-off Ceremony which took place at the Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Baclaran. In the presence of the Papal Nuncio, Cardinals, Bishops, religious men and women, and a throng of lay people, the special Papal Envoy, Cardinal Agnello Rossi blessed and sent forth 17 priests, 40 Sisters, 4 Brothers, and 4 Lay Missionaries to various local Churches. Among the 40 Sisters were our own Sr. Alicia Posadas who received a nomination to work at the M.I.C. Secretariat (general) in Canada, and Sr. Angelina Yap who will work among our Chinese brothers of Taiwan. The impressive ceremony could not but kindle in the young the desire of giving oneself to the missions.

(Excerpts from Provincial Newsletter)

ONE THOUSAND GUITARS FOR GOD

A grandiose manifestation of faith will take place on the occasion of the forty-second International Eucharistic Congress which will be held at Lourdes (France) July 14, 15, 16 and 17, 1981. Young people between the ages of 16 and 24 from all over the world, are invited to participate, to sing and to play together in a spirit of loving brotherhood. They are urged to chant a new hymn, the triumphant hymn of the Church in honour of her Lord.

The various delegations will be formally introduced on July 14. A Eucharistic celebration and a period of prayerful reflection will follow this presentation.

During the next three days, fourteen animation centres will be put at the disposal of the various delegations for the rehearsal of their musical programmes. A world concert will close the grand meeting during which five groups from different continents will sing joyfully to the Lord during two hours. Radio and TV are expected to cover the event.

The organizers urge the early formation of national committees throughout the world. These committees will promote the movement "One thousand Guitars for God", and will select the delegations which will travel to Lourdes.

YAURI, PERU

Mountain Dwellings

by Pierrette Bernier, M.I.C.

Houses in this region are simple and practical. They are built in much the same style as they have been for centuries past. Wherever field stones abound, the walls are made up of these stones held together by a certain kind of clay. In towns and villages adobe bricks are used.

Building a new house calls for a community bee. Straw is chopped up fine, mixed with clay and water, then trodden underfoot until a smooth mixture is obtained. This mixture is then poured into moulds prepared for this purpose. The bricks thus obtained are set out to dry in the sun.

Another bee takes place when time comes around to set up the house. Exterior walls of adobe bricks are daubed with a clay mixture. The roof is made of saplings covered with cleverly woven thatch, unless the people can afford corrugated iron sheeting.

There is only one door made of heavy wood, usually quite low. Some houses boast of one small window with panes of isinglass. Others have no opening save the door. The floor is of beaten earth. The house is divided, not by a partition, but by a low platform covered with sheepskins and coarse blankets, used as bedding for the whole family.

On the other side, there is a low crude stove on which the housewife cooks family meals. Fuel consists mostly of dried llama or sheep dung. Acrid smoke fills the house and blackens the walls but nobody seems to mind. The staple food here consists chiefly of *chuño*, dehydrated potatoes. Meat is scarce and vegetables seldom available.

Some houses
boast of
one small window.
Others
have no opening
save the door.



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