

World of Stamps: Madagascar

By Geir Sør-Reime



Madagascar has an area of about 226,597 square miles and a population just above 20 million.

Human settlement apparently did not take place until around 200-500 AD, when settlers arrived both from Asia (Borneo) and from Africa (Somalia, Mozambique). In the 7th century, Islam arrived on the island, and later, mighty kingdoms developed, with trade relations all round the Indian Ocean. European contact started around 1500, when the Portuguese arrived. In the 17th century, France managed to establish trading ports along the coast. In 1883, France invaded the island, and managed to secure the northern port of Diego Suarez (from 1975 Antsiranana) on the northern tip of Madagascar as a colony, and in 1896, France annexed it and its surrounding territory.

France had also secured control over the northern offshore island of Nossi-Be (now known as Nosy Be), which became a French protectorate in 1840, and was annexed by France the following year; and the island and port of St. Marie de Madagascar (Nosy Boraha), which had been settled by French in 1750 and became a French colony 1820-22.

Already from 1790 onwards, Britain also had important relations with Madagascar rulers, and had recognized it as an independent country in 1820, but did not accept the French annexation.

During WWII, Madagascar continued to be administered by the French Vichy regime after Germany had invaded France, but in 1942, British troops occupied the island to prevent its use as a base for Japanese submarines, and from then on, Madagascar was administered by the Free French.

The first stamp issues of Madagascar were not made by the French, however, but by the British consulate at Tananarive, and by the Norwegian Missionary Society.



Norwegian Missionary Society



Norwegian Missionary Society's printing works, Antsirabe, where the NMS stamps were printed

From the early 1880s, France had operated post-offices on Madagascar, but only in 1889, the post-offices at Tamatave, Tananarive, Fianarantsoa, Mahanoro, Majunga, Vatoman-dry, and Vohemar were supplied with French Colonies general issues. These were used 1889-92, and normal French stamps 1892-96. In 1889 and 1891, shortages forced these offices to produce local surcharges (numeral surcharges only) on French Colonies general issues, and



Left, French Post, Madagascar, 1889 local surcharge on French colonial stamp (Sc. 3); right, 1891 surcharge (Sc. 4)



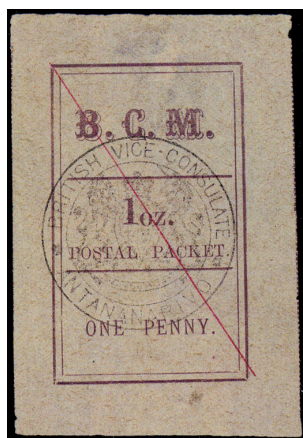
French Post, Madagascar, 1891 local typeset issue (Sc. 11)



Letter with 1891 typeset issue of French Post, Madagascar (Sc. 11)

in 1891, a typeset local issue inscribed 'Postes francaises MADAGASCAR' was also made.

The British consulate at Antananarivo operated a runner-service to the French post-office in Tamatave with its own stamps 1884-87. These stamps were quite large and type-set lo-



Sc. 1

cally. The first type (left), issued from March 1884, was inscribed 'B.C.M. / POSTAL PACKET / value' and counter-stamped with the stamp of the British Vice-Consulate, Antananarivo. Both provisional surcharges and ad-



Sc. 14

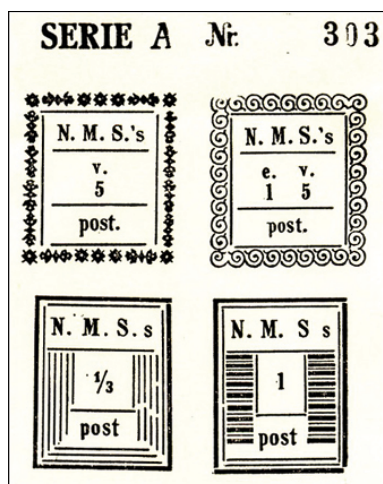
ditional values were made till 1886, and that year (right), another handstamp inscribed "British Consular Mail Antananarivo" was applied to a 4p stamp.

In 1886 also, a new series, just inscribed POSTAGE and



1886 1d in full pane of four, no period after "Postage", Sc. 16a

value was issued, again counter-stamped with the stamp of the British Vice-Consulate, Antananarivo or the British Consular Mail, Antananarivo.



Norwegian Missionary Society 1894-96 all four values, 1978 reprint

Between 1875 (parcels only, letters from 1888) and 1896, the Norwegian Missionary Society, (which started activity on Madagascar in 1866, operated a runner service between its various missionary stations on the highlands, centered round Antsirabe. Four simple type-set stamps were issued 1894 and 1896. The two first stamps were denominated in grains of rice, whereas the two latter stamps were denominated in British currency.

The Norwegian missionary activities led the foundation for the Evangelical Church of Madagascar, the centenary of which was celebrated 1967 with a single stamp.

During the French war of occupation, the British ran an inland mail service Jan.-Sept. 1895, also using special stamps.



Above, British Inland Mail 1895 on cover (Stanley Gibbons 50) sent to Durban and forwarded from there; right, 1895 British Inland Mail, 2nd issue (Malagasy runners) (Sc. 58-59)



1886 British Consular Mail, 3rd issue (Sc. 40)



1967 for centenary of Malagasy Lutheran Church (Sc. 403)



Letter forwarded by British Consular Mail without stamps to the French P.O. in Tamatave (from asdaonline.com)

At that time, France blockaded the port of Tamatave, and runners took the British mail to Vatomandry instead. The post was established with the understanding of the Madagascar government.

The British Inland Mail first issued seven simple type-set stamps in January 1895, followed by six pictorial stamps showing a native runner, printed in London and issued in March.



British Inland Mail 1895 (lower left) on cover (SG 50) sent to Durban and forwarded from there.



French Post 1895 overprint on French stamps (Sc. 16-17) and on complete cover (Sc. 15-16)

French stamps overprinted “Poste Française/Madagascar” were issued in 1895, coinciding with the French invasion/occupation of the island. The port of entry for the French troops was Majunga, and there, the local postmaster produced manuscript surcharges on French stamps to cater for a shortage of 15 centime stamps. Later, French stamps were handstamped “15”, some also on stamps where the manuscript surcharge had been partly washed off.



French Post, Madagascar, 1895 overprint on French stamps (Sc. 14)



French Post, Madagascar, 1896 surcharge in oval (Sc. 24)

In 1896, the post-office in Tananarive surcharged French stamps with a handstamp consisting of the value within an oval, three values exist, 5c, 15c and 25c, the latter on three different original stamps.



French Colonies, 1st issue (Sc. 28)

Later in 1896, when the French had firm control; stamps in the colonial

key-type “Navigation and Commerce” were issued with an inscription reading “Madagascar and Dependencies” in French. In 1898, both Diégo-Suarez and Ste.Marie de Madagascar became administrative parts of Madagascar and Dependencies (they had been administrative parts of Nossi-Bé until 1894). Nossi-Bé itself became a part of Madagascar and Dependencies in 1901. In fact, also the Comoro Islands were administered from Madagascar and used the stamps of Madagascar 1911-1950.

Several of the 1896 values were re-issued 1900-06 in changed colors. Between 1902 and 1906, shortage of specific values resulted in a number of



French Colonies, left, 1902 surcharge (Sc. 53); right, 1902 surcharge on stamps of Diego-Suarez (Sc. 56)

surcharges and also other provisional measures, including the bisecting stamps and overprinting them with certifying handstamps.

A completely new pictorial series had already appeared in 1906, depicting Zebu cattle and a lemur animal in front of a Traveler's Palm tree (this tree is also featured in the coat-of-arms of the Republic of Madagascar).



1903 Zebu cattle, lemur and Travelers Tree (Sc. 63)



Left to right, 1908 definitive transportation by sedan chair (Sc. 80); Provisional surcharges on 1908-28 definitives: 1921 (Sc. 130) and 1922 (Sc. 138)

picturing transport in Madagascar was issued, but again, a number of provisional surcharges appeared 1912-32.

A definitive series with several motifs appeared 1930-38. Motifs included Zebu cattle, the former governor, General Gallié-



1930 definitive Sakalava chief (Sc. 148); 1930 Hova woman (Sc. 154); 1930 Betsileo woman (Sc. 159); 1933 definitive Hova man with oxen (Sc. 147)

ni, a Sakalava chief and Betsileo and Hova girls (Sakalava, Betsileo and Hova are ethnic groups of Madagascar).

The first commemorative stamp for Madagascar was the 1931 issue for the International Colonial Exhibition in Paris, in a design used for all French colonies. In



1937 International exhibition Paris (Sc. 193)

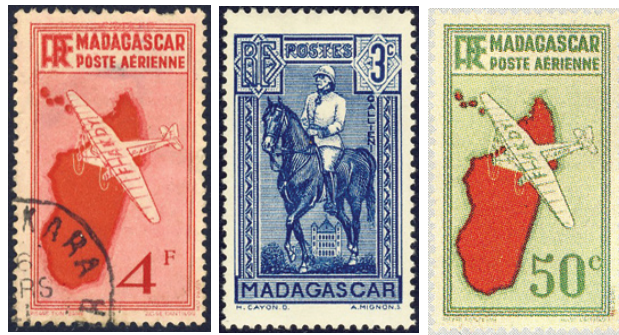


1939 New York's World Fair (Sc. 209)

1937, a similar set appeared for the International Exhibition in Paris. Madagascar also participated in the French omnibus

issues 1938 for the International Anti-Cancer Fund, and the 1939 issues for New York's World Fair and 150th anniversary of the French Revolution.

A lengthy air post series appeared in 1935, and the following year, the General Galliéni stamps were re-issued in gravure, the first issue having been recess-printed. Both of these sets were reprinted during WWII by the



Left to right, 1935 air post stamp (Sc. C11); 1940 General Galliéni (Sc. 180); 1935 air post (with "RF") (Sc. C1)

Vichy regime, and although Vichy supports were in power on Madagascar until the British invasion 1942, these stamps, with the 'RF' monogram removed, were not put on sale on Madagascar.



1941 Vichy government semi-postal, defense of French colonial empire (Sc. B10)

The Vichy regime also issued a number of commemorative stamps inscribed Madagascar, none of which were put on sale on the island. These include the 1941 issue for the Defence of the French Colonial Empire, and the 1941 pair with the local scenery and the portrait of Marshall Petain, the head of state of the



1941 Marshall Petain (Vichy issue) (Sc. 210A)



1942 Centenary of attachment of Mayotte and Nossi-Bé to France (Vichy issue, not catalogued in Scott)



1942 Vichy regime semi-postal air post stamp for children's fund (illustrated, but not listed in Scott)



1942 Vichy regime re-issue of air post stamps (without "RF") (mentioned, but not listed in Scott)

Vichy regime; a 1942 single commemorating the centenary of the attachment of Nossi-Bé and Mayotte to France, and the 1942 semi-postals for the protection of children.



1938 Jean Laborde (Sc. 198)

In 1938, a long set commemorated the 60th death anniversary of Jean Laborde (1805-78), who was stranded on Madagascar, and later built himself up as a businessman, and was the first Consul of France on Madagascar.



1942 France Libre overprints (Sc. 231, 239)



1944 Free French semi-postal (for Red Cross) (Sc. B15)



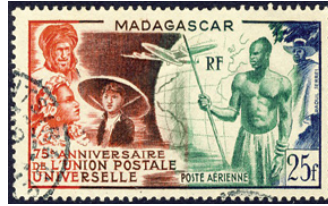
1942 Free French overprint and surcharge on air post stamp (Sc. C35)



1943 Free French (Sc. 247)

After the British invasion, the Vichy representatives on Madagascar were replaced by a Free French administration, and in 1942, a number of stamps were overprinted 'FRANCE LIBRE' or surcharged also, to mark the change of government. In 1943 London-printed stamps featuring a Traveler's Palm were issued, also inscribed France Libre (Free French).

After the war, Madagascar participated in several French colonial omnibus issues, the 1945 Governor Eboué issue, the 1946 Victory issues, the 1949 UPU centennial issue, the 1950 Colonial Welfare Fund issue, the 1952 issue for the centenary of the Military Medal; and the 1954 issue for the 10th anniversary of the Victory.



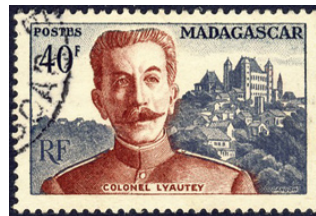
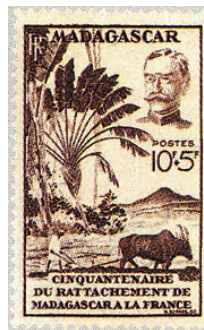
Above, 1949 Centenary of Universal Postal Union (Sc. C55); right, 1945 Governor-General Eboué (sided early with DeGaulle and the Free French) (Sc. 259)



Left to right: 1946 definitive dancer (Sc. 272); 1946 Zebu cattle (Sc. 273); 1946 mother and child (Sc. 279); 1946 air post stamp showing port of Tamatave (Sc. C51)



In 1946, a new definitive series was issued, some values portraying French militaries, others showing local people or Zebu cattle. There was also a set of air post stamps associated with this issue. In 1946, a single commemorated the



Left to right: 1946 semi-postal for 50th anniversary of Madagascar as French colony (Sc. B16); 1946 General Gallieni (Sc. 277) ; 1954 Colonel Lyautey (Sc. 291)

50th anniversary of the French conquest of Madagascar, and included a portrait of General Gallieni. A 1954 stamp was issued for the birth centenary of Marshall Hubert Lyautey

(1854-1934), who served in Madagascar 1896-1902, where he commanded the French forces during the 1896-97 invasion.

Madagascar in 1956 issued a set of four promoting the Economic and Social Development Fund, and the final stamps before independence was a set of three depicting plants.

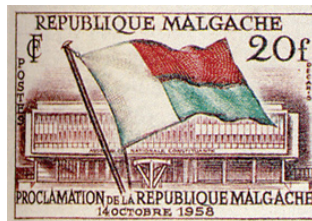


Left, 1956 coffee plant (Sc. 296); right, 1956 FIDES (Economic and Social Development Fund) showing Gallieni College, Tananarivo (Sc. 293)

Independence was a set of three depicting plants.

A new definitive series had been released in 1952, incorporating more national designs than the 1946 series.

Madagascar became an independent republic within the French Community October 14, 1958, and the first stamp inscribed 'Republique Malgache' (Malagassian Republic), was the December 10, 1958 stamp for the 10th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. The two stamps marking the proclamation of the Republic were issued February 28, 1959. A long definitive series showing butterflies and moths was issued 1960, as were three commemorative stamps, one of which portrayed President Philibert Tsiranana.



1959 Proclamation of Malagassian Republic (Sc. 303)



1959 for French Community (Sc. 305)



Left, 1960 President Tsiranana (Sc. 320); right, 1960 butterfly (Sc. 310)



The Malagassian Republic left the French Community and became a fully independent republic June 26, 1960.



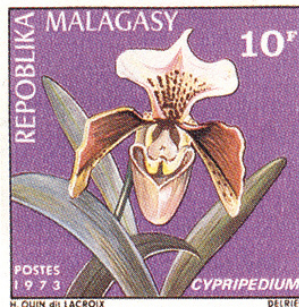
Madagascar101: 2010 French stamp celebrating 50th anniversary of independence of former French colonies in Africa, including Madagascar

The first post-independence stamp, a 1960 single commemorating independence and portraying President Tsiranana was still inscribed “Republique Malgache”, but subsequent stamps were now inscribed in Malagasy language “Republika Malagasy” (“Malagassian Republic”). This first stamp was also surcharged and overprinted to celebrate the Independence Fête.



Left, 1960 President Tsiranana (Sc. 318); right, 1961 lemurs (Sc. 322)

The first stamps to be inscribed “Republika Malagasy” was a set of six stamps depicting lemurs. Madagascar’s unique flora and fauna have been featured on a number of subsequent stamp issues, including a 1962 set featuring birds and orchids, a 1966 set with insects, 1973 sets featuring chameleons, orchids, and lemurs; 1975 set showing flora, 1970 set showing animals, including lemurs, a 1984 set with lemurs and another with orchids, a 1985 set with orchids, a 1986 set with birds, a 1989 set with orchids, a 1990 set with lemurs, and a 1999 set featuring chameleons. Endemic flora was the theme of a 2003 set, and there is also a 2005 set featuring orchids.



Left to right: 1963 Birds (Sc. 340); 1973 Orchids (Sc. 495); 1973 lemurs (Sc. 501)



Left to right: 1962 admission to the U.N. (Sc. 326); 1963 semi-postal showing PO Tamatave (Sc. B20); 1968 for 10th anniversary of Republic (Sc. 417)



1970 for President's 60th birthday (Sc. 451)

Madagascar's admission to the U.N. was celebrated in 1962 with a pair of stamps. The GPO in Tananarive was featured on a 1963 Stamp Day single. President Tsiranana's 55th birthday was celebrated 1965 with two stamps, and the two 1968 stamps for the 10th anniversary of independence depicted him and his wife. In 1969, he had been President for 10 years, and a single stamp was issued for that occasion. A single stamp was also issued for his 60th birthday, in 1970.

President Tsiranana was forced to resign as President in 1972, and was succeeded by General Gabriel Ramanantsoa, who again resigned in 1975.

He again was succeeded by Colonel Richard Ratsimandrava, who was assassinated after only six days as President, in February 1975, and was portrayed on three 1975 stamps.



1975, President Ratsimandrava (Sc. 521)

The assassination of President Ratsimandrava led to civil war in Madagascar. In the event, Colonel Didier Ratsiraka was appointed President, and started on a socialist course, leading to the proclamation, on December 21, 1975, of the Second Republic. Later, he reverted to a more capitalist policy, and stayed as President till 1993. In 1997, he was re-elected and stayed until 2002.

In 1976, the inscription on Malagasy stamps was changed to "Republika Demokratika Malagasy" (Malagas-



Left to right: 1976 World Health Day, first issue inscribed Democratic Malagassian Republic (Sc. 549); 1985 10th anniversary of socialist revolution (Sc. 722); 1979 “Women, Supports of the Revolution” (Sc. 592)



sian Democratic Republic), and the 1st anniversary of this 2nd Republic was commemorated 1976 with a single stamp showing the arms of it. Several 1977-80 stamps reflected the socialist orientation of the president. In 1980, stamps were issued for the 5th anniversary of the “revolution”, the 20th anniversary of independence and the 5th anniversary of the Malagassian Democratic Republic. The 10th anniversary of the Democratic Republic was celebrated with a 1985 stamp, and the same year, another single commemorated 25 years of independence. In 1980, the 15th anniversary of the Socialist Revolution was celebrated with two stamps, and of course, a stamp was also issued for the 30th anniversary of independence, but the 15th anniversary of the Democratic Republic, also in 1990, was only commemorated in 1991, with a single stamp.



1990 15th anniversary of socialist revolution (Sc. C189)

In 1994, following the exit of President Ratsiraka and Albert Zafy winning the Presidential elections, the name of the country was changed to “Repoblikan’i Madagasikara” (Republic of Madagascar), and that also became the inscription



1998 thematic, here Sports Cars (Sc. 1388)

on the country’s new stamps. The post-1994 stamps have primarily been thematic in nature, normally with no direct rela-



1999 for 125th anniversary of Universal Postal Union (Sc. 1496)



Above, Front of 1996 booklet with set of four for 25th anniversary of Greenpeace (Sc. 1341-44); Right, top to bottom: 2006 for 20th anniversary of Madagascar Philatelists Association; 2007 for Whale Festival on St. Marie island; 2008 for Paositra malagasy, Madagascar mail service as a factor of regional development

tion to Madagascar itself. Since 2000, the number of new issues, though, has been very low, with only a few new stamps per year, apparently reflecting the political unrest in the country.

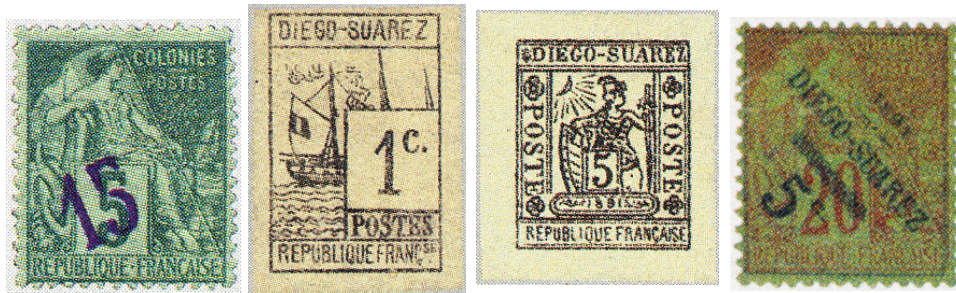
In 2002, Marc Ravalomanana was elected President after he beat Ratsiraka, but in early 2009, President Marc Ravalomanana was ousted by the 35-year old Andry Rajoelina after popular demonstrations and unrest. The unrest has continued though, and most countries have refused to recognize the new government.

As mentioned above, the French, before they got control over the entire island of Madagascar, had acquired three settlements on and around the main island: Nossi-Bé, Diego-Suarez and St. Marie de Madagascar. We will now briefly return to these three settlements.

Diego-Suarez is a port and district in the northern end of Madagascar itself. It is now called Antsiranana (from 1975). Its original name is from the Portuguese explorer Diogo Suares, who was there in 1543. France managed to get rights there already in 1840, and after the first French-

Madagascar war, France acquired the port in 1885. In 1942, the British invasion force landed there when they managed to oust the Vichy-friendly government of Madagascar and replace it by a Free French government. There was a French naval base there until 1973.

French colonial stamps surcharged 15 (centimes) were produced in Diego-Suarez in 1890, and locally produced stamps were introduced later the same and the following year. In 1891, French colonial stamps overprinted DIEGO-SUAREZ in a large frame, and surcharged also, were introduced. The following year, French colonial stamps just overprinted DIEGO-SUAREZ were produced, and finally, also in 1892, stamps in the colonial Navigation and Commerce design, inscribed DIEGO-SUAREZ & DEPENDENCES were put on sale. In 1893, the inscription was altered to DIEGO-SUAREZ only, as the former dependencies of Nossi-Bé and St. Marie de Madagascar got their own distinct stamps.



Left to right, top row first: 1890 surcharge on French colony stamp (Sc. 2); 1890 local (Sc. 6); 1891 local (Sc. 10); 1892 local surcharge with name of colony (Sc. 12);



1892 Navigation and Commerce (with "and Dependencies") (Sc. 25); 1892 Diego-Suarez overprint (Sc. 19); 1894 Navigation and Commerce (Diego-Suarez only) (Sc. 39)

The island of Nossi-Bé (Nosy Be – Great Island), off the north-west coast of Madagascar proper and with an area of 120 square miles, accepted French protection already



Left to right: 1889 surcharge on French colonies stamp (Sc. 8); 1890 NSB overprint (Sc. 16); 1893 NSB overprint (Sc. 23); 1893 Nossi-Bé overprint (Sc. 29); 1893 NOSSI-BÉ overprint (Sc. 31); 1894 Navigation and Commerce series (Sc. 40); Nossi-Bé 1894 "Navigation and Commerce" definitive (Sc. 32)

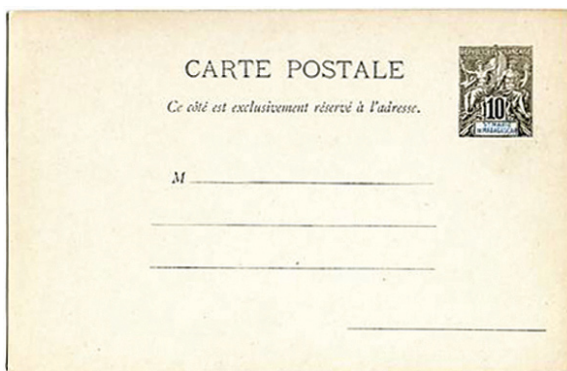


in 1840, and the French took over in 1841. It was administered as a dependency of Diego-Suarez until 1894, and initially used the stamps of Diego-Suarez. Already in 1889, French colonial stamps were surcharged locally on Nossi-Bé, and in 1890, these surcharges also included an overprint reading NSB (NoSsi-Bé). Such overprint/surcharges were made in 1891 and 1893 also. In 1893, some French colonial stamps were also overprinted Nossi Bé or NOSSI-BE with handstamps. Finally, a series of stamps in the Navigation and Commerce design and inscribed NOSSI-BÉ was issued, again replaced by Madagascar stamps in 1901.



1901 postal card (H&G 7) inscribed "Madagascar et Dependances"

Sainte-Marie de Madagascar (Nosy Boraha) is an island off the north-eastern coast of Madagascar, with an area of 85.6 square miles. In the 17th and 18th centuries, it was used as a hiding place for several well-known pirates. It became a French possession already in 1750-61, and



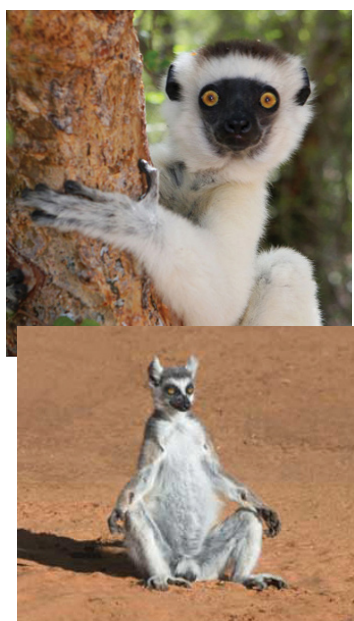
St. Marie de Madagascar 1894 (Sc. 6); St. Marie de Madagascar 1894 postal card (H&G 1);

was officially ceded to France in 1850. Before 1894, the French colonial stamps and the stamps of Diego-Suarez were used, and only in 1894, a series in the Navigation and Commerce design was issued with the inscription St. Marie de Madagascar. They were replaced by the general issues of Madagascar in 1898.

For a short period in 1894, prior to the receipt of the distinctive stamps, stamps of Diego-Suarez were overprinted with the date canceller of St. Marie without the date.

* * * * *

Madagascar has been described as unlike any other place on the planet. To support that description, we conclude with a few photographs.



At left, the island is famous for its strange lemurs, the bottom photo showing one sunning itself. Less well known is the strange “stone forest” with a couple of lemurs (arrow).

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