

Book Review

Environnement et pratiques paysannes à Madagascar. Florent Lasry, Chantal Blanc-Pamard, Pierre Milleville, Samuel Razanaka, and Michel Grouzis (eds.). Paris: IRD Éditions (Institut de recherche pour le développement) and CNRE (Centre National de Recherches sur l'Environnement) 2005. CD-Rom multimedia publication, including texts, atlas, photos, tables, figures, movie, glossary. 35 € (ISBN 2-7099-1571-5).

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Multidisciplinary research in a multimedia format: is this the way of the future? In *Environnement et pratiques paysannes à Madagascar*, a team of French and Malagasy geographers, ecologists, and agronomists present their findings on the dynamics of agrarian and environmental change in southwestern Madagascar. They document and explain a trend of agricultural colonization and rapid deforestation in the Mikea forest, driven by an export market for maize. This finding, and the detailed assessments of rural land use strategies and agro-ecological change that accompany it, are important and useful, yet this work also offers an opportunity to evaluate the benefits of multidisciplinary team-based research and to comment on the possibilities embedded in multimedia publication formats.

The dry forests and savannas near the port of Toliary are home to the Masikoro people. Over the past few decades, forests have been converted to fields along a fast-moving pioneer front. Masikoro farmers slash and burn the forest, cultivate maize for five or more years until nutrients are exhausted and weeds proliferate, then move on, abandoning the field to pasture. Dry forest is permanently lost.

Environnement et pratiques paysannes à Madagascar summarizes detailed investigations into this process, mostly in the *commune rurale* of Analamisampy, some 100 km north of Toliary. Different sections of the CD-Rom detail the environmental and historical context, the story of pioneer settlement and land access, the local farming strategies, and the agronomy and ecology of the forest-clearing maize cultivation. Addi-