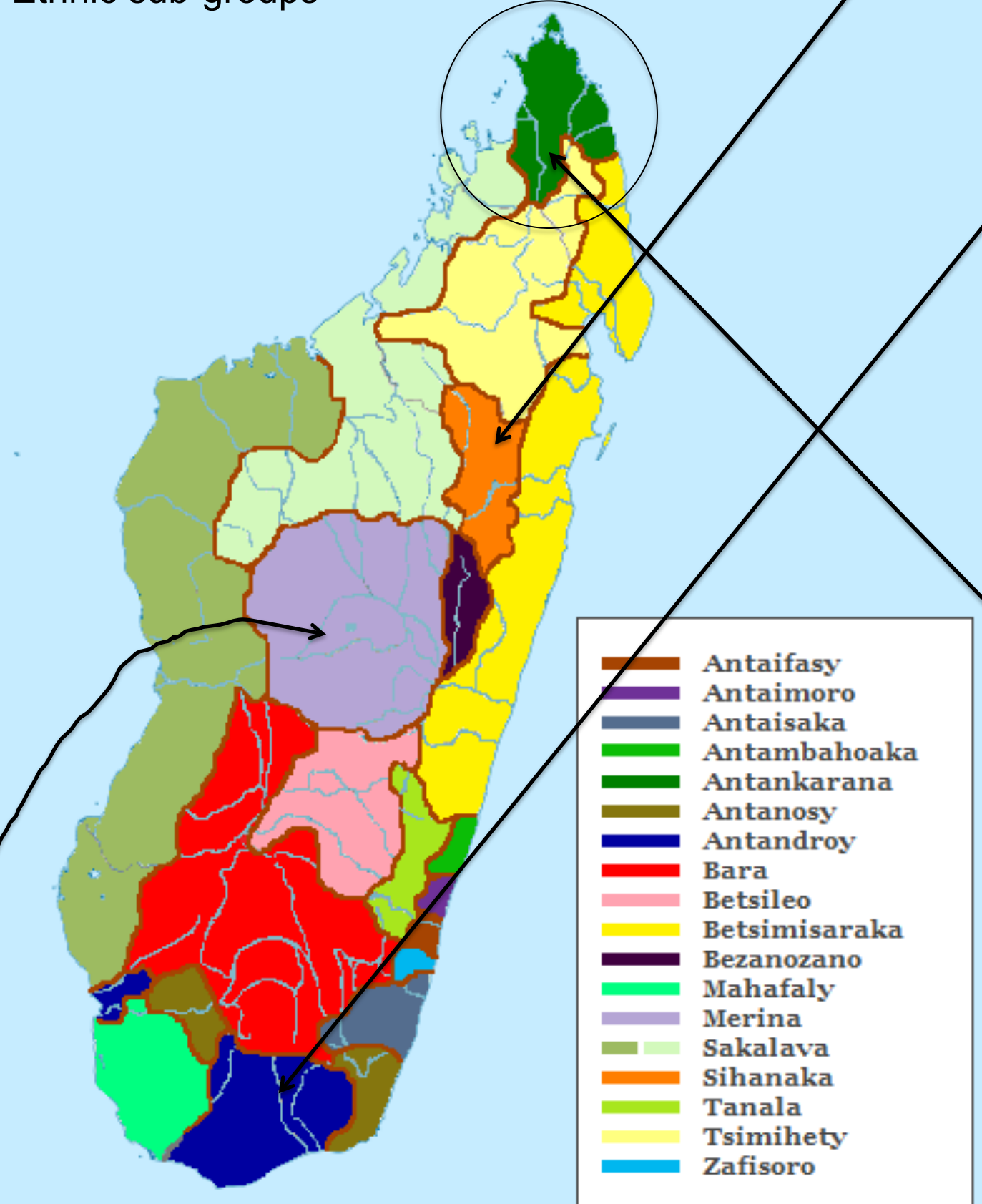# The features of proper determiners in Malagasy dialects

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1. Introduction

Proper names in Malagasy require a determiner

The paradigm of proper determiners varies across dialects

Goal: to explore the different features of proper determiners and their position in the DP of four dialects

Malagasy: Official language of Madagascar, spoken by over 18 million people.

Austronesian language; 10-18 dialects spoken on the island

Ethnic sub-groups

- Antaifasy
- Antaimoro
- Antaisaka
- Antambahoaka
- Antankarana
- Antanosy
- Antandroy
- Bara
- Betsileo
- Betsimisaraka
- Bezanozano
- Mahafaly
- Merina
- Sakalava
- Sihanaka
- Tanala
- Tsimihety
- Zafisoro

2. The dialects

Official Malagasy: based on Merina (central plateau) taught in schools and used in government
Sihanaka: spoken to the north west of the capital
Tandroy: spoken in the south
"**Northern dialects**": spoken in the north (includes Antankarana, Sakalava, Betsimisaraka, Tsimihety)
NB: the ethnic groups and the dialect groups do not always match, but the above image is a useful guide.

2.1 Official Malagasy

Dez (1990): 3 proper name determiners (distinct from common noun determiner *ny*
Invariant for Case, omitted when proper name occurs as predicate
- *i*: familiar, occurs on names from cities, mountains and rivers, can anthropomorphize an animal
- *ra:* more respectful, can anthropomorphize an animal
- *andria:* most respectful (male?)

(1) a. tonga iKoto
         'Koto arrived.'
     b. tonga Rakoto
         'Rakoto arrived.'
     c. tonga Andriankoto
         'Andriankoto arrived.'

(2) a. Ivato
         (city name)
     b. iPiso
         'Cat'
     c. Ravano
         'Mr. Heron'

Proposed features:

(3) a. *i* [proper, fam]   b. *ra* [proper, -place]   c. *andria* [proper, hon, +human]

2.2 Sihanaka

Ranjivason (1984): 3 proper name determiners

- *i*: familiar
- *ra:* more respectful
- *rie:* most respectful

i also occurs as a common noun determiner, but undergoes phonologically conditioned allomorphy when a common noun determiner and not when a proper name determiner.
Same features as proposed for Official Malagasy

2.3 Tandroy

Rajaona (2005): 3 proper name determiners, but form is determined by Case (cf. Niuean, Tagalog, etc.)

- Clause final subjects take *ty*
- Genitive or accusative proper names take *ʔi*
- In other positions: *i*

(4) a. marare   ty   Koto
         sick   DET   Koto
         'Koto is sick.'
     b. mahatrea   ʔi   Koto   raho
         see   DET   Koto   1SG
         'I see Koto.'
     c. i   Koto   marare
         DET   Koto   sick
         'Koto is sick.'

Proposed features:

(5) a. *ty* [proper, nom]   b. *ʔi* [proper, acc/gen]   c. *i* [proper]

2.4 Northern dialects

Botouhely (2007): a single proper name determiner *i*

The only feature is [proper]

3. Plural

Official Malagasy: proper name can be preceded by *ry* (plural marker for proper names) (6a)
Sihanaka: plural demonstrative *iery* precedes proper name (6b)
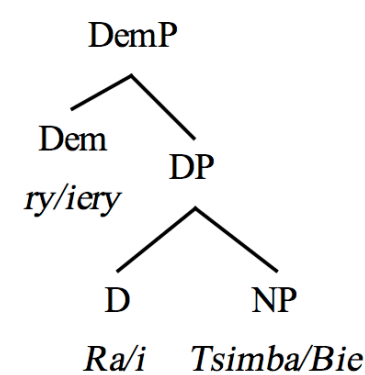Tandroy: *ry* follows other proper determiners (6c)

(6) a. ry Ratsimba   b. iery i Bie
         'the Ratsimba family'   'Bie and his consorts'
     c. ty ry Koto
         'Koto and his friends'

Interpretation: family (like English 'the Kennedys') or the person and friends
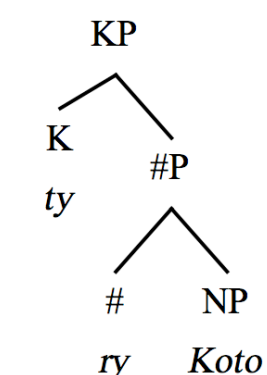
4. DP structure

Proper determiners in Official Malagasy and Sihanaka are low in the DP structure: can be preceded by number/demonstrative head
Proper determiners in Tandroy encode case (are in K°): higher in the structure than number

Official Malagasy/Sihanaka

```
        DemP
       /    \
     Dem     DP
   ry/iery  /  \
           D    NP
         Ra/i  Tsimba/Bie
```

Tandroy

```
        KP
       /  \
      K    #P
      ty   /  \
          #    NP
          ry   Koto
```

6. Further issues and conclusions

More data are required, in particular from the Northern dialects
Data from proper names can shed light on feature inventory and DP structure

References

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