

Promotion of Tradition and the Success of Development Projects: The Case of the Rural Commune of Ambohitseheno, Mananara, Madagascar

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Abstract—Traditions constitute an essential pillar of community life in Madagascar, guiding social cohesion and local development practices. However, the adoption of externally initiated development projects by the population is often unsuccessful. These failures, particularly in the agricultural sector, motivate the search for remedial strategies, such as the valorization of local traditions. Our objective is to analyze the influence of tradition valorization on the success and sustainability of community projects. Conducted through a survey of the population in the rural commune of Ambohitseheno, Mananara, Madagascar, the study employed a quantitative approach using the Chi-square test of independence on a sample of 125 respondents. The results highlight the structuring role of tradition in shaping perceptions of project success and durability. Likewise, the method used to sustain traditions had a significant effect on perceived project success, with evolutionary or mixed practices, open to innovation, promoting better community ownership. The most significant result was observed between the type of heritage valorized (material or cultural) and the persistence of the project, as revealed by the Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 8.92$). In contrast, no statistically significant relationship was found between the type of tradition valorized and project persistence ($\chi^2 = 0.44$), indicating that the sustainability of actions depends primarily on community solidarity and social cohesion rather than on the specific content of the traditions employed. These findings confirm that tradition, far from being an obstacle, represents a strategic resource for the success and sustainability of local development when integrated into a participatory, adaptive, and endogenous approach.

Keywords— Tradition, valorization, local development, sustainability, social cohesion, heritage, Madagascar.

I. INTRODUCTION

In Madagascar, traditions constitute a fundamental pillar of life (Andria S. et Al., 2013). They guide social behaviors (Perrineau, 2018), regulate collective relationships, and influence the economic and environmental choices of local populations (Sandron, 2006). Passed down from generation to generation, these practices and representations ensure cultural continuity while fostering cohesion and solidarity within communities (Rakotomalala, 2019). Development policies inspired by external models (Herskovits, 1950) have long underestimated the importance of cultural foundations, viewing them as obstacles to modernization rather than as

levers for endogenous development (Hountondji, 2002). In the Malagasy context, which is oriented toward sustainable and participatory development (M. Rabemanambola et al., 2009), the valorization of tradition emerges as a key factor in the success of community projects. Considered a living and evolving resource, tradition represents a social, symbolic, and technical capital (Razafindrakoto, M. Roubaud, F., et al., 2017) that is essential for adapting development actions to local realities (Fanafody, 2015).

The success of a project relies on the integration of local cultural knowledge and values (UNESCO, 2006), the recognition of cultural diversity (Francis, 2025), and participation based on dialogue—conditions essential for community ownership and the sustainability of actions—while their absence often leads to project failure (Singini, 2024); (Chambers, 2007); (Rakotomalala, 2019). In this perspective, the main hypothesis was formulated: the valorization of tradition facilitates the success of development projects. To test this hypothesis, it was broken down into five operational sub-hypotheses to examine the different dimensions of cultural and heritage valorization: 1) The association between the type of traditions valorized and satisfaction with the project; 2) The relationship between the method used to sustain tradition and project satisfaction; 3) The link between the type of tradition considered beneficial for the project and beneficiaries' satisfaction; 4) The correspondence between the heritage and infrastructure valorized and the persistence of the project; 5) The possible association between the type of tradition valorized and project persistence.

The overall objective of this study is thus to determine the extent to which different forms of traditional valorization influence both the perceived success and the actual sustainability of community projects (Verdubo-Ulloa, 2018). This approach falls within a perspective of endogenous development, where tradition is seen as a strategic resource to be reinterpreted and adapted to contemporary dynamics (UNESCO., 2010).

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Cadre and conduct of the Survey :

The study was conducted in the rural commune of Ambohitseho, Mananara, characterized by strong social cohesion and an economy primarily based on agriculture. This local context, where tradition still largely structures social relationships and economic practices, provides an ideal setting to observe the interaction between culture and development.

The survey involved 125 respondents, selected from among farmers, community leaders, and stakeholders engaged in local development projects. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, administered through face-to-face interviews to facilitate understanding of the questions and ensure the reliability of responses. The interviews were conducted across the different fokontany of the commune over a two-week period in July 2025, allowing the collection of both factual and perceptual information regarding the valorization of tradition and the success of community projects.

B. Description of the Questionnaire :

To test the main hypothesis that the valorization of tradition contributes to the success of development projects, a structured questionnaire was developed. It was designed to collect farmers' perceptions, attitudes, and practices regarding tradition and local development. The questionnaire consists of three main sections (A, B, and C), each organized around a specific analytical focus and observable indicators

❖ Section A : Valorization of Tradition

This first section examines the role of local traditions in the daily lives of farmers in the studied rural commune, focusing on cultural heritage and the methods used to preserve local resources. It addresses the types of traditions being valorized, the motivations behind this valorization, the resources involved, as well as the mechanisms for transmitting and sustaining these practices. These elements allow for an assessment of cultural attachment, the adaptability of practices, and the strategies for passing on local knowledge.

❖ Section B : Tradition and Project

This section analyzes the interactions between traditions and development projects through two main indicators: the conservative mindset and the development dimension. It examines traditional practices that are either supportive or detrimental to projects, trainers' attitudes toward peasant culture, and methods of community mobilization. The objective is to assess the influence of traditional values on the success or vulnerability of community initiatives.

❖ Project and Development

The final section of the questionnaire focuses on the reality of existing projects in the commune and the beneficiaries' perception of their success. The selected indicators relate to the actual project and the farmers' realities. The questions address the types of projects implemented, the funding sources, the causes of failure and persistence, the level of satisfaction with the projects' existence, and the desired directions for future projects.

In order to test it, several variables from the three sections of the questionnaire were cross-analyzed to examine the relationship between the valorization of traditions and project success. The analysis focuses in particular on the influence of

the types of traditions valorized, the methods of transmission, and the traditions considered beneficial on satisfaction with the existence of the project, as well as on the role of heritage and forms of traditional valorization in the persistence and sustainability of community initiatives. These cross-analyses make it possible to assess the extent to which consideration of traditional dimensions shapes perceptions of success and the long-term sustainability of projects.

C. Analysis Method :

The data collected are nominal qualitative data, derived from closed-ended multiple-choice questions. Cross-tabulations of variables were analyzed using the Chi-square test of independence, which allows for determining whether a statistically significant relationship exists between the modalities of the two variables. Microsoft Excel was used for data entry and processing, and the following interpretation criteria were adopted: if $p \leq 0.05$, the relationship is significant and the variables are associated; if $p > 0.05$, the relationship is not significant and the variables are independent. This method enables empirical validation or refutation of the formulated sub-hypotheses by assessing the actual role of tradition in the satisfaction and sustainability of community projects (Agresti, 2019) ; (Dagnelie, 2012).

III. RESULTS

The validity of the main hypothesis—that the promotion of tradition fosters the success of the development project—was assessed using the results of the statistical analysis based on the Chi-square (χ^2) test of independence. Five statistical associations corresponding to the five sub-hypotheses were tested. The Chi-square (χ^2) values, degrees of freedom (df), and associated probabilities (p) were presented for each of them.

A. Association between the Type of traditions valorized by the population and satisfaction with the Existence of the development project :

1) Chart of observed frequencies

Type of traditions promoted	Project existence satisfaction		Total
	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	
Cultural promotion	49	27	75
Material promotion	18	31	50
Total	67	58	125

2) Chart of expected frequencies

Type of traditions promoted	Project existence satisfaction		Total
	Non satisfied	Satisfied	
Cultural promotion	40	35	75
Material promotion	27	23	50
Total	67	58	125

$\text{Khi}^2 = 5.58; \text{ddl} = 1; p = 0,018$

A significant association between the type of traditions promoted and satisfaction with the development project was revealed by the Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 5.58; \text{df} = 1; p = 0.018$). According to the observed frequencies, projects emphasizing the material dimension of traditions were associated with a higher level of satisfaction, whereas those focusing on cultural

promotion were more frequently linked to a lack of satisfaction. This highlights a differentiation in perceptions of project success according to the type of tradition valued.

Material and utilitarian traditions, such as technical know-how and the exploitation of local resources, were perceived as directly contributing to project success, reflecting a functional and pragmatic approach to local development. In contrast, cultural and symbolic traditions, centered on collective memory, customs, or intangible heritage, were associated with lower satisfaction, indicating a pursuit of identity recognition rather than tangible results.

From this differentiation, it was suggested that perceptions of project success were influenced by the nature of the tradition promoted: material approaches addressed practical and economic needs, whereas cultural approaches were grounded in logics of recognition and transmission.

Based on this result, it was confirmed that two complementary forms of promotion—one utilitarian and the other symbolic—differed in their relationship to beneficiary satisfaction. Thus, the sub-hypothesis stating that the type of tradition promoted influences project success was validated.

B. Association between the method of preserving the tradition and satisfaction with the existence of the project :

i. Chart of observed frequencies

Method of preserving the tradition	Project existence satisfaction		Total
	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	
Evolutionary / Mixed	59	40	98
Direct transmission	8	18	27
Total	67	58	125

ii. Chart of expected frequencies

Method of preserving the tradition	Project existence satisfaction		Total
	Not satisfied	Satisfied	
Evolutionary / Mixed	53	46	98
Direct transmission	14	12	27
Total	67	58	125

$\text{Khi}^2 = 3.98; \text{ddl} = 1; p = 0,046$

A significant association between the method used to preserve the tradition and satisfaction with the project was revealed by the Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 3.98; \text{df} = 1; p = 0.046$). According to the observed frequencies, projects in which evolutionary or mixed methods were adopted were associated with a higher level of satisfaction, whereas those relying on direct and strictly traditional transmission were more frequently linked to dissatisfaction. This highlights a differentiation in approaches to sustaining traditions based on the method of promotion. Evolutionary and mixed methods, which combine ancestral practices with techniques adapted to the contemporary context, were perceived as more effective and better integrated into current development dynamics. In contrast, direct transmission methods, based on faithful reproduction of traditional knowledge, were associated with lower satisfaction levels, reflecting difficulties in adapting to current socio-economic needs.

Based on this distinction, it was suggested that perceived project success was influenced by the ability of stakeholders to

adapt traditions to change. Flexible and hybrid approaches allowed for a reconciliation of heritage preservation with modern development requirements, whereas conservative approaches limited the projects' impact on beneficiary satisfaction.

These results confirmed that flexibility in the transmission and reinvention of traditions constituted a favorable factor for community satisfaction. Thus, the sub-hypothesis stating that the method used to preserve the tradition influences project success was validated.

C. Association between the type of tradition beneficial to the development project and satisfaction with the project's existence :

i. Chart of observed frequencies

Type of tradition beneficial to the project	Project existence satisfaction		Total
	Non satisfied	Satisfied	
Cultural promotion	50	28	79
Material promotion	17	30	46
Total	67	58	125

ii. Chart of expected frequencies

Type of tradition beneficial to the Project	Project existence satisfaction		Total
	Non satisfied	Satisfied	
Cultural promotion	42	36	78
Material promotion	25	22	47
Total	67	58	125

$\text{Khi}^2 = 5.57; \text{ddl} = 1; p = 0,018$

A significant association between the type of tradition beneficial to the project and satisfaction with the development project was revealed by the Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 5.57; \text{df} = 1; p = 0.018$). According to the observed frequencies, projects based on the material promotion of traditions were associated with higher satisfaction levels, whereas those emphasizing cultural promotion were more frequently linked to dissatisfaction. This highlights a differentiation in perceived benefits according to the nature of the tradition promoted.

Material and practical traditions, such as agricultural know-how or local techniques, were perceived as contributing more directly to project success and effectiveness. In contrast, cultural and symbolic traditions, focused on transmitting community values and beliefs, were associated with lower satisfaction, reflecting strong identity recognition but a more limited contribution to direct economic outcomes.

Based on this distinction, it was suggested that beneficiary satisfaction was influenced by the nature of the benefit derived from the tradition: material promotion provided tangible advantages, whereas cultural promotion relied on symbolic and social effects that were less immediately perceptible. These results confirmed that two complementary forms of contribution of traditions to development—one material, the other cultural—differed in their impact on community satisfaction. Thus, the sub-hypothesis stating that the type of tradition beneficial to the project influences project success was validated.

D. Association between valued traditional heritage and infrastructure and the cause of project persistence

i. Chart of observed frequencies

Valued traditional heritage and infrastructure	Cause of project persistence		Total
	Project/Training	Socio-community	
Built and cultural heritage	3	48	51
Natural and hydraulic heritage	27	47	74
Total	30	95	125

ii. Chart of expected frequencies

Valued traditional heritage and infrastructure	Cause of project persistence		Total
	Project/Training	Socio-community	
Built and cultural heritage	12	39	52
Natural and hydraulic heritage	18	56	43
Total	30	95	125

$\chi^2 = 8.92$; $ddl = 1$; $p = 0,003$

A highly significant association between the type of heritage promoted and the cause of project persistence was revealed by the Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 8.92$; $df = 1$; $p = 0.003$). According to the observed frequencies, projects associated with natural and hydraulic heritage were more closely linked to project-oriented logics, whereas those focused on built and cultural heritage were primarily rooted in socio-community dynamics. Natural and hydraulic heritage was mainly associated with technical and training capacities, reflecting a functional and structured approach to local development. In contrast, built and cultural heritage was linked to a social and community-based logic, in which solidarity and local cohesion were considered the main factors for sustainability. Based on this result, it was confirmed that two complementary forms of sustainability—one technical, the other community-based—are structured by heritage promotion, whether natural or cultural. Thus, the sub-hypothesis stating that the type of heritage promoted influences the cause of project persistence was validated.

E. Association between the type of traditions promoted by the population and the cause of project persistence :

i. Chart of observed frequencies

Type of traditions promoted	Cause of project persistence		Total
	Project/Training	Social and Community	
Cultural promotion	20	55	75
Material promotion	10	40	50
Total	30	95	125

ii. Chart of expected frequencies

Type of traditions promoted	Cause of project persistence		Total
	Project/Training	Social and Community	
Cultural promotion	18	57	75
Material promotion	12	38	50
Total	30	95	125

$\chi^2 = 0.44$; $ddl = 1$; $p = 0,509$

No significant association between the type of traditions promoted and the cause of project persistence was revealed by the Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 0.44$; $df = 1$; $p = 0.509$). According to the observed frequencies, projects emphasizing the cultural dimension of traditions were mostly associated with socio-community causes of persistence, while those based on

material promotion were similarly linked to the same logic. Thus, no notable difference between the two types of promotion was evident regarding the nature of the project's sustainability factors.

Project persistence appeared to be influenced more by transversal social and community mechanisms than by the type of traditional promotion adopted. Promotion practices, whether cultural or material, were perceived as contributing similarly to local cohesion and the continuity of development initiatives. Based on this observation, it was suggested that project sustainability did not depend directly on the type of tradition promoted, but rather on collective mobilization and community solidarity present in both approaches. Material and cultural traditions were thus considered complementary in maintaining community dynamics and transmitting local knowledge.

According to these results, no statistically significant difference was found between the two forms of promotion, confirming that their influence on project persistence was equivalent. Therefore, the sub-hypothesis stating that the type of tradition promoted influences the cause of project persistence was not validated.

F. Summary Table of results :

Sub-hypothesis	Related variables	p-value	Result
3.1	Type of valued traditions × Satisfaction	0,018	Significant
3.2	Means to keep the tradition alive × Satisfaction	0,046	Significant
3.3	Beneficial tradition × Satisfaction	0,018	Significant
3.4	Valued heritage × Cause of tenacity	0,003	Highly significant
3.5	Type of valued traditions × Cause of tenacity	0,509	Non-significant

IV. DISCUSSION

A. Association between tradition promotion and project success (3.1, 3.2, 3.3) :

The results obtained showed that the perceived success of development projects was influenced by the way traditions were promoted within local communities. Chi-square tests conducted for sub-hypotheses 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 revealed significant associations ($p < 0.05$), confirming that material, evolutionary, or mixed forms of promotion were more strongly associated with higher levels of satisfaction. These observations are consistent with the work of Fanafody (Fanafody, 2015) on Malagasy traditional medicine in a globalized context, which demonstrated that cultural flexibility and the adaptive capacity of ancestral practices facilitate their integration into development policies. Similarly, Rabenoro (Rabenoro, 2018) highlighted that rural communities that reinterpret their traditional knowledge in light of contemporary challenges are better able to reconcile cultural identity with socio-economic progress. Thus, locally evolutionary promotion was perceived as a condition for project success (Facchini, 2008).

These results also corroborate the conclusions of Hountondji (Hountondji, 2002) regarding the necessity of an endogenous approach to development, in which culture is not static but mobilized as a dynamic resource. In contrast, strictly symbolic or heritage-focused promotion was associated with lower levels of satisfaction. This finding aligns with UNESCO's analyses (UNESCO, 2006) on the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which suggest that traditions preserved solely for conservation, without functional adaptation, tend to lose their immediate social and economic impact.

In summary, these three sub-hypotheses demonstrated that project success depends on communities' ability to transform their traditional practices into development tools, rather than maintaining them within a logic of static preservation.

B. Association between the type of heritage promoted and the cause of project persistence (3.4) :

Sub-hypothesis 3.4 highlighted a highly significant association ($p = 0.003$) between the type of heritage promoted and the cause of project persistence. Natural and hydraulic heritage was associated with technical and training-oriented approaches, while built and cultural heritage was linked to socio-community dynamics. This result confirmed the observations of Rakotomalala (Rakotomalala, 2019) on territorial heritage in Madagascar, which indicated that the sustainability of initiatives depends on the type of resource mobilized: natural resources require technical management, whereas cultural heritage relies on solidarity and collective memory. Similarly, Crespi (Crespi, 2019) showed that heritage governance fosters differentiated forms of sustainability: institutional and social.

This distinction highlights the dual role of tradition in local development: on one hand, as an operational tool for resource management; on the other, as an identity-based and community-oriented mechanism for social cohesion. These two dynamics were considered complementary, aligning with UNESCO's concept of cultural biodiversity (UNESCO, 2010).

Thus, sub-hypothesis 3.4 validated the idea that the mode of heritage promotion determines the form of project sustainability: technical for natural resources and community-based for cultural heritage.

C. No association between the type of traditions promoted and the cause of project persistence (3.5) :

Unlike the previous cases, sub-hypothesis 3.5 was not validated ($p = 0.509$). No significant association was observed between the type of tradition promoted and the cause of project persistence. Projects, whether promoting one type or the other, were in both cases linked to socio-community-oriented logics. This absence of a relationship can be interpreted as indicating that project sustainability depends primarily on the social capital of communities rather than on the specific content of the traditions promoted.

These results are consistent with the work of Putnam (Putnam, 1993) on the role of social capital in local governance: cohesion, trust, and participation were identified

as essential determinants of the sustainability of collective actions. In the Malagasy context, Andriamihaja (Andriamihaja, 2021) also showed that community solidarity constitutes a decisive factor in maintaining projects, regardless of the cultural or material dimensions of the practices mobilized. In other words, when the community remains cohesive, the type of traditions promoted matters less than the collective sense of belonging and the ongoing mobilization of stakeholders.

D. Summary on the validation of the main hypothesis :

The set of sub-hypotheses 3.1 to 3.5 partially confirmed the main hypothesis, which states that the promotion of tradition facilitates the success of development projects. The analyses showed that the form of promotion—evolutionary, material, or mixed—and the nature of the heritage mobilized influence project satisfaction and sustainability. However, when community mechanisms are dominant, the type of tradition does not directly determine project sustainability, which relies more on social cohesion and collective participation.

These findings support the thesis advanced by Fanafody (Fanafody, 2015), UNESCO (UNESCO, 2006), UNESCO (UNESCO, 2010); and Rakotomalala (Rakotomalala, 2019), according to which successful sustainable development in local contexts requires a balanced articulation between the promotion of traditional knowledge (cultural anchoring) and its integration into modern dynamics (socio-technical adaptation). Thus, traditions do not constitute an obstacle to development; they have been identified as essential levers, provided they are reinterpreted, shared, and updated within local sustainability strategies.

V. CONCLUSION

The analyses show that the promotion of tradition plays a major role in the success and sustainability of development projects. The results highlight significant links between the type of traditions promoted, their modes of transmission, and beneficiary satisfaction. Evolutionary, material, or mixed forms of promotion are associated with a better perception of success, whereas purely symbolic approaches appear less effective. Project success is thus favored when tradition is reinterpreted and concretely integrated into contemporary development dynamics.

The results indicate that the nature of the heritage promoted influences the forms of project sustainability, contrasting technical approaches with socio-community dynamics. Tradition therefore plays a dual role in local development, serving both as a tool for resource management and as a factor of social cohesion. However, project sustainability depends more on community solidarity and social capital than on the type of tradition mobilized. Overall, tradition appears not as an obstacle but as a lever for transformation, provided it is adapted to contemporary dynamics and integrated as a living cultural resource.

In conclusion, the hypothesis that the promotion of tradition facilitates the success of development projects was validated. It highlighted the central role of local knowledge in building truly endogenous and sustainable development. The

results also suggested that an effective development policy should be based on the conscious and active integration of living traditions into project planning, training, and community governance, in order to promote sustainability that is technical, social, and cultural.

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