

Understanding the Underlying Stakes of Insecurity and Popular Vindictiveness: A Case Study of the Anosy Region

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Abstract: *Beyond the widespread judicial laxity, the failure of the security system in rural areas, and popular frustration, this article aims to examine the underlying issues of the two chronic social phenomena in the Anosy region, focusing on the case of Amboasary Sud: cattle theft and mob justice. The question then arises: what are the cultural and economic factors that influence cattle theft and mob justice? In this regard, primarily qualitative data from documents, field observations, and interviews were collected and analyzed. Following an analysis from a systemic perspective, our results reveal two main aspects. Firstly, the phenomena of cattle theft and mob justice, being interdependent, require an in-depth exploration of their cultural dimension. Culture thus plays a dual role: on one hand, it amplifies cattle theft, as the Bara community in Amboasary Sud inherits a civilization where theft symbolizes strength, perseverance, and constitutes a rite of passage into adulthood. On the other hand, culture can be considered an essential element in resolving conflicts related to cattle theft and mob justice, as it encompasses various values, representations, and social norms that rationalize the actions of both thieves and victims. Secondly, our results underscore the need to reconsider economic factors as primary drivers of the proliferation of these two phenomena. Given the persistent poverty, environmental problems such as drought and chronic malnutrition in the south, particularly in Amboasary Sud, addressing economic and environmental issues can significantly improve the situation.*

Keywords: *Understanding, Culture, Economy, Environment, Insecurity, Mob justice, Anosy region.*

I. Introduction

The mob justice, often referred to as swift justice, involves the swift imposition of corporal punishment, including death, by a crowd without trial on an individual accused of

wrongdoing by the collective conscience (Imbiki Analet, 2011). This practice, recognized in the Malagasy Penal Code as assault and battery or murder, is guided by both rational and emotional ideals. In this study, our objective is to analyze the popular governance of cattle theft in order to understand the underlying factors influencing the practice of mob justice, which motivates the title of the study: "Understanding the latent issues of insecurity and mob justice: Case of the Anosy Region."

Indeed, the general understanding of mob justice entails the pursuit of justice on behalf of society. It takes the form of swift crowd-imposed bodily punishment, occasionally resulting in fatality, targeting an individual believed to be guilty based on collective conscience, occurring at the time of the offense and without the necessity of a trial. According to Malagasy criminal law, this practice can be either legal, in accordance with Law 2001-004, or illegal.

From a legal qualification standpoint, mob justice is considered a violation of the legal principles of modern democratic societies, as it goes against the principle that no one should take justice into their own hands. From a historical-legal perspective, judicial systems in Madagascar in the 19th century were divided into two main structures: clan justice and royal justice. Within the framework of the Dina concept, a form of popular justice is instituted by the Fokonolona, which applies immediately and may bypass criminal proceedings. From a sociological standpoint, Max Weber subdivides mob justice into four forms corresponding to four ideal types of actions: traditional action, affective action, value-rational action, and goal-rational action, each guiding individual behaviors in distinct ways.

Cattle theft is a common and typical security issue in Madagascar. In the southern region of Anosy, particularly in the District of Amboasary, cattle theft remains prevalent and is intertwined with another social phenomenon known as mob justice. For Malagasy people in general and the Antanosy in particular, cattle hold significant interest as they possess considerable value in economic and socio-cultural life. Owning cattle symbolizes power, prosperity, and wealth. The zebu represents honor, respect, and esteem, as reflected in the saying "Tsy indroa mamtoky e tsy managn'aomby," meaning "If you don't have a cow, you don't need to announce your departure twice." (Inclassable, 2020).

II. Research Methods

2.1 Cattle in the Amboasary district, the Ifotaka zone

In the latter half of 2012, there was a surge in zebu thefts in Southern Madagascar, spearheaded by a figure known as Remenabila (Madafocus, 2021).

According to OMC NAT, cattle theft, recognized as a national scourge, predominantly affects 14 out of 22 regions, notably in the South where massive rural exodus toward urban areas is on the rise due to incidents like the burning of villages by criminals, such as in Manevy (Malaza, 2014). For instance, the district of Amboasary Sud has been grappling with a continuous increase in cattle thefts, particularly involving oxen, for several years. Violent crimes, murders, summary executions, and depopulation in various rural areas have become commonplace in this southern part of the island. Those who remain often sleep in fields at night, as seen in Ifotaka. Women fear fetching water alone due to safety concerns; tourist circuits have shrunk, negatively impacting hotels, car rentals, and tour guides. The socio-economic situation is extremely precarious, with government authority nearly absent. Large groups of cattle rustlers, numbering from 20 to even 50 men, frequently gather. These livestock thieves primarily target cattle herds, often kept in remote pastures and thus vulnerable to theft. Organized gangs take advantage of the region's

isolation and lack of efficient communication means. This surge in banditry is primarily attributed to increasing poverty and the challenge of securing stable incomes in this rural area (Dupont, 2023). Livestock breeders are regular victims, consistently losing their cattle, which are vital for their livelihoods (Randrianasolo, 2022).

Moreover, insecurity and cattle thefts have created a climate of fear and mistrust among the residents (L'Express de Madagascar, 2012). Faced with this situation, the population turns to mob justice, taking matters into their own hands by punishing suspected thieves. Frustrated by the impunity of the thieves, residents resort to vigilante justice, apprehending alleged culprits and subjecting them to brutal forms of punishment. This also reflects citizens' disillusionment with law enforcement and the judicial system, which appear powerless against the wave of cattle thefts. This situation raises concerns regarding respect for human rights and the legal functioning of the judicial system (Randriamampionona, 2019).

2.2 Insecurity and popular justice

Regarding mob justice, from September 2015 to mid-November 2016, at least 46 people fell victim to popular outrage and public lynching (CNIDH Madagascar, 2016). Between 2017 and 2018, several dozen innocent civilians and law enforcement personnel carrying out their duties were also victims. This practice is sanctioned by Law No. 2014-005 of June 19, 2014, concerning the fight against terrorism and international crime, along with its implementing decree, as well as Law No. 2001-004 on Dina and its implementing Decree No. 2014-1138 of August 19, 2014. In light of these national and regional contexts, our interest lies in analyzing and understanding the issues related to two juxtaposed phenomena: cattle theft and mob justice in the southern zone of the large island, particularly in the district of Amboasary Sud. Beyond judicial laxity and popular frustration with longstanding insecurity in the south, a significant question arises:

What are the environmental, cultural, and socio-economic issues that intersect with insecurity and mob justice? Two specific questions emerge. Firstly, how can we understand the latent environmental, cultural, and traditional factors related to cattle theft in the Anosy Region? Secondly, why is it necessary to deeply analyze the economic issues related to insecurity and mob justice in the case of cattle theft?

The primary objective is to understand the underlying factors that influence insecurity and mob justice related to cattle theft in the southern part of the island. Additionally, the study focuses on providing analytical insights into the necessity of identifying in-depth the environmental, cultural, and socio-economic issues involved in security governance. With this aim, two specific objectives are in focus. Firstly, it is necessary to examine the environmental, cultural, and traditional factors linked to cattle theft in the Anosy Region. Secondly, there is a need to conduct a thorough analysis of the economic issues related to insecurity and mob justice in cases of cattle theft.

Jara proposes a comparative approach to tackling cattle theft and mob justice in Latin America, highlighting the similarities and differences among countries in the region (Jara, 2013).

To deeply investigate insecurity and mob justice, Dubois suggests a multifactorial study considering various factors such as socio-economic,

cultural, historical, and political factors. He emphasizes the importance of considering different individual and social perceptions and representations of the phenomena in question (Dubois, 2012). Insecurity and mob justice related to cattle theft in the south are primarily linked to a systemic reality involving multiple cultural, environmental, and socio-economic aspects. Additionally, two specific hypotheses emerge. Firstly, cultural and traditional factors such as beliefs, rituals, and social norms have a significant impact on insecurity and mob justice in cases of cattle theft. Secondly, environmental, social, and economic issues such as extreme poverty, lack of economic opportunities, and limited access to justice further contribute to insecurity and mob justice in cases of cattle theft in rural, hard-to-reach areas, particularly in the Anosy Region.

2.3 Literature review

In terms of understanding the phenomenon of cattle theft in Southern Madagascar, many authors have expressed their interests and viewpoints. On a global scale, Dupuis explores the origins of insecurity and popular violence during the 19th century by examining the various forms of insecurity present in 19th-century society. He highlights economic and social factors contributing to this insecurity, such as poverty, unemployment, social inequalities, and tensions between classes, and explores why mob justice was so prevalent at that time (Dupuis, 2018). Baune studies the link between insecurity and acts of popular vengeance, emphasizing that this punitive practice is a collective reaction from a community (Baune, 2015). Dubois, in his article, focuses on representations of insecurity, stating that insecurity is a term that denotes a sense of insecurity or fear within a community (Dubois, 2012). According to Lavoie, theft often creates a sense of insecurity and frustration among livestock breeders, leading to a rush towards mob justice as a means of seeking justice (Lavoie, 2018). Dubois and several other authors agree that mob justice is often influenced by various factors, including socioeconomic, cultural, historical, and political factors (Dubois, 2012; Tidjani, 2012). Regarding the causes and factors of insecurity and mob justice, for cattle theft in the south, Caron and several other authors argue that insecurity in the south is mainly linked to the inability of law enforcement to resolve issues, leading logically to victims and affected communities taking justice into their own hands (Caron, 2013; Gagnon, 2016; Dillet, 2021; Rakotondrabe, 2021). Some authors, like Lévesque, study the geographical influence on the dynamics of insecurity, particularly in rural regions, where distance posits that isolation and limited access to security services may foster the emergence of mob justice (Lévesque, 2017). Regarding the consequences of cattle theft in rural areas (Bolaji, 2015; Ndiaye, 2017), Ndiaye particularly emphasizes the complexity of the tripartite relationship between insecurity, mob justice, and the judicial system (Ndiaye, 2017). Tidjani examines the social and economic factors contributing to cattle theft in West Africa, highlighting the consequences for the security of local populations (Tidjani, 2012). Rochon focuses on the economic impact of insecurity by implementing an economic approach, stating that cattle theft diminishes their capital and their ability to produce meat or milk. He underscores that these problems discourage foreign and domestic investments, thus limiting economic development (Rochon, 2017). Beaudoin, on the other

hand, focuses on societal impacts, elucidating the consequences of cattle theft on society and highlighting communities' reactions to this criminal act. He argues that insecurity and mob justice can have significant repercussions on social cohesion and trust among individuals (Beaudoin, 2013).

Several authors also focus on proposing solutions regarding rural African security. Diarra analyzes the causes and possible solutions to combat cattle theft and the resulting insecurity in the Sahelian regions of Mali (Diarra, 2014).

Guissé, by examining issues related to cattle theft in Senegal, proposes perspectives to strengthen the fight against this crime and improve the security of livestock breeders (Guissé, 2013). Diallo, in turn, explores the concept of citizen vigilance concerning rural security (Diallo, 2016).

In terms of criminology, Lévesque (2017) examines the phenomenon of insecurity and mob justice using a criminological approach to understand the causes and consequences of the phenomenon, referring to the concept of objective insecurity, which refers to actual crime rates measured by official statistics. On a legal level, analyzing social tensions and conflicts between communities, Boucher explains that mob justice is illegal and contrary to the principles of the rule of law, as understandable as it may be due to lack of confidence in the judicial system, the practice poses significant legal issues: violates individuals' fundamental rights, the right to presumption of innocence, the right to a fair trial, and the right to protection against cruel and inhuman treatment (Boucher, 2017). Tremblay, on the other hand, examines the political dimensions of insecurity and mob justice through the study of a specific case: cattle theft. According to him, this crime creates political and social tensions within a community. Cattle theft can be perceived as a challenge to the authority and legitimacy of the state, which is supposed to guarantee the security of people and their property (Tremblay, 2015).

In terms of media coverage, Martin, focusing on the scandalous and dramatic aspects of cattle theft, points out that the media can influence the public's perception of the severity of insecurity and the need for punitive measures (Martin, 2018). Faced with this illegal punitive practice, ethical issues arise. Desjardins raises various ethical issues related to this practice, pointing out the use of violence as a means of enforcing the law (Desjardins, 2013).

Regarding responses and prevention related to cattle theft, some authors like Giroux emphasize that preventing insecurity and mob justice related to cattle theft requires a holistic and multidimensional approach (Giroux, 2016).

Rajemisa-Raolison proposes specific solutions, such as implementing socio-economic development policies to improve living conditions, strengthen law enforcement, and raise awareness among the population about the dangers of mob justice (Rajemisa-Raolison, 2022). Romain Dillet explains the phenomenon of "cow vigilance" as a local solution. It involves groups of citizens organizing to track down cattle thieves and often punishing them violently without intervention from authorities (Dillet, 2021).

2.4 Documentation, on-site participant observation, surveys and interviews

Our method consists of four components: documentation, on-site participant observation, surveys, and interviews. In terms of surveys, a sample of 30 people per FKT (Fokontany, a local administrative division) constitutes our sampling, and the study population consists mainly of five actors: farmers,

victims, investigators, community members, and local authorities. To deeply analyze the latent factors influencing insecurity and mob justice in the south, a qualitative approach is favored for its ability to provide a thorough and nuanced understanding of the phenomena under study. The main thematic areas of analysis are as follows:

- a. Cattle theft analysis in the Anosy region and the greater south over the past five years.
- b. Mob justice cases.
- c. Profile of victims and aggressors: This allowed us to gather information on the profile of cattle theft victims (e.g., local farmers) and aggressors (e.g., cattle thieves). This would help better understand the motivations and characteristics of individuals involved in these criminal acts.
- d. Methods of theft used: It would be important to quantify the methods of theft used by cattle thieves. For example, it could involve individual cattle theft, serial thefts, or thefts organized by criminal networks. This would help better target prevention and enforcement measures.
- e. Socio-economic and environmental factors: It would be relevant to consider socio-economic and environmental factors that could contribute to insecurity and mob justice. This could include variables such as unemployment rate, poverty level, access to security services, and the absence of an effective judicial system.
- f. Community effects: The analysis should also include an assessment of the impact of insecurity and mob justice on the local community. This could include effects such as widespread fear, inter-community tensions, economic and social instability, etc.

By combining these different elements, it would be possible to paint a comprehensive picture of the situation of insecurity and mob justice related to cattle theft in the district of Amboasary Sud, Anosy region. This would enable the formulation of recommendations and the implementation of appropriate measures to address this issue.

Systemic analysis has been implemented to thoroughly understand the underlying factors and issues related to the phenomenon of insecurity and mob justice. According to its principle, the systemic approach is based on the system's ability to question itself, the flexibility of each element's roles, and their adaptability. It also allows for delving into complex problems by creating a simplified model of reality and dealing with the complex system from a global perspective. This approach facilitated the analysis of the phenomena of insecurity and mob justice by considering them as systems where multiple interdependent elements and parameters converge. It describes the interactions among the components of the phenomenon of cattle theft as well as mob justice, focusing on the synergy of cultural, environmental, social, economic, and other elements that make up each system.

III. Result and Discussion

3.1 Results

Focused on analyzing and understanding the underlying factors influencing insecurity and mob justice in southern Madagascar, our data reveal two main findings

a. Addressing Insecurity and Mob Justice: Insights and Initiatives from Southern Madagascar

Insecurity is a multifactorial phenomenon; apart from high unemployment, poverty, the lack of adequate security services, and corruption, the data especially reveal the significant role of cultural factors. On one hand, traditional Malagasy culture generally values conflict resolution through peaceful means. On the other hand, beliefs and superstitions fuel mob justice; the data present cases where individuals may be accused of witchcraft or occult practices and lynched by the crowd without a fair trial, such as the case of the woman known as Tokanono during the era of "Remenabila" (2012), accused of sorcery and association with bandit groups, forcibly taken from Amboasary to Antananarivo, and her photo flooded the media. These beliefs reinforce insecurity, primarily psychological, as individuals live in fear of being unjustly accused and punished without evidence.

Several civil society initiatives have been implemented to prevent insecurity and promote justice by combating insecurity and mob justice in the south. Civil society organizations conduct awareness campaigns in communities to inform about the harmful consequences of insecurity and mob justice. These campaigns include information sessions, discussions, and training to raise awareness about the importance of justice and legal mechanisms for conflict resolution. They also provide free legal support services to individuals in need in the district of Amboasary Sud.

These services include legal advice, assistance in legal procedures, and legal representation, aiming to ensure access to justice for all, especially vulnerable individuals who may be victims of mob justice. Mediation groups have also been established to help communities peacefully resolve their disputes. These groups consist of civil society members trained in mediation and conflict resolution. They intervene in tense situations and seek to find acceptable solutions for all parties involved. Capacity-building initiatives are implemented to train community members on their rights and existing legal mechanisms. These training programs aim to empower community members so they can actively participate in promoting justice and preventing insecurity. Dialogue forums are organized to facilitate exchanges and mutual understanding among the different communities of the district of Amboasary Sud. These dialogues aim to prevent intercommunity tensions and promote peaceful coexistence. They also provide a space to discuss issues of insecurity and mob justice and to find collective solutions.

b. Cultural dynamics in southern Madagascar: Tradition and governance in conflict resolution

In the rural areas of Southern Madagascar, particularly among the Antanosy of Amboasary Sud, traditional methods of conflict resolution are prevalent. These methods foster solidarity and a sense of belonging and responsibility towards the security of the community. Additionally, cultural practices promote respect for social norms and community values, which can help prevent delinquent or dangerous behaviors. For example, adherence to "fady," social taboos in Malagasy culture, especially among the Antanosy, may deter individuals from engaging in reprehensible acts due to fear of social and spiritual consequences.

However, traditional beliefs and cultural practices can also pose challenges to public safety. Some beliefs may perpetuate harmful ideas, such as belief in witchcraft or black magic, which can lead to violence, lynching, or unjustified retaliation.

Vigilante justice in the south is primarily linked to traditional security governance, known as "Kabary Ambany Kily," the trial system in cases of disputes

between neighbors. In principle, it involves an oral debate between the plaintiff and the owner of the zebu, under a tamarind tree, to address any misdeeds related to the animal, demonstrate respect for others, and apologize.

The cultural dimension of vigilante justice, although seemingly archaic, is rooted in enduring traditions and cultural beliefs within the community. It is based on the principle that the community has a duty to punish transgressors and ensure the safety of all. This communal justice ethos is deeply ingrained in the region's culture.

Rurals, particularly the Antanosy of South Amboasary, tend to resort to traditional methods of conflict resolution. These methods foster solidarity and encourage a sense of belonging and responsibility towards everyone's security. Additionally, cultural practices can promote respect for social norms and community values, which can help prevent delinquent or dangerous behavior. For example, "fady," social taboos present in Malagasy culture and particularly among the Antanosy, may deter individuals from committing reprehensible acts out of fear of the social and spiritual consequences.

However, traditional beliefs and cultural practices can also pose challenges to public safety. Some beliefs may perpetuate harmful ideas, such as belief in sorcery or black magic, which can lead to violence, lynching, or unjustified reprisals. In search of sustainable security governance: "Kabary Ambany Kily." Popular vengeance in the south is primarily linked to traditional security governance, "Kabary Ambany Kily," a trial system in case of disputes between neighbors; essentially, it involves an oratorical duel between the plaintiff and the owner of the stolen cattle, under a tamarind tree, to excuse the misbehavior related to the animal, show respect towards others, and apologize. The cultural dimension of popular vengeance, although it may seem archaic, is rooted in traditions and cultural beliefs that persist in the community. It is based on the principle that the community has a duty to punish wrongdoers and ensure everyone's safety. This vision of community justice is deeply ingrained in the region's culture.

3.2 Discussions

This work contributes to understanding the negative phenomena affecting Malagasy society. In the case of cattle theft and summary justice, this manuscript, given its analytical and in-depth nature, will serve as a support for various stakeholders (decision-makers, civil society, researchers, learners, etc.) regarding cattle theft and popular vengeance. The study on insecurity and mob justice in the south, particularly in Amboasary Sud, has certain limitations. The sampling is limited, and the research was confined to the District of Amboasary Sud. Additionally, the size of the sample may restrict the scope of the conclusions. Furthermore, due to its remote geographical location and security concerns, the field data (observations, surveys, and interviews) are insufficient, leading to reliance on data from secondary sources such as articles, reports, and testimonies.

The Anosy region, located in the southeast of Madagascar, implements several public policies and security programs to ensure the well-being and protection of its inhabitants.

- a. Rural Development: The Anosy region implements rural development programs to improve the living conditions of rural populations. These programs aim to develop agriculture, livestock farming, fishing, and basic infrastructure to reduce poverty and ensure food security.
- b. Public Health: Policies and programs are implemented at the national level to improve access to healthcare, disease prevention, and hygiene

- awareness. Health centers and hospitals are developed, and training sessions are organized to enhance the skills of medical personnel.
- c. Education: Public policies are put in place to improve access to primary and secondary education, as well as to promote adult literacy. School infrastructure is built, and teacher training programs are organized.
 - The key considerations are the followings:
 - d. Increased Violence: Insecurity and mob justice lead to a rise in violence within society. Acts of violence, such as lynching and assault, have become commonplace, endangering lives and creating a climate of fear.
 - e. Unfair Justice: Mob justice often stems from a sense of injustice or a loss of trust in the judicial system. This can result in unfair justice, where innocent individuals may face severe punishment without a fair trial.
 - f. Social Instability: Insecurity and mob justice can cause social instability in the district of Amboasary. This can hinder economic development, investments, and investor confidence, ultimately impacting the quality of life of the population.
 - Furthermore, it is recommended to:
 - g. Strengthen law enforcement: Enhancing law enforcement in the Amboasary district is crucial. This can be achieved by increasing the number of law enforcement officers, providing adequate training on human rights to police personnel, and ensuring that laws are applied fairly and impartially.
 - h. Raise awareness and educate: Conducting awareness campaigns and educational programs is vital to inform the population about the dangers of mob justice and the consequences of violence. This can be achieved by collaborating with local organizations and community leaders to organize seminars, workshops, and public debates.
 - i. Improve the judicial system: It is necessary to strengthen the judicial system to restore community trust in justice. This involves improving access to competent legal representation for disadvantaged individuals, expediting judicial proceedings, and ensuring fair judgments.
 - j. Economic development: Enhancing economic conditions can help reduce insecurity and mob justice. Economic development programs, such as job creation, vocational training, and business opportunities, can help reduce frustration and dissatisfaction among the population.
 - k. Community mediation: Promoting community mediation can also be beneficial in resolving conflicts peacefully. Establishing mediation committees composed of respected community members can help prevent acts of violence and promote conflict resolution without resorting to mob justice. By implementing these recommendations, it is possible to reduce insecurity and mob justice in the Amboasary district, thereby creating a safer and more just environment for its inhabitants.

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study sheds light on the complex interplay of factors contributing to insecurity and mob justice in the southern region of Madagascar, particularly in Amboasary Sud. Cultural traditions, economic challenges, and deficiencies in law enforcement all play significant roles in perpetuating these issues. While traditional conflict resolution methods

rooted in Malagasy culture promote solidarity and community cohesion, they can also fuel superstitions and unjust acts under the guise of justice. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including strengthening law enforcement, enhancing public awareness and education, improving the judicial system, fostering economic development, and promoting community mediation. By implementing these recommendations, it is possible to mitigate insecurity and mob justice, paving the way for a safer and more just society in Amboasary Sud and beyond.

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