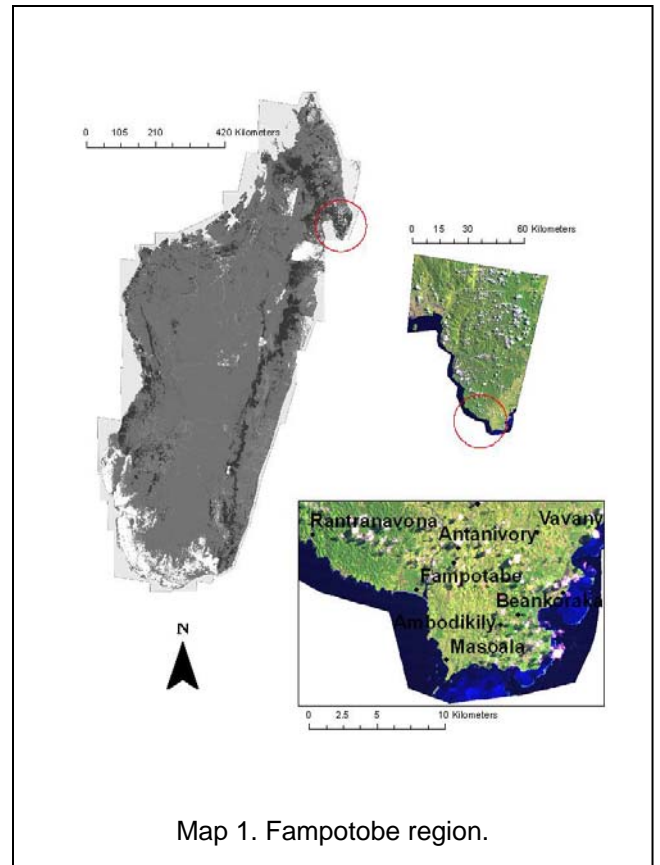
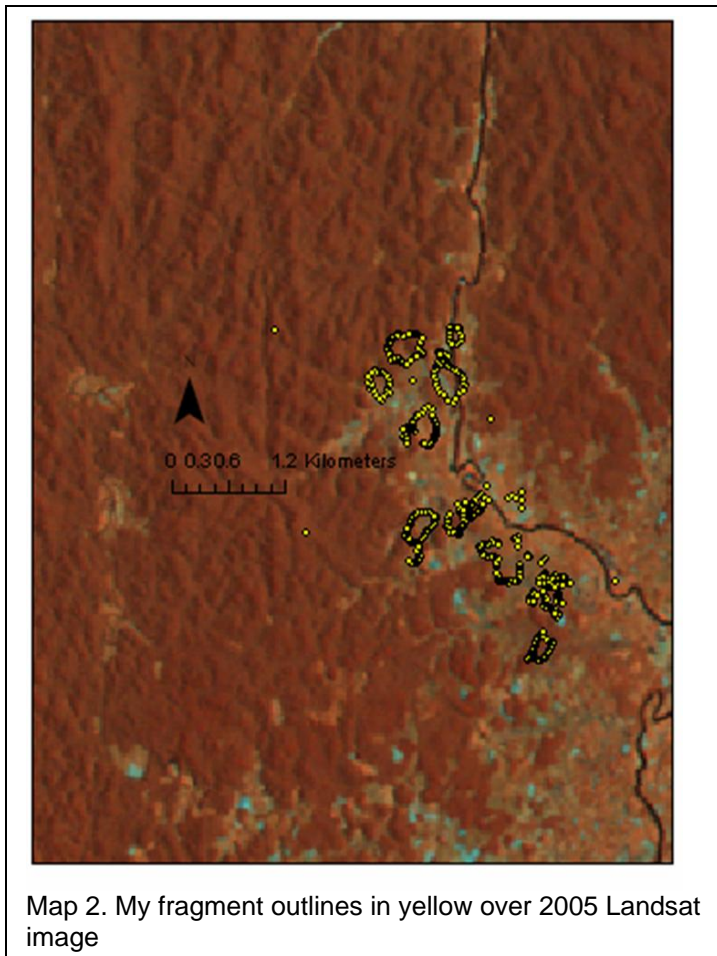


Fampotobe, in the field

I spent the past few weeks in the Fampotobe region (see map to right) searching for forest fragments. I managed to get my hands on a 2005 Landsat image with no clouds, but the spectral radiance of the secondary forest and primary forest are too similar to accurately delineate forest fragments. So, I did what my committee previously groaned at...I took my GPS unit and walked around the edges of the forest fragments. I have a wonderful guide who is a wild boar hunter and he happens to know how to track lemurs. This guide's name is translated as Good-good. We (me and my trusty guide/translator/Malagasy teacher) had explained to him what constituted a forest fragment; a patch of forest surrounded by agriculture. He took us to a couple of fragments but he also took us to pieces of forest that are not fragments. He thought that a forest fragment also meant a relatively narrow strip of forest that is part of the big forest. Often we would be walking around the forest edges through 6ft high longoza (wild ginger), elephant heart swamps, dense patches of a thorny plant related to eggplant, and then we would make a turn into the forest. Ok, wait, why are we cutting into the forest, I would ask. Because Good-good insists it is a fragment. No, this is not a fragment because now we



Map 1. Fampotobe region.



Map 2. My fragment outlines in yellow over 2005 Landsat image

are walking through the forest, not along the edge...where does the edge take us? Oh, he would say, it takes us too far because this is the big forest. Then I would sigh. As a result, I have mapped some forest fragments and some edges of the "big" forest, which is still useful. I overlaid my fragment boundaries created in the field with the satellite image, and it looks like someone is off by a few meters (See Map 2). According to my GPS unit, I walked around forest fragments in the river. I need an airplane to fly over the region so I can actually pinpoint the fragments. On the ground, these patches of forest are surrounded by former rice paddies (swamps) & rice paddies and long days of walking.

As for lemurs, I talked to local people a bit. I asked about the presence of lemurs in every fragment. People told me the larger diurnal lemurs, white-fronted brown lemur (*Eulemur albifrons*) and red-ruffed

lemur (*Varecia rubra*), are not in the fragments. I did meet one family who claimed they have *Eulemur* in the forest fragment within their rice plantation. We asked the man of the family (he said he protects the lemurs from hunters) to walk us through the fragment to search for them. We spent about 1.5 hours walking quietly from one end to the other and back again listening for lemurs and looking for signs. We saw some fruit on the ground that might have been chewed by lemurs, but no sightings or sounds of lemurs...anyhow, the man said to us afterwards that the lemurs come out at night. My trusty guide informed the man that *Eulemur* is diurnal, not nocturnal. The man insisted his lemurs come out at night and they are brown lemurs. Neither Good-good (who lives near this man and his fragment of nocturnal lemurs) nor the trusty guide believed him. Good-good said he knows this man would hunt the lemurs for food if they were in his forest fragment, and the man just wants a job with my project. I want to go back and do some more systematic surveys of the fragments...perhaps the brown lemurs really are nocturnal in this fragment? That would be pretty interesting if it is true. The grandfather-in-law, we call him the "old man," of the man who protects his nocturnal lemurs told me that the ancestors are pretty annoyed by my presence. I was the cause of the heavy rains (non-stop rain for about 5 days), which made the rivers swell to dangerous depths. I had the opportunity to experience crossing one of these rivers. It involved a rope and a chain of people. The old man told me I did not see lemurs in the fragments because I need to appease the ancestors with a ceremony. We told him we will do it next time because I am bringing another foreigner with me. I have a Malagasy student helping me out. The people in the Fampotobe region, however, consider Malagasy people from Tana (the capital) to be foreigners. I have to buy some liquor and pay a small fee for the ceremony. Hopefully after that people will stop blaming me for their bad weather and I can get on with my research.

Upcoming plans are to systematically survey the forest fragments along transects for diurnal and nocturnal lemurs. I also will send out search parties for more forest fragments, *real* forest fragments this time.





The forest edge; rice plantation and forest fragment.