

Hainteny: The Traditional Poetry of Madagascar

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Rachel Pryzby



Project Origins

- Semester in Madagascar, Fall 2007
- Malagasy language
- Intersection of art, environment and religion



Defining *Hainteny*

- Translation: “art of word”
- Maximum thought, minimum words → allusion, metaphor, proverbs
- Themes: romantic love (desire, hesitation, declaration, union), separation and nostalgia, regret, wisdom, humor and mockery, prayer
- Heavy environmental imagery

The People's Poetry

- Oral poetry
- Art form of illiterate
- Used to woo prospective lovers, settle debates, declare loyalty



Evolution of *Hainteny*

200-500 AD: First settlers arrive
from southeast Asia

1500: First European contact

~1750-1850: Merina conquest

1883-1896: Franco-Hova War

1946: Nationalist uprising

1960: Independence from France

2009: President Marc

Ravalomanana ousted from
presidency by Andry
Rajoelina

- Response to colonialism: negritude and malgachitude
- Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo (1901-1937)
- Translation and publication dilemma

Traditional *Hainteny*

Merina Hainteny 12

Translated by Leonard Fox

That road, there in the north
Is shady, like an old road
And it seems to wind here, it seems to wind there,
But in the west, it encircles the house of
She-whom-I-love-more-than-anyone

Irony lalana ery avaratra ery

Dia malomaloka toa lalana ela

Ary toa miolika atsy toa miolika aroa

Nefa manodidina no andrefan-tranon-dRatiskonohoniolona

Contemporary *Hainteny*

- “Isabelle” by David Jaomanoro
- Social issues
- Sometimes composed in French
- Social and political issues



References

Fox, Leonard. Hainteny: The Traditional Poetry of Madagascar. Lewisburg: Bucknell U Press, 1990.

Haring, Lee. Verbal Arts in Madagascar: Performance in Historical Perspective. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.

All photography by Pierrot Men