Hainteny: The Traditional Poetry of Madagascar

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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

*Iriny 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


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