

"FOR AN INCLUSIVE LITERARY HISTORY OF

MALAGASY LITERATURE"

International symposium in tribute to:

Anatolie Raharimalala Raharinjanahary (1949-2017), Désiré Andriamiadamanana Ranaivosoa (1949-2015) and Seth Andriamanatsilavo (1943-2020)

Organizers: PLIDAM, Inalco, Paris and the EICD-FFSF laboratory of the École Normale Supérieure (ENS) of the University of Antananarivo

Venue: École Normale Supérieure of Antananarivo, Madagascar

August 25th and 26th, 2022

ARGUMENT

The first witnesses of Malagasy literature, from the oral tradition (the legend of Raminia, the fable of Rasoanoro, etc.) and from the Arabic-Malagasy *Sorabe* written tradition (the *kitsary telopolo naninanana*, etc.), have been published in French translation by the Governor Etienne de Flacourt in 1658 in Paris in his seminal work *Histoire de la Grande Isle Madagascar*¹.

The Modern Malagasy literature was born in the 19th century with the adoption of the Latin alphabet to transcribe the Malagasy language to the detriment of the Arabic-Malagasy by the King Radama I (1810-1828). This happened with the arrival of the L.M.S. missionaries in Antananarivo in 1820 and the translation of some religious texts and ancient literature's texts

¹ Edition annotée, augmentée et présentée par Claude Allibert, Paris, Inalco-Karthala, 2007.

(a first collection of hymns in Malagasy in 1828 with some compositions by Malagasy people, the translation of thirteen Greco-Latin fables by Aesop, Phèdre and Horace in 1834, the translation of the Bible in 1835 and the writing of a bilingual Malagasy-English and English-Malagasy dictionary). Passionate about art and literature, the Queen Ranavalona I (1828-1861) launched a program to collect historical and cultural traditions. Raharo and his fellow students are going to collect *hainteny* poems and others will write manuscripts on history, customs and genealogy (let us quote, among others, the manuscript of Rahanetra in 1830, or that of Ramarosandratana in 1834).

In January 1866, the first Malagasy newspaper, was published by the L.M.S. and entitled *Teny Soa Hanalan'Andro* "The good word for leisure". That same year, the Malagasy translation of John Bunyan's book *The Pilgrim's Progress (Ny Dian'ny Mpivahiny*) was completed. Along with the Bible, it will serve as a model, in terms of form and narrative structure for the future Malagasy prose writers. In 1870, the missionaries decided to revise their collection of hymns by following the rules of English versification. From then on, some Malagasy composers of hymns emerged such as Pastor Josefa Andrainaivoravelona (1835-1897) from the Ambonin'Ampamarinana temple and Pastor Rajaonary (1850-1902) from the Ambatonakanga temple.

To support and strengthen the establishment of Christian churches, missionaries of different denominations founded periodicals in which future writers sharpened their pens².

At the end of the 19th century, three literary personalities stood out : Pastor Rajaonary (R.J.Y.) who wrote the first secular poem, *Ny abidin'ny toaka* "The alphabet primer of rum" appeared in the magazine *Ny sakaizan'ny ankizy madinika* in 1880; Father Basilide Rahidy (1839-1883), the first Malagasy priest who collaborated with the Catholic magazine *Resaka*, published a book entitled *Fanoharana*, a translation-adaptation of the fables of La Fontaine in 1889 and finally the minister Rainandriamampandry (1839-1896), author of an important book *Tantara sy fomban-drazana* "History and customs of the ancestors", published posthumously in 1896 by the L.M.S. after his execution by order of General Gallieni.

On the political level, the second Franco-Malagasy war (1894-1895) marked the end of the kingdom of Madagascar. The country then became a protectorate of France on October 1st 1895 and a French colony on August 6th, 1896.

Governor Gallieni decided to keep the Malagasy with French as official languages. In 1897, he founded the *Vaovao frantsay-malagasy* newspaper "Franco-Malagasy News" which would host texts by Malagasy authors. The Municipal Theater of Ambatovinaky in Antananarivo opened its doors in 1899. The French soldiers played operettas there for entertainment. These will serve as a model for Malagasy playwrights in their theatrical creations (the play is moralizing and the scenes are interspersed with songs interpreted by the actors themselves).

² *Resaka* "Chat" for the Catholic mission in 1874, *Mpiaro* "Protector" for the Anglican mission in 1875, *Mpanolo-tsaina* "The Counseillor" for the L.M.S. in 1877, *Ny Fiangonana sy ny Sekoly* "The Church and the School" for the F.F.M.A. in 1880, *Ny Mpamangy* "The Visitor" for the Norwegian mission in 1882, *Ny Sakaizan'ny ankizy madinika* "The friends of the little children" of the F.F.M.A. in 1880 (the title changes to *Sakaizan'ny Tanora* "The Friend of the Young" in 1884).

His repertoire also includes pieces by Malagasy authors such as Rajaonah Tselatra (1863-1931) with *Zefine sy Armand*.

The beginning of the 20th century (1899-1915) is considered by historians of Malagasy literature as a period of "renovation", the birth of literary arts inspired by the West. With the new governor, Victor Augagneur (1905-1909), Freemason and free-thinker, authors will have the opportunity to experiment with new literary genres and explore new themes. Thus, was born in 1904, the first Malagasy novel, entitled *Raketaka zandriko* "Raketaka, my little sister" by Pastor Rabary (1864-1947), published in the review *Mpanolo-tsaina*, new series. And, in 1906, another great figure of Protestantism, Alphonse Ravoajanahary (Eli-Sephon: 1881-1927), was published in the columns of the newspaper *Vaovao frantsay-malagasy*, the first novel of secular inspiration, favorable to the current of ideas of free thought: *Andraozikely* "To-the-little-rose-tree".

In addition, Malagasy intellectuals, trained by the missionaries, founded newspapers of information, opinion and literary newspapers independent of the mission such as *Ny Basivava*, "The Talkative", created in 1906 and directed by Édouard Andrianjafitrimo (Stella: 1881-1951). In 1910, *Ny Lakolosy volamena* "The Golden Bell", directed by Justin Rainizanabololona (Jupiter: 1861-1938) was also released.

A literary circle is organized around these two poets inside the *Basivava*, where they introduce young people like Ny Avana Ramanantoanina (1891-1940) and Jasmina Ratsimiseta (1890-1946) and others to a new poetry governed by a versification³ more in line with the structure of the Malagasy language.

In 1913, the articles of Pastor Ravelojaona (1879-1956), *Japon sy japoney*, in the review *Ny Mpanolo-tsaina*, awakened the patriotic consciousness of young students of theology and medicine. They then founded a secret society⁴ called V.V.S. (Vy Vato Sakelika "Iron, Stone, Ramification") which was discovered by the colonial administration in 1915 and severely repressed by condemning certain members, poets and writers like Ny Avana Ramanantoanina (1891-1940), Jasmina Ratsimiseta (1890-1946), Arthur Razakarivony (Rodlish: 1897-1965), Alfred Ramandiamanana (Ramangamalefaka: 1886-1939) to exile in Nosy lava and Mayotte. They were finally freed and granted amnesty in 1920. They wrote their most beautiful texts during this forced exile far from the land of their ancestors (*tanin-drazana*).

In 1923, the return of the deportees is marked by a revival of the press (muzzled for 7 years) and a cultural ferment in the Franco-Malagasy literary milieu. A new era is dawning for the Malagasy literature. The French-language literature emerged with Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo (1901-1937)⁵. This bilingual poet was able to harmoniously combine his passion for the

³ Codified by Jupiter in his booklet *Lesona tsotsotra momba ny fianarana poezy amin'ny teny malagasy* "Elementary lessons on Malagasy versification", Tananarive, FFMA, 1914.

⁴ Their goal was to preserve Malagasy culture while integrating into modernity.

⁵ His complete works are now available in bookstores. J. J. Rabearivelo, *Œuvres complètes, Tome 1 et 2*. Édition critique coordonnée par Serge Meitinger, Liliane Ramarosoa et Claire Riffard, Paris, CNRS éditions / Présence Africaine, 2010, 1273 + 1789 p.

French language and his attachment to the Malagasy language and civilization. He took the Malagasy literature out of its insularity through translation and literary criticism. In the same way, he enriched the literature in Malagasy language by translating great works of foreign literature. He was also a recognized leader by the poets and writers of his generation for the revival of Malagasy letters.

Thus, in 1931, he joined his friends Charles Rajoelisolo (1896-1968), Ny Avana Ramanantoanina to found the *Fandrosoam-baovao* newspaper "The new progress" and to launch the literary movement *Mitady ny very* which he translated as "Searching for lost poetry". He committed himself in a literary debate within the newspaper for the defense and the illustration of the Malagasy literature.

At the same time, the nationalist militancy was growing to oppose the colonial order. An insurgency led by the members of the M.D.R.M. (Democratic Movement for Malagasy Renovation) party broke out in 1947 on the east coast of Madagascar. Insurrection which, in turn, will also be severely repressed by the colonial power. The deputies Joseph Ravoahangy, Jacques Félicien Rabemananjara, Joseph Raseta will be deported to Nosy Lava then to France.

On the literary level, the French-speaking poets Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo, Jacques Rabemananjara (1913-2005) and Flavien Ranaivo (1913-1999) will be consecrated and legitimized on the international level by the anthology⁶ of Léopold Sédar Senghor published in 1948.

During this period (1940-1960), the Protestant Paul Minault college was a breeding-ground for many young talents such as Célestin Andriamanantena (1918-2002), Jean Verdi Salomon Razakandraina (Dox: 1913-1978), Emilson Daniel Andriamalala, (1918-1979), Georges Andriamanantena (Rado: 1923-2008), etc. who would become famous poets and writers after independence in 1960.

In 1952, fifteen Malagasy poets and writers⁷ came together and founded the Union of Malagasy Poets and Writers (U.P.E.M.). They animate the circle with a poetic recital *Valiha torifolo, Bitsiky ny poety* "Ten-string zither and Murmurs of the poets" on the national radio and the publication of a literary magazine *Tatamo* "Water lily".

We should also mention the literary review *Fampitaha* "Competition", created in 1963 by one of the founders of U.P.E.M., the poet Michel Paul Abraham Razafimaharo (1926-2012).

⁶ Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française. Précédé de Orphée noir, par J-P. Sartre, avantpropos de Ch.-A. Julien, Paris, PUF, 227 p., (6è édition, 2002).

⁷ They are Regis Rajemisa Raolison (1913-1990), Claude Ratsimandresy (Daud Ratsarazaka: 1930-1962), Elie Charles Abraham (1919-1989), Flavien Ranaivo (1914-1999), Jean Verdi Salomon Razakandrainy (Dox: 1913 -1978), Michel Paul Abraham Razafimaharo (1926-2012), Rakotovao (Odeam Rakoto: 1922-1973), Pierre Janvier Abraham (1923-2001), René Randriarimalala (Ener-Lalandy : 1918-2005), Bernard Ranjato (Nivo- Hary: 1916-1985), Faustin Raharison (1931-), Mychel Guste Rakotonirina (1915-), Raymond Abraham (1921-1978), Jean Louis Razafindratre (1923-1993), Penombre Andriampenomanana (1914-2000).

If during the previous periods, the Malagasy literary field was, on the one hand, dominated by the poetry, the post-colonial period (1960-1980) was, on the other hand, marked by the novel. Different institutions will organize literary prizes. Among the laureates, we can mention Emilson Daniel Andriamalala (1918-1979), Clarisse Ratsifandrihamanana (1926-1987), Razafindrazaka (Andry Andraina: 1922-2006). Bernard Raveloharison (1921-?), Iharilanto Patrick Andriamangatiana (1955-), Harilala Ranjatohery (1962-...), etc.

Poets like Randja Zanamihoatra (1925-1997), Charles Ratsaraoelina (Le Myosotis: 1910-1997), Georges Andriamanantena (Rado: 1923-2008), Nirhy-Lanto Rakotonindrina (1923-2004), Nalisoa Ravalitera (1945-...) and many others will also publish their poetic works during this period.

All these authors are recognized by the Institution and are taught at school and university.

In the 1980s, Malagasy French-language literature rose from its ashes with authors expatriated in France such as Michèle Rakotoson and Jean Luc Raharimanana. The new literary journal *Lettres de Lémurie* by Sophie Bazin and Johary Ravaloson wanted to take the literature of Madagascar and the other islands in the southwest of the Indian Ocean out of their insularity.

Contemporary Malagasy literature is very much alive and continues with the activities and publications of the members of *Havatsa*-U.P.E.M. association, the successor of the U.P.E.M. of the 1950s, the *Faribolana Sandratra* "Promotion group" literary circle, born in 1982-1983⁸, with its newspaper literary *Ambioka* "seed", its poetic readings and its collective collections. The literary site *pôetawebs* of Toetra Ràja and Tsikimilamina Rakotomavo produces *Sorapiainana* "Biographies" of known and little known authors (which they then republish in the form of books) and regularly organizes *pôeta misehatra* conferences on Malagasy language and literature.

Since 2017, the literary magazine *Tsara soratra* "Beautiful writing" from Ranjasoa Publishing of Mialy Ravelomanana, with the collaboration of members of *Havatsa*-U.P.E.M. and *Faribolana Sandratra*, has welcomed established authors and young talents from Malagasy literature.

In the 1960s, the University of Madagascar was founded and the Malagasy department was created by the Professor Siméon Rajaona. The Malagasy literature became an intellectual discipline taught at the university and in the high schools.

Malagasy scholars attempt different approaches and theories to analyze Malagasy literature.

Professor Charles Ravoajanahary used historical and sociological approaches to write the history of Malagasy literature. His colleague Jean-Irénée Ramiandrasoa applied a thematic, hermeneutic and reception theory approach to the works. Mrs. Denise Beby Solohery and Mr. Jean Baptiste Rajaonarison proposed the analysis of a literary work. Professor Siméon

⁸ Founded by a group of friends: Solofo José, Nalisoa Ravalitera, Ranoë (Norbert Eugène Rakotomahafaly), Elie Rajaonarison, Ilay, Lydiary...

Rajaona, for his part, favored the aesthetic and stylistic study of a literary text⁹. He illustrated it in his anthology *Takelaka notsongaina* "Selected pages", volume 1 and 2, 1963. The school programs aim to make middle and high school students to appreciate beauty (*ny kanto*). For this, it highlights the elements that contribute to the beauty of a text, in the case of a poem for example the rhyme, the rhythm, the images, the style, etc.

This aesthetic approach leads to neglecting or excluding from the Malagasy literary heritage certain texts which do not conform to the required aesthetic criteria, to the canon of classical and school texts proposed by Siméon Rajaona in his anthology.

One of the objectives of this symposium is therefore to renew the Malagasy literary history by constituting an expanded corpus integrating the different genres excluded until now.

Despite the efforts made by some academics like Mrs. Dominique Ranaivoson¹⁰, there is a lack of literary criticism who could evaluate and interpret the abundant works on the contemporary Malagasy literature¹¹.

Many Malagasy poets are also lyricists. We could integrate the songs into the corpus and study the relationship between songs and literature. It is also necessary to overcome the academic opposition between literature of Malagasy expression and literature of French expression and also include the latter in the Malagasy studies (integrating, for example, the bilingual works of Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo into the Malagasy program, introducing translated Malagasy texts in the French program).

The following productions are often underestimated and neglected: children's literature, Christian literature [like these edifying novels, these pious stories published by the Lutheran printing press (T.P.F.L.M.)], detective literature (For example the novels of Paul Rapatsalahy (Idealy Soa), etc.), popular novels or short stories (for example those of S. Bem, Dolores de Valih, etc.), the literature of ideas (for example the texts by Andriamifidy, Dama-Ntsoha, Rahajarizafy, Randzavola , Rabary, Rakotonirainy, etc.), life stories and autobiographies (*sorapiainana*), theatrical texts, radio plays (*tantara an'onjampeo*), (for example the texts by Ener-Lalandy, Vahandanitra, Solofo José, etc.), books on *kabary* "discourse", novels and poems published on the web (literary web, digital literature, literary blog), etc.

Many works are still dispersed in the press and in the magazines, among the authors or their descendants. It would be necessary to carry out an inventory work, to free oneself from certain prejudices in the choice of the texts to be retained and to bring them together in new anthologies.

⁹ The results of the work of these university critics are brought together in the journal of the Department of Malagasy, *Hiratra*, n°5 of 1987 and in the journal of the Ministry of French Cooperation, *Notre Librairie*, n° 109 of 1992.

¹⁰ One of Dr Ranaivoson's latest articles: Écrire pour la presse: un tremplin pour les écrivains? Le cas de Madagascar, *ELA*, N° 48, 2019. URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1068434ar

¹¹ During the period of *Mitady ny very*, the poet Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo played this role of literary critic and discoverer of young talents. All the gray literature on ancient or contemporary Malagasy authors kept in the libraries of the departments of literary studies of universities deserves to be listed and published.

This symposium is intended as a space for reflection and analysis on this Malagasy literature which is so lively but little known¹² and little studied.

Researchers from different backgrounds are invited to reflect, from a multidisciplinary perspective, on the raised questions but also to broaden the scope of the investigations.

AXES:

The perspective adopted within the framework of this symposium being based on the notion of contact, in particular between languages, cultures, disciplines, genres and communications will develop questions on the processes of inclusion *vs* exclusion which are at work in different fields of anchoring Malagasy literature and those of its history, for example: political, religious, artistic, scientific, educational and communicative anchors. They will question the institutionalization or marginalization observed in such processes: what forms and modalities? What actors? In what contexts, does it evolve or not?

Papers may address the following areas (non-exhaustive list):

1. **Didactics of literature:** the question of literary heritage, its production, transmission and preservation [indicative corpus: *Lahatsoratra voafantina* "selected texts" by P. Rajaobelina (1948), Les *Takelaka notsongaina* "Selected pages" S. Rajaona, Volumes 1 and 2, (1960-1963), *Fary Mamy* "Sweet sugar cane" (several volumes) by Fanomezana Rabemolaly, Herman Ravelomanana, Nalisoa Jean Ravalitera and Henri Ramiliarison, (1973-1980).]

What periodizations for the history of Malagasy literature, including French-speaking Malagasy literature? Which approaches: chronological and/or thematic, comparative, etc?

- 2. **Regional literature and national literature:** the connections, the influences and the relations which can keep the two fields up. The academic work of Bakoly Domenichini Ramiaramanana (1936-2005) on Merina poetic literature (1983) and of Lucien Xavier Michel-Andrianarahinjaka (1929-1997) on Betsileo literary system (1986) contributed to the recognition and legitimization of oral literary productions collected and transcribed or translated by missionaries and colonial officials. At the dawn of the 21st century, would it be appropriate to broaden, deepen and enhance this regional diversity, and above all what would be the principles and options with a view to developing an anthology of literary texts that reflect the common national identity?
- 3. The role of the media in the construction of literary history and the preservation of Malagasy literature: institutional frameworks (relation to censorship, among others), issues, problems and major debates.
- 4. Literature and the problem of translation (translation from and into Malagasy, bilingual editions, etc.)

¹² Recently the Ambassador of India to Madagascar Mr. Abhay K. presented to the Anglo-Saxon public a panorama of Malagasy literature through interviews with contemporary authors and biography of the great authors of Malagasy literary history. https://glli-us.org/category/african-literature/madagascar-literature/

- 5. **Malagasy literature and literary criticism** (journalistic criticism, university criticism, literary circle, literary prize, etc.)
- 6. Songs and Literature: borders shared or not, forms, corpus.
- 7. **History in Malagasy novels** [indicative corpus: *L'Interférence*, *L'aube rouge* by Jean -Joseph Rabearivelo, *Au-delà des rizières* by Naivo (Naivoharisoa Patrick Ramamonjisoa), *Ny sikajin'i Dadabe* by Randriamiadanarivo, *Fofombadiko* by Emilson Daniel Andriamalala, *Mitaraina ny tany* by Andry Andraina, etc.]
- 8. Children's literature in Madagascar [indicative corpus: publications of the T.P.F.L.M., Saint-Paul bookstore editions, "Jeunes Malgaches" editions, Tsipika editions, Mpariaka boky editions, etc.]
- 9. Literature and development. As Juliette Ratsimandrava points out, "Writers, creators are the brain and the spirit of a nation which distinguishes it from the other nations of the world" Other avenues: literature as a specific resource; inventory of Malagasy committed literature. What meaning do Malagasy authors and writers (re)give to their literary commitment¹³? How do they express their positions and defend them in relation to economic and social concerns such as corruption, children's and women's right, abuse, violence, the gender issue and so many other hot topics?
- 10. **Malagasy literary creation in the digital age:** situation in relation to cyberspace, typology, modalities, national and international scope.

CALENDAR:

Launch date of the call for papers: Thursday 10 February 2022

Paper proposals of **300 words** accompanied by a short bio-bibliographic notice (including your contact details), should be sent jointly to Theis Rasoloarivony (theisvoah@gmail.com) and Linah Ravonjiarisoa (alice.ravonjiarisoa@inalco.fr) before April 29th, 2022. Notifications of acceptance will be sent to participants no later than June 17th, 2022.

- Presentations in Malagasy, French or English will be 20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes of exchange and discussion.
- Participants from the provinces or from abroad will be able to present their communication via **Zoom** (or equivalent) if they cannot be present in place.
- It is planned to publish a selection of articles at the end of the colloquium.
- Registration fees: 40 euros for non-residents (to be paid on site); 50.000 ariary for residents; 20.000 ariary for the public (PhD students or independent researchers).

¹³To write is to reveal. Indicative bibliography: Jean Paul Sartre, *Situations II Qu'est-ce que la littérature ?* (1948), Paris, Gallimard, 1987; Chloé Chaudet, *Écritures de l'engagement par temps de mondialisation*, Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2016; Benoît Denis, *Littérature et engagement*, Paris, Seuil, 2000

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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- Nirilalaina Randriatefison, Senior lecturer, ENS, Antananarivo
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