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LE SACRÉ & LE CHAMANISME

ANCÊTRES ET ESPRITS DANS
LES TRADITIONS DU GABON

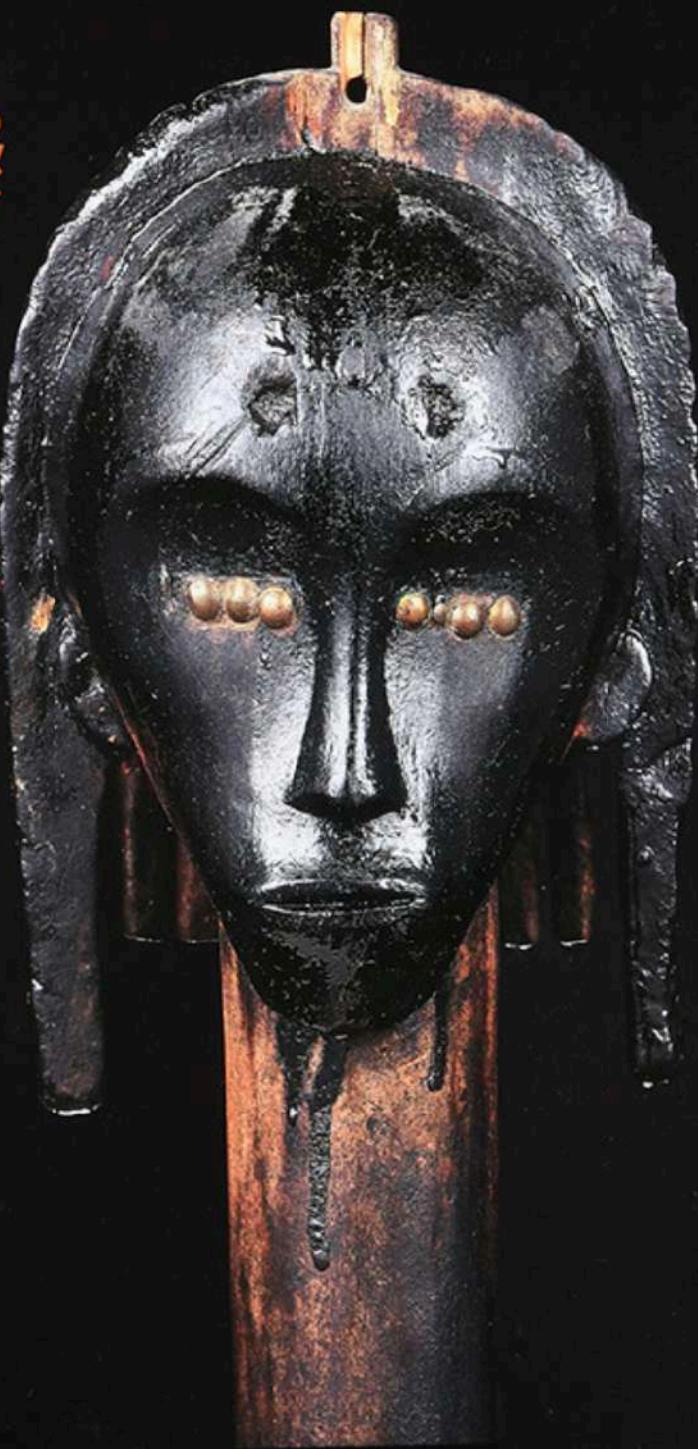
CHAMANISME ET
ARTS RUPESTRES

LE CHAMANE ÉTAIT
UNE FEMME

LE SACRÉ NOUVEAU
DEPUIS ANDRÉ BRETON
ET ÉDOUARD GLISSANT

UNE ODE AUX ANCÊTRES
DEUX PIÈCES DE
CULTURE CHU

CORINE SOMBRUN
TRANSE ET SCIENCE



> Dans le sud
malgache, Fesira,
sculpteur antanôsy

> Bertrand Goy

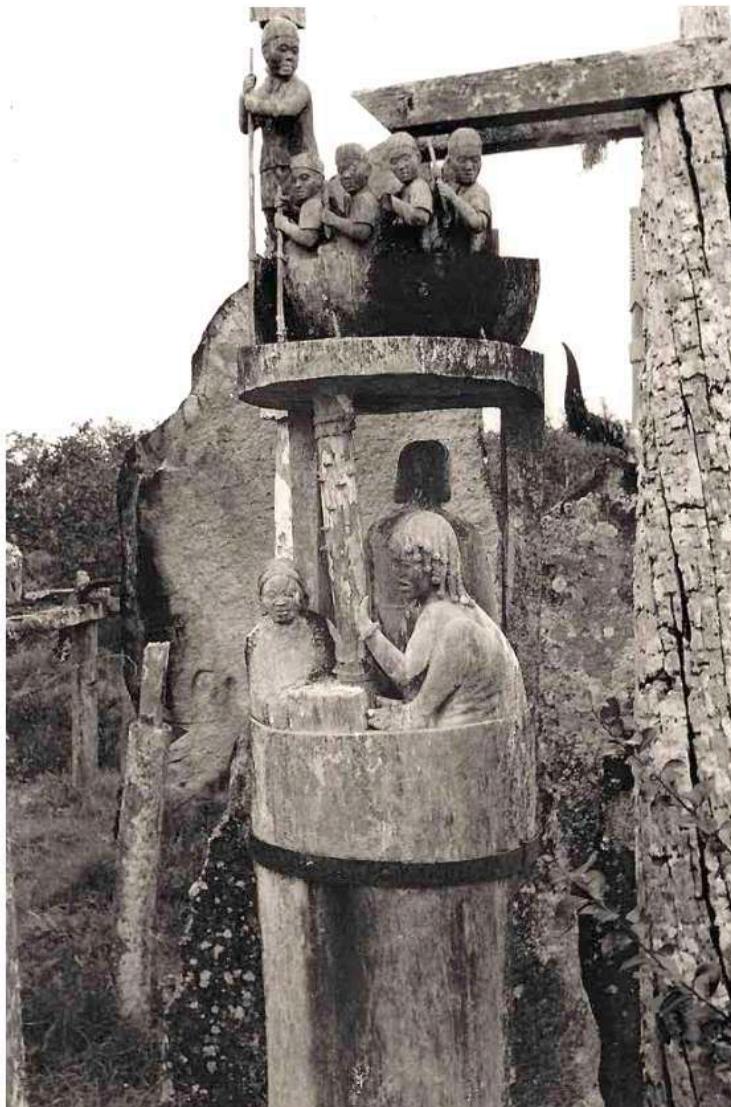


Fig. 5. Monument Aux Nautoniers. Antsary.
Cliché B. Schlemmer.

L'anthropologue Pierre Vérin⁵ confirme l'identité de Fesira auquel il attribue un monument à plusieurs étages plus récent, *Aux Nautoniers* (fig. 5), érigé sur ce même site peu après la statue de Ramaria. Il commémore le décès tragique de deux dockers antanôsy du village, survenu en 1928 dans le port de Fort-Dauphin. Cette sculpture vient hélas de disparaître malgré la vigilance des riverains. Si les remarquables statues d'Antsary en font sans doute le site le plus spectaculaire de l'Anôsy, la réputation de Fesira, leur auteur, lui a permis de diffuser son art hors de son pré carré jusqu'en Androy et chez les Antanôsy



Fig. 6. Monument Maroanaky.
Cliché B. Schlemmer.

immigrés de l'Onilahy. Doit-on de ce fait parler d'un style régional ou d'une école, d'un atelier, au sens donné aux productions des maîtres de la peinture ou de la sculpture en Occident ? Au-delà du caractère figuratif de son œuvre, Fesira a en effet conçu une manière très particulière de relater l'histoire du disparu. Elle a sans doute influencé ses successeurs, particulièrement Remanifotsy Fanohorany, pourtant un Antandroy, qui conçut en 1960 un *aloalo* atypique de quatre niveaux resté célèbre sous le nom de Maroanaky près du hameau de Manova [fig. 6].

MADAGASCAR

Island of the Ancestors



JOHN MACK

MADAGASCAR

Island of the Ancestors

JOHN MACK



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Front cover: Sakalava man standing beside a figure suitably
armed with gun and spear at the entrance to a grave-site.

Back cover: Betimisireka woman weaving the raffia cloth
distinctive of eastern Madagascar on her single-heddle loom.

Page 1: Wood-carving of two birds in a pose derived from
images found on a Seicalava tomb. H. 90 cm. MAA 62-1-17.

Pages 2-3: Wood panel with animal and bird imagery,
Mahafaly. L. 105 cm. MAA 63-17-92.

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Funerary sculpture

Some funerary sculpture is directly commemorative in character, whereas in other cases the intention seems rather to be that of reflecting aspects of the symbolism of the mortuary process itself. Some images appear on cenotaphs properly speaking, but more often perhaps they are placed on tombs, even though they may, nevertheless, serve some more general commemorative purpose. The subjects may be human or may include birds, animals and manufactured objects such as aeroplanes and motor cars, sometimes as part of some more complex scene.

All the sculpture examined here is in wood, although cement sculpture, either in relief on the side of funerary monuments, or as an object in its own right, is beginning to become familiar, particularly in southern Madagascar. Indeed, with the exception of the Sihanaka in the north-east of the plateau, all the traditions of funerary sculpture that have been documented occur in the south and west of the island. This is perhaps predictable. After all, these are areas where second burial is not found. Commemorative sculpture, in so far as it isolates and honours individuals,

Mahafaly tomb of a noble family showing the range of subjects traditional on *absalo* interspersed amongst the cattle horns on the top of the tomb.



emphasises particular deceased relatives as opposed to the community of ancestors. Second burial, however, and especially the *famadihana* process in grouping and reshuffling ancestral bones moves more in the direction of the anonymity of the dead. This is most evident in the case of the Merina where it has been stressed that the tomb is so regarded that over time individual dead housed within it merge conceptually with the tomb itself: 'The focus is shifted from an actual person, whether alive or dead, to a non-individuated ancestor, and then to a thing - the tomb' (Bloch 1971, p. 122). The Merina traditionally make no funerary sculpture.

There is in Malagasy no single word by which to distinguish sculpture, either as a general category of object or specifically as a funerary artefact. Those terms that are available are all compounds of the word *sary*, which has the general meaning of 'an image'. However, the term *aloalo* has gained some currency in some of the art books where it is often used as if it were generic. *Aloalo* comes from the word *alo* which carries with it the sense of an intermediary or messenger (Decary 1962, p. 278). It therefore refers to the function rather than the form of an object, so that not all sculpture found in association with burials is necessarily *aloalo* and not all *aloalo* are necessarily sculptural. The term has been taken over from the Mahafaly, amongst whom it refers to one specific form of funerary object, and has been extended to other objects where its use may be inappropriate.

Aloalo are strictly the polar sculptures referred to above which certain royal Mahafaly clans reserved to their own use. They have been the subject of a number of preliminary field studies, and the sites in which they occur are well photographed and recorded. Yet few who have studied them have felt able to venture any conclusive interpretation of their significance (Boulfroy 1976, Woulkoff 1976, and, as a more general survey, Decary 1951 and 1962). Furthermore, whatever their original intent, this may well have altered for not only have the rights to the use of *aloalo* been extended but the form of the *aloalo* itself has evolved.

The classic style associated with the older tombs is a single naked figure with, above, the projection already referred to with its geometric motifs topped usually by a carved zebu or bird. In more recent times, however, the style has developed to the point where a whole series of scenes and images are now employed. Among the newer motifs are cyclists and horse-riders, aeroplanes and *taxis-brousse*, gendarmes arresting thieves or sorcerers, a colonial judge, hunters and warriors, drinkers, or a funeral cortège. What this suggests is a shift of emphasis from the earlier forms of funerary sculpture which all appear to comment on the kinds of transition involved in burial practice - in this they resemble the funerary sculpture of some of the Sakalava. The later sculpture, however, in referring to events associated with the dead are more directly commemorative and as such are more comparable to the cenotaphs of the Antanosy and particularly the remarkable series of memorial sculptures dating from the 1930s and 40s and attributed to the prolific and gifted Antanosy sculptor *Iesra*.

Sakalava tombs are varied reflecting both the diverse origins of the Sakalava themselves and hierarchical divisions within their society. Royalty possess spirit mediums at their death and in this respect retain



Mahafaly *aloalo* displaying a number of scenes recalling the life of the deceased and resulting in a highly complex sculpture.



Female figure with child in the Sakalava style and from a Veu tomb.
H. (of figure)
50 cms. MAA
63-2-215.

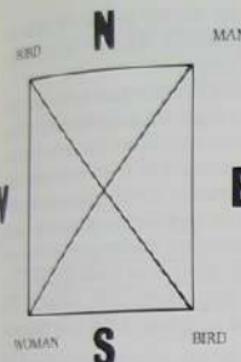
a bodily incarnation. Their tombs are not perhaps as vital a focus for their descendants or subjects as their continuing spiritual existence expressed in the person of a medium and certain royal relics. Funerary sculpture is hardly relevant since in a sense royalty do not die but represent themselves through invading a living person. Sculpture is in fact used on the tombs of certain higher-ranking groups of Sakalava rather than on royal tombs which are by contrast modest (Bloch 1981). The subjects of this sculpture are again, as those of the Mahafaly, naked figures and birds represented singly or, in the case of the Sakalava, in erotic embrace. Two features in particular distinguish Sakalava figurative work: one is the exaggeration of the sexual organs, and the other is the predominance of the female which, where a contrast with a male figure is made, is carved on a larger scale.

Any notion that these figures commemorate the dead on whose graves they appear, or more particularly that they are portraits, would certainly seem to be out of the question. For all Malagasy the wearing of clothing is a strictly observed habit, even in the warmest parts of the island. Nudity, when it is inadvertently encountered, is always startling and embarrassing. Washing or bathing is carried out discreetly; it is only between sexual partners that nudity is admitted, and in other contexts is a mark of madness. The dead too are in principle always clothed. Thus when the corpse is washed it is only by and in the presence of people who should usually be relatives of the deceased and of the same sex. Equally, clothing and shrouding the dead are the very acts which assert the proper quality of regard in which the living hold the dead. Clothing sculpture in fact was common amongst the Sihanaka and Antaimoro. There is little doubt, then, that the nudity of the Sakalava and Mahafaly funerary figures implies sexuality itself rather than necessarily the sexuality of particular persons. Indeed, amongst taboos associated with those graves where such sculpture is displayed is a ban on their being visited at the same time by persons between whom there are incest prohibitions.

Most discussions of Sakalava sculpture have either missed these points or confined themselves to some general statement about death and regeneration, as if they were rather specifically Sakalava ideas. Certainly in carving female figures more prominently than male, and thereby asserting the priority of Sakalava women, some notion of rebirth is arguably implicit in the sculpture. However, Mahafaly graves in displaying naked figures imply sexuality *per se*, and it is striking that many events, funerary or otherwise – at ceremonies associated with the birth of the New Year, for example – were in the past exceptional times when unrestricted sexuality was stressed, whether actually or by implication.

In the Sakalava case the implication is certainly there, for even if single figures are put up they generally face each other, male confronting female, across a square structure. It has been remarked (Lombard 1973, p. 96) that this arrangement draws on the *vintana* system described above. A male figure placed in the north-east facing a female one on the south-west replicates a situation which is taboo. Persons with opposing *vintana* as determined by time of birth and its related spatial reference would not in normal circumstances knowingly engage in such a relationship.

Alalo = concentrally carved,
FUNERARY SCULPTURE
= volon de laogivian



Sakalava tomb.

Sakalava grave with wooden human and bird figures.

Perhaps one of the most eloquent statements of some of the elements involved in such a set of sculptural references occurs in a discussion of Bara ritual by its leading modern interpreter. Sakalava funerary sculpture is yet to be regarded in this light, but some indication of the kinds of concern that might be anticipated may be gauged from Huntingdon's words (1973, p. 82):

It is not enough to bury someone, merely to dispose of the body. The survivors must bring about a successful conception and rebirth of their deceased kinsman into the world of the ancestors. This process, like the conception of an infant, is a difficult and risky endeavour for both the deceased and his survivors. Should this transition fail, the consequence is nothing short of catastrophic infertility with the deceased remaining like a dead foetus in the womb of his survivors' world.

Amongst the Mahafaly the number of traditional *aloalo* with their naked figures indicated both how the particular deceased was regarded in life and also how intensely rebirth as an ancestor was sought. In modern times, however, these references have disappeared. *Aloalo* are now carved with serious or humorous imagery, often recalling a riot of events which charac-



terised the life of the deceased. The subjects are usually portrayed clothed and the purpose is biographical. Aloalo have become obituary announcements when formerly they were notices of rebirth.

The Antanoso in the area of Fort Dauphin and its hinterland have always regarded funerary sculpture as what might be regarded as essentially commemorative. The sites at which the carvings are placed are the cenotaphs, the places of commemoration, where it is customary to erect monuments in stone, cement and wood to each person buried in the communal tomb. Both birds and human figures are reported as appropriate imagery, and certainly there does seem to have been an established tradition of sculpture in the area (although the wet climate in the south-east contributes to a more rapid deterioration of wood sculpture than elsewhere). Indeed, the carver Tsivoloa, who was one of the foremost sculptors of the post Second

Below right Memorial to a man who served with the French authorities and who is also remembered as owning the first motor car in this remote village. The sculptor, Festira, has shown him seated beside two images recalling these biographical details. Antanoso.

Below Modern figurative carving of a woman developed out of the traditions and subjects of funerary sculpture. Sakalava. H. 98 cm. MAA 63.1-6.



World War period in the Sakalava area was Antanosy by origin (Mallet 1963). Virtually all the sculpture remaining in the Antanosy area at the moment, however, is the work of a single itinerant carver, Fesira.

Most of Fesira's work would seem to date from the immediate pre-war period and includes occasional references to the major local events of the time - the introduction of the first Antanosy-owned motor car in one remote village, or a canoeing accident in another. As with the carvers of the more recent of the *aloalo*, his method of commemoration was not the production of sculpted portraits but of other references to the lives of the deceased. It was not what people looked like but who they were and what they did that made them significant. In practice, however, Fesira's method of work was such that he may well not have known personally those whose cenotaphs he created. He worked on a commission basis, payment being

The top of a memorial which, among other events, commemorates an accident in which a canoe overturned and its occupants drowned. By the Antanosy sculptor Fesira.



made by the descendants of the person commemorated. His practice was to move into the village itself where a house was built in which he would work. Older people recall him as staying for periods from six to nine months, the time it would take to execute the more complicated work. It was the duty of those commissioning him to feed and keep him. They would also relate the events of the life of their dead relative and decide which should be recorded sculpturally; whether it was to be a complex work, or which identifying features should be included if a sole figure – a medallion in the form of a cross, for instance, for the first catechist in a family. Beyond that, however, the conception and execution of the work were the inspiration of Fesira himself.

His sculpture seeks to show its subjects in a conventional light. The figures are carved appropriately clad in pursuit of virtuous tasks or in comfortable repose. Like the portrait painters in the Western tradition who choose to overlook the blemishes of their subject, Fesira consistently presented culturally appropriate images. Who, after all, would wish to commission memorials to their ancestors portrayed otherwise? But, while the eroticism of other sculptural traditions is no part of Antanosy practice, is the purpose and process of creating such a cenotaph purely and simply commemorative?

In documenting Fesira's works and asking in those villages where he had carved about his methods and the circumstances in which he worked, a number of details were constantly related. No one apart from the immediate descendants of the deceased was allowed to see the work while it was being carved. Fesira always worked indoors, in secret. Furthermore, he is often recalled as having worked at night and rested by day. Most strikingly, however, he is reputed to have carved naked. The significance of this is unmistakable: his nakedness reflects the process of conception which the act of carving represents. At another level, however, his nakedness is the prelude to the rebirth of the ancestor commemorated when, for the first time, the finished work is displayed publicly at the cenotaph. The nakedness of the Antanosy *sculptor* recalls the nakedness of the Mahafaly and Sakalava *sculpture*. Fesira was not simply carving memorials but creating ancestors. In that he was heir to the distinctive feature of Malagasy culture practice.

provinces malagueñas



Philippe OBERLÉ

Provinces malgaches

ART - HISTOIRE - TOURISME

*Préface du Docteur Césaire Rabenoro,
Président de l'Académie Malgache*

334 illustrations en noir et blanc
Hors texte: 10 illustrations couleurs

Maquette: Christian Borboën

Editions KINTANA

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Les deux volumes réunis couvrent donc l'ensemble du pays.

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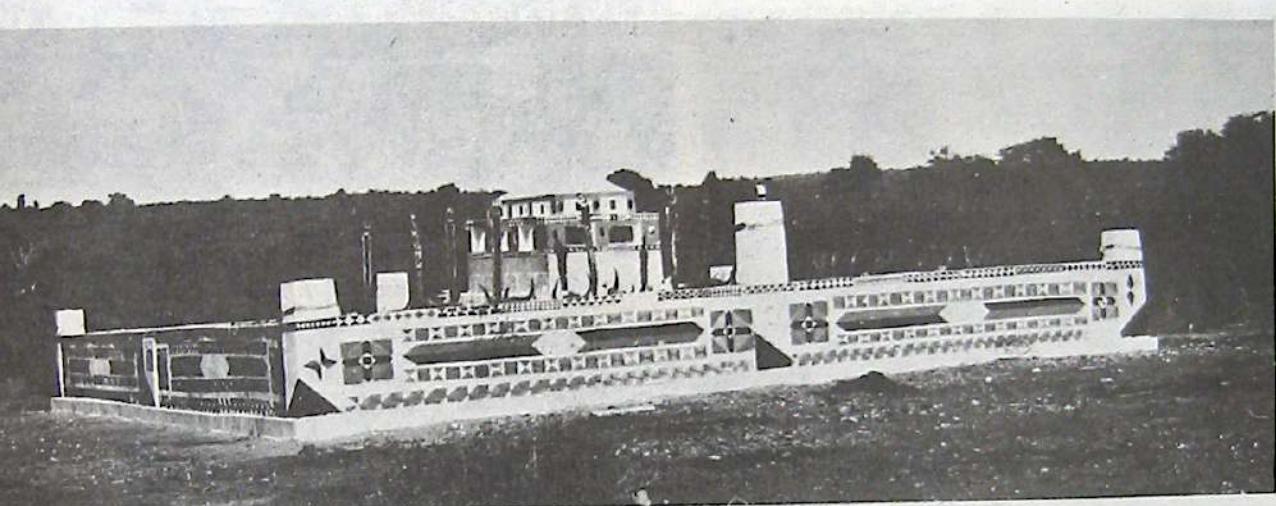
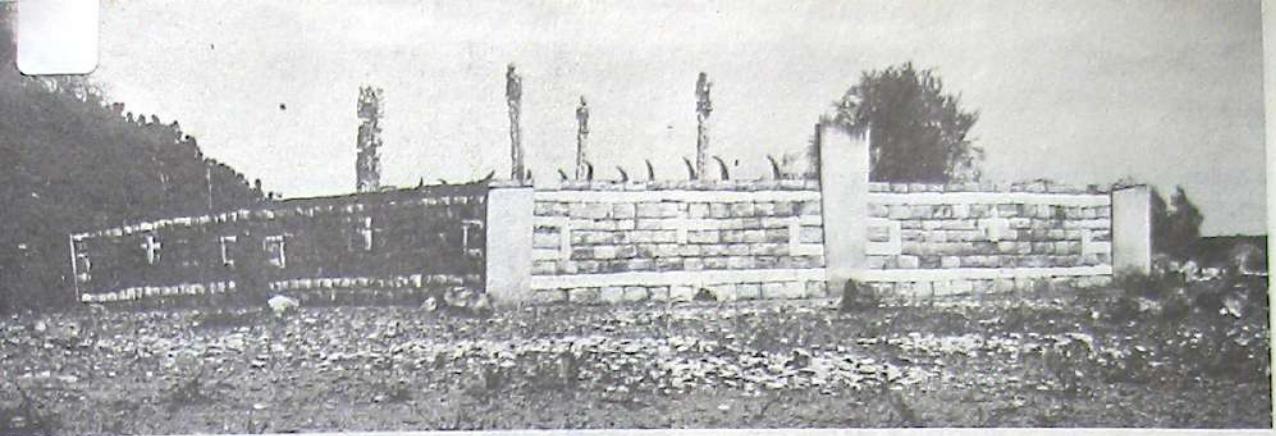
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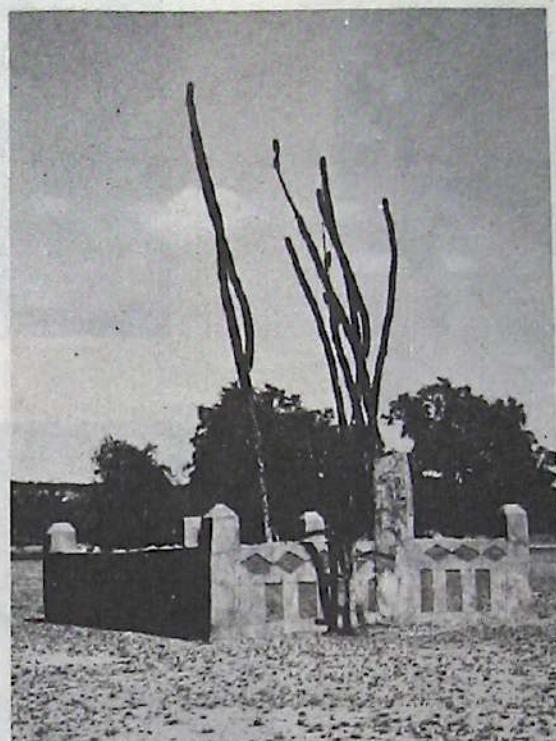
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TOMBEAUX ET ALOALO

Les tombeaux mahafaly, comme ceux des Antandroy, sont de grands édifices carrés d'environ dix à quinze mètres de côté, d'un mètre à un mètre cinquante de hauteur, constitués de pierres grossièrement taillées sur les parties externes, et de pierres brutes entassées dans la partie interne. Deux hauts vatolahy sont dressés au milieu de deux faces opposées, tandis que des monolithes de moindres dimensions consolident les angles de l'édifice. Un décor géométrique de pierres blanches, au motif nommé «croix mahafaly», orne les faces des tombeaux du clan tetho près de Tranoroa. Des fantsiholitra, ou arbres-pieuvres, sont plantés contre l'édifice, dont l'emplacement est parfois choisi à côté d'un grand arbre.

Sur le dessus du tombeau, des aloalo, poteaux de bois sculpté de 1 m 50 à 1 m 80 de hauteur, sont fichés au nombre de 4 à 16, selon un ordre soigneusement géométrique, les sujets invariablement orientés vers l'est. Les crânes des boeufs sacrifiés lors des funérailles ornent le tombeau, ainsi que quelques ustensiles familiers du défunt. Les aloalo comportent des sculptures géométriques à jours sur leur fût, et des figurines sculptées à leur sommet. Celles-ci reflètent une inspiration variée, qui évoque généralement la personnalité du défunt, des biens qui lui étaient chers, ou simplement des scènes de la vie quotidienne, ainsi que des boeufs et des oiseaux:



Tombeau en ciment, près d'Amborompatsy. Deux fantsiholitra ont été plantés à côté de l'édifice.

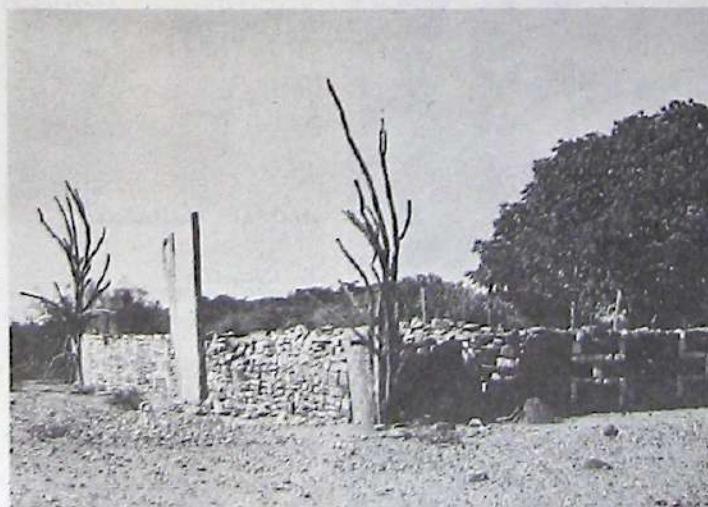
Tombeau orné de «croix mahafaly», entre Ampanihy et Tranoroa.

Page de gauche, de haut en bas:

Tombeau orné du magnifique poteau sculpté Maroanaky, œuvre du sculpteur Remanotsa Fanohorany. (Hameau de Manova)

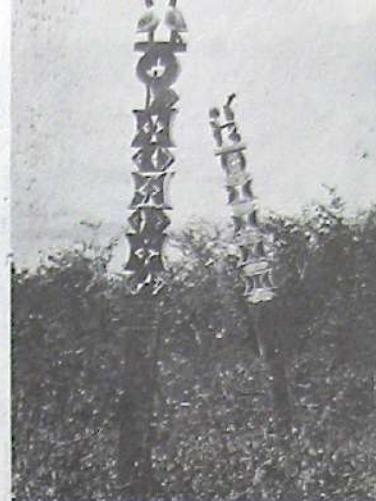
Tombeau moderne à quelques kilomètres d'Ampanihy, avec douze aloalo et trente bucrânes.

Tombeau orné de dix aloalo, entre Betiohy et Ampanihy.





1



2



3



4



6



5

ALOALO MAHAFALY

1. *Cycliste*
2. *Deux oiseaux. Gymnaste.*
3. *Cavalier*
4. *Buveurs et zébu*
5. *Buveurs. Guerriers.*
6. *Deux oiseaux. Gendarme arrêtant un voleur.*



7



8

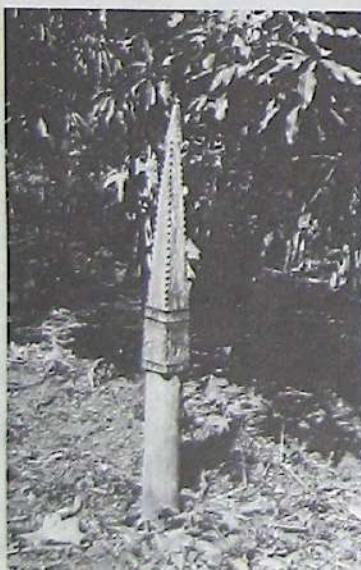


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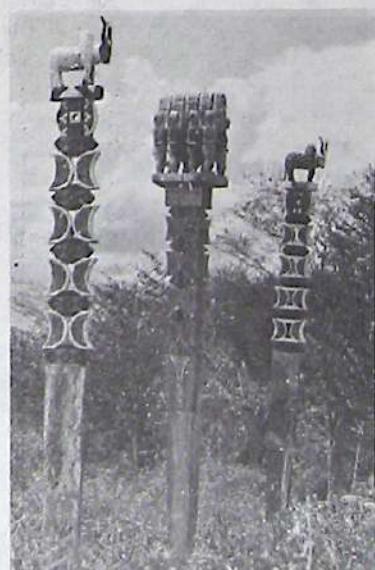
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12



11

7. Avion.
8. Voyage en car-brousse. Convoy mortuaire.
9. Le juge colonial.
10. Convoy funèbre.
11. Hazomanga, poteau de circoncision mahafaly.
12. Zébus. Convoy mortuaire.



zébus, deux zébus luttant, couple d'oiseaux se faisant face ou côté à côté, fumeur de pipe, motocycliste, militaire, guerriers avec fusils et sagaies, fonctionnaire assis à son bureau, perceuteur tenant un coffre, fonctionnaire colonial à cheval, accordéoniste et couple dansant, bouvier, deux gymnastes, deux buveurs assis à table, gendarme arrêtant un voleur, deux joueurs de cartes, homme luttant avec un crocodile, femme portant une cruche, femme trayant une vache, femme consultant un sorcier, avion, taxi-brousse, maison, deux hommes devinant, femme se coiffant, colonial avec casque porté en filanzana, convoi funèbre (de 8 à 14 personnages portant la bière ou l'accompagnant)...

Ces sujets sont peints de couleurs vives que les intempéries dégradent rapidement. On ne trouve sur les tombeaux mahafaly aucune scène érotique comparable à celles des Sakalava-Vezo. Contrairement aux Sakalava qui cachent leurs tombes parmi les bois, loin des regards, les Mahafaly édifient de préférence leurs tombeaux aux abords des grandes routes notamment entre Tuléar et Ampanihy afin de montrer leur magnificence aux yeux des passants. L'édition de ces tombeaux est coûteuse et exige plusieurs mois de labeur. Les aloalo se payent au sculpteur au prix d'un ou deux boeufs chaque, et jusqu'à quatre ou cinq boeufs pour des pièces exceptionnelles.

Tel fut le prix d'un magnifique aloalo sculpté vers 1960 par l'artisan Remanifotsy Fanohorany, d'Andrabaly près de Beloha, qui s'élève sur une tombe située à côté du hameau de Manova, au km 243 de la route de Tuléar vers Tranoroa. Cet aloalo, qui comporte quatre étages de scènes, se nomme Maroanaky («beaucoup d'enfants»). Au niveau supérieur deux gendarmes arrêtent deux sorciers (ou voleurs?) tandis qu'un juge lit une sentence. Le second niveau comporte trois sujets: femme avec un enfant, femme portant un parapluie, un livre à la main, un coffre sur la tête, homme avec une angady (bêche). Trois sujets encore au troisième niveau: une femme verse du lait d'une calebasse dans une marmite à laquelle vient laper un chat voleur, femme envoyant son fils à la ville, femme allaitant. Au niveau inférieur, un chasseur tire au fusil sur une pintade perchée, tandis que deux chiens essayent de l'attraper, un chasseur tire sur un maki perché dont un chien mord la queue, un serpent se dirige vers le maki.

La représentation de scènes de la vie quotidienne correspond à une évolution relativement récente de l'art mahafaly. Autrefois les aloalo portaient presque exclu-





sivement des oiseaux ou des zébus. Par contre la base du poteau pouvait représenter un personnage debout, la partie géométrique de l'aloalo ne prenant naissance dans ce cas qu'au-dessus de sa tête. On rencontre des aloalo de ce type sur les tombeaux anciens, notamment celui du roi Tsiampondy à Ankirikiriky.

Jadis l'érection des aloalo sur les tombeaux était réservée par privilège royal à certains clans. Peu à peu les rois élargirent ce droit contre paiement à d'autres familles, et même comme nous l'avons indiqué plus haut, aux Antandroy. Quelle est la signification du mot aloalo ? Alo signifie « intermédiaire ». On peut donc considérer ces poteaux sculptés comme des intermédiaires entre les vivants et les morts, quoique certains spécialistes réfutent cette interprétation.

Chasseur visant un maki. Un serpent se dresse vers l'animal.

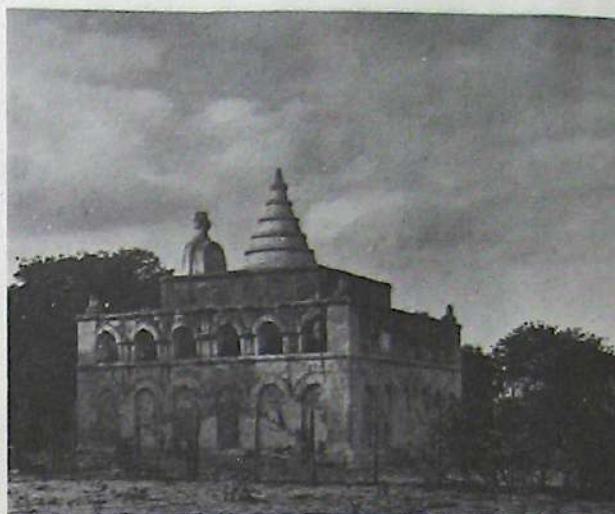


Détails du poteau Maroanaky:

Gendarmes arrêtant deux sorciers (ou voleurs). Femme versant du lait dans une marmite à laquelle vient laper un chat.

Ci-contre à gauche:
Le poteau sculpté Maroanaky à Manova.

Chez les Mahafaly comme chez les Antandroy les tombeaux traditionnels en pierres tendent à céder la place à des édifices en maçonnerie. Les faces du tombeau reçoivent alors des peintures aux couleurs criardes, motifs géométriques ou scènes réalistes, tandis qu'une maisonnette sacrée, ornée de petits miroirs, s'élève au milieu du tombeau. Cette regrettable dégénérescence de l'art funéraire s'explique par le souci de construire des édifices d'aspect «riche». La pierre apparaît démodée aux yeux des nouvelles générations qui lui préfèrent le béton. Souhaitons que l'administration et les élites locales persuadent la population que l'art légué par les ancêtres recèle une richesse culturelle et esthétique incomparablement supérieure à une technologie d'importation qui n'a pas sa place dans le cadre naturel magnifique des pays mahafaly et antandroy, où les tombeaux traditionnels s'intègrent si parfaitement au paysage.



Tombeau du chef mahafaly Fitroza à Tsikombe.

Tuléar et les Vezo

BAIE DE SAINT-AUGUSTIN

Les navigateurs européens fréquentaient de longue date la baie de Saint-Augustin. Les Hollandais en particulier y relâchèrent lors de leur premier passage à Madagascar en 1595, sous le commandement de l'Amiral Cornelis de Houtman, en route pour les Indes Orientales. Dans la baie propice aux escales, on trouvait de l'eau et des vivres en abondance, et les indigènes acceptaient de troquer boeufs et moutons contre des pacotilles d'Europe. Le scorbut faisant à cette époque des ravages parmi les équipages, nombreux furent les marins qu'il fallut ensevelir lors des escales. Une petite île de la baie d'Ampalaza, Nosy-Manitsa, prit même le nom de «cimetière des Hollandais».

Martin du Vitré, marchand de Saint-Malo relate son passage à Saint-Augustin dans son «Premier voyage fait aux Indes Orientales par les Français en 1602». Son navire, le Croissant, accompagné du Corbin appartenant au sieur de Laval, se réfugia dans la baie pour réparer les dégâts causés par une forte tempête. Un bateau hollandais les rejoignit. Le premier soin des navigateurs fut d'établir un bastion à terre destiné au repos des malades: «on alla choisir en terre une place, la plus propre qu'on

put trouver, pour descendre tous les malades du scorbut, dont nous avions un grand nombre en nos navires; les Hollandais n'en avaient pas un seul. Le lieu ayant été pris et marqué au pied d'une haute montagne, sur le bord de la rivière qui tombe en cette baie (l'Onilahy), on le ferma d'une palissade de gros pieux de bois, plantés et fichés les uns près des autres et entrelacés de grosses branches, et de bastions de même ouvrage, et on couvrit des voiles du navire; pour défendre cette forteresse, on y porta quelques petites pièces de canon. Nous ne pouvions en user autrement, parce qu'il ne se trouve point là de pierres dont on pût se servir à propos; de faire des fossés et des remparts, il n'y avait pas moyen, car c'était tout sable mouvant. On y descendit nos malades du scorbut, dont nous avions un grand nombre, et pour leur sûreté on y envoya des hommes sains, avec des arquebuses, des mousquets et autres armes, afin de faire garde nuit et jour». Ces dispositions défensives se révélèrent inutiles car les habitants se montraient pacifiques et acceptèrent de fournir des vivres que les Français se procurèrent à très bon compte puisqu'un mouton s'échangeait contre une cuillère en étain...

«Le pays abonde en bétail, écrivait du Vitré, qui forme toute la richesse des indigènes, lesquels changent de résidence suivant les saisons de l'année, conduisant leurs troupeaux aux meilleurs pâturages. Ils ont de petites maisonnettes construites avec des roseaux et des bran-